

Why I (No Longer) Eat Animals

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Over the years, I have been asked why I am vegetarian and eat mostly vegan. It's hard to know where to start. I've been vegetarian for nearly twenty-five years. Each year, I seem to find another reason—environmental, animal rights, personal health—to not eat animals. The longer that I've been vegetarian, the better I feel about my choice.

I never ate a lot of meat growing up. I'm not sure whether it was because I was a picky eater or sensed the unnecessary of eating other living beings.

When I lived outside Washington, D.C. after college, I had two vegetarian apartment mates. I decided to make the switch to being a vegetarian at that point for two main reasons: I didn't want to offend them by eating meat, and vegetarian cooking just seemed easier and cheaper.

After moving to Los Angeles, I joined Vegan Toastmasters. I listened to the



speeches of fellow members and read books and articles that they suggested. And I became convinced about ten years ago to (try to) avoid all animal products as a vegan because of the close ties between the meat and dairy industries.

[*The Breakthrough Institute*](#)¹,

which researches environmental and development issues, outlines the many emissions from livestock. Animal agriculture contributes about the same

amount of warming gasses as all transportation sources, [*The New York Times*](#)² reports. Additionally, the deforestation associated with large livestock operations greatly exacerbates emissions.

Why is animal agriculture a problem? Raising livestock requires a lot of land, energy, and water. Note this research summary in *Science*, [“Veganism Could Save the World, New Study Argues:](#)



1

<https://thebreakthrough.org/issues/food-agriculture-environment/livestock-dont-contribute-14-5-of-global-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

2

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/30/dining/climate-change-food-eating-habits.html?fbclid=IwAR3-97qKwiRS-il0hullsOooDvgkzcRp0PVyng9qcT6rWZdvYleRyQfFIO4>

[Cutting Out Meat Could Fill Our Bellies While Saving Forests.](#)³ Additionally, cows and sheep burp a lot of methane, which causes more warming than carbon dioxide.

And then there are the health considerations. Being vegetarian or vegan prevents many diseases. T. Colin Campbell and Thomas M. Campbell's large scale *The China Study*⁴ looks at the links between diet, lifestyle, and disease in rural China. The findings surprised many people. Eating animal-based foods cause cancer cells to grow, while plant-based foods cause cancer cells to slow or stop growing. "The evidence now amassed from researchers around the world shows that the same diet that is good for the prevention of cancer is also good for the prevention of heart disease, as well as obesity, diabetes, cataracts, macular degeneration, Alzheimer's, cognitive dysfunction, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis and other diseases," the Campbells found (109-110).



The *Journal of the American Heart Association's* article says it all in the title, "[Plant-Based Diets Are Associated with a Lower Risk of Incident Cardiovascular Disease, Cardiovascular Disease Mortality, and All-Cause Mortality in a General Population of Middle-Aged Adults.](#)"⁵

Ah, the ethics... Why do we teach children to love all animals, whether they be on a farm or in the wild? Then, as they get older, we teach them that we "have" to eat animals. We need to reorient our relationship with animals and treat them with the respect that they deserve as sentient beings. They are not here just for our pleasure to do with as we desire.

Let me be clear: I am a sinner like everyone else. I won't bore you with all of my sins. But I present myself as vegan when in reality I cheat sometimes. I have a sweet tooth and love donuts, cake, and cookies that no doubt have butter, eggs, and milk chocolate in them—all animal products. I enjoy the butter noodles in the Switzer Dining Hall.

I do believe that what we put in our bodies should be a personal decision. (I've had plenty of family, friends, and doctors, over the years, tell me that my diet is misguided.) Yet I think that it's important to start and continue a conversation. Why do you eat what you do? Do you consider its source? What effect do culture and family traditions play?

³ <https://www.science.org/content/article/veganism-could-save-world-new-study-argues>

⁴ The full title of the Campbells' book is *The China Study: The Most Comprehensive Study of Nutrition Ever Conducted and the Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss and Long-term Health*.

⁵ <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/JAHA.119.012865>