

conscious eating



# ‘Less Meat’ Goes Mainstream

## Options Grow for Plant-Based Eating

by Marlaina Donato

Plant-based lifestyles, once considered by some as a fad that would fade, are on the rise worldwide. According to a Harris Interactive poll commissioned by the Vegetarian Resource Group, 6 million to 8 million Americans have completely eliminated meat, including seafood, from their plates. With a 600 percent increase of people going vegan domestically in the past three years and companies like Nestlé devising vegan-tailored product launches, plant-based eating is creating unprecedented demand.

“I’ve definitely seen plant-based eating become more mainstream. Many restaurants now provide plant-based options to keep their customers happy, and more food startups are creating nut- and soy-based cheeses, milks and yogurts,” says Lisa Stollman, a plant-based nutritionist in New York City. Vegan lunch options are even making their way into the Los Angeles public school system.

### Millennials Lead the Way

GlobalData, a data and analytics company, reports, “Seventy percent of the world population is either reducing meat consumption or leaving meat off the table altogether,” with Millennials at the forefront.

“The environment has been the Millennial generation’s primary concern. Health is of less importance than interest in making the Earth a better place to live,”

says Gene Stone, a plant-based diet expert in Hudson, New York, and author of the bestselling *Forks Over Knives: The Plant-Based Way to Health*.

Stollman concurs, saying, “The majority of my vegan clients are in their 20s and 30s, and their concern for animal treatment relates to sustainability. Sustainability helps to reduce methane emissions from industrial farms.”

Wynnie Stein, co-owner of the iconic Moosewood Restaurant, in Ithaca, New York, and co-author of its groundbreaking spin-off vegetarian cookbooks, has witnessed monumental changes since the early 1970s. Younger cooks at Moosewood have also brought passionate innovations to the establishment. “Millennials are incredibly creative, especially with plant-based and gluten-free dishes. They’re committed to animal rights and issues that affect the health of the planet,” observes Stein.

## Benefits All Ages

Since the American Medical Association’s recent suggestion that hospitals consider providing plant-based meals for patients, perceptions are shifting. Holistic Cardiologist Joel Kahn, in Ferndale, Michigan, began teaching plant-based diets to heart patients in 1990, and has subsequently seen hundreds of them avoid invasive and surgical procedures, as well as show less evidence of heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, obesity and hypertension. “Many of my patients have decreased or eliminated the otherwise lifelong ‘jail’ of prescription drugs. They learned that disease reversal, not management, is the goal,” says Kahn.

Supermarkets across the country are stocking meatless products like plant-based burgers. Many athletes and bodybuilders that have switched away from eating meat attest to improved results by tapping into plant power. People of all walks of life, including seniors, have embraced this paradigm. “There is increased interest in health as Baby Boomers age and start to realize the benefits of a plant-based diet, much of it due to myriad new research,” says Stone.

According to the Harvard School of Public Health, a diet rich in vegetables and fruits lowers blood pressure. The American

Diabetes Association supports a nutrient-dense vegetarian diet that can decrease the risk of certain diseases.

For Stollman’s vegan clients aged 50 and older, “Health plays a strong role in their interest in plant-based eating. The science has become clear, and based on the evidence, I continue to teach my clients the importance of including plant-based meals in their daily diets,” she says.

## Looking Forward

The surge of people changing their diet has a multilevel impact. “I feel deeply grateful to have been able to help spread the word about plant-based diets. Health, the environment and animal protection are great concerns of mine,” says Stone.

Stein appreciates how the positive change in diet benefiting people and the planet is coming full circle. “We’re still amazed and honored to know that our cookbooks have helped to create a sea change. Folks visiting from all over the world tell us how our recipes have influenced several generations of their families.”

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