

Plant-Powered Palate – Good for You and Good for Mother Earth

More than 90 percent of the population in Singapore is not vegetarian or vegan, so expecting a mass shift to vegan lifestyles is unrealistic. By making small changes to eat less meat, though, people who do eat meat can improve their health and also reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Why Plant-based Foods Matter

Eating meat is clearly part of the culture in Singapore as well as in many other countries. Yet it comes at a cost.

Diets high in red and processed meat and lower in whole grains, legumes, vegetables, and fruit are associated with higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers, [according](#) to Johns Hopkins University and the US [National Institutes of Health](#). A [study](#) at Harvard showed that one daily serving of unprocessed red meat led to a 13 percent higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease or cancer and processed red meat such as a hot dog or bacon raised the risk by 20 percent.

Along with the health risks, meat has major impacts on climate change. Food and agriculture cause about 25 percent of global carbon emissions, and meat causes about 60 percent of that total. Beef is the [worst culprit](#), with production of meat emitting 10 times as much greenhouse gases as poultry and 32 times as much as tofu.

Less Meat and More Veggies Improves Health

Rather than simply giving up meat entirely, which meat-eaters are highly unlikely to do, eating less meat – and less beef in particular – has large positive effects. Simple dietary substitutions such as substituting chicken for beef in dishes such as burritos could improve consumers' overall dietary quality by 4–10 percent, researchers [suggest](#), and it could reduce the dietary carbon footprint in the US by more than 35 percent. Researchers in Germany [found](#) that replacing 1.8 ounces (50 grams) of processed meat with plant-based foods every day lowered cardiovascular disease risk by 25 percent, and replacing that much processed meat with plant-based foods reduced the risk of death by 21 percent.

People who switch to a vegan lifestyle have even better health. Stanford Medicine researchers who studied identical twins, putting one on a vegan diet and the other on an omnivore diet, [found](#) that a vegan diet improves cardiovascular health in as little as eight weeks. The twin who shifted to a vegan diet had lower cholesterol (LDL-C) levels, insulin and body weight.

Along with the health benefits, the changes help the climate too. Even just swapping higher-carbon foods for lower-carbon alternatives, such as replacing cow products with plant-based foods or poultry once a day, could reduce people's dietary carbon footprint by more than 35 percent. "We found that making small changes in what we eat can substantially reduce carbon pollution and also make our diets healthier," Anna Grummon, assistant professor at the Stanford School of Medicine, [told](#) ABC News.

How to Switch

A key question, then, is how to switch. It's one thing to have an intent to live a healthier and more climate-friendly life. It's another thing to do it.

One option is simple substitutions such as chicken instead of beef in tacos, cod instead of shrimp or plant-based instead of dairy milk. [Lower-carbon foods](#) have better [Healthy Eating Index](#) scores, so they are good for you and the planet.

Another is Meatless Mondays or Taco Tuesdays. You can try new recipes one day a week, knowing you'll go back to meat the next day. Or if you don't have much meat for breakfast

or lunch anyway, decide you'll have meat only for dinner. As MSNBC [put it](#), "Taco Tuesdays can turn into a chance to save the environment.

Harvard researchers also [suggest](#) reducing processed meats such as bacon, sausages, and cold cuts. If you eat red meat multiple times a day, such as a sausage for breakfast and a ham sandwich for lunch and steak at dinner, try cutting down to once a day. If you eat red meat once a day, reduce the portion size a bit. A single instead of a double hamburger, fewer slices of bacon or beef, or buying half a pound of beef and adjusting other ingredients if a recipe calls for a pound can make a real difference. Eating more "umami-packed" plant-based foods such as soy sauce, miso, toasted nuts or seeds and vegetables such as tomatoes can provide a savory rich taste when you're cooking without animal foods.

While vegans and vegetarians may suggest that you switch to plant-based foods entirely, and it does have advantages, it may be unrealistic. Even reducing meat in your diet or swapping to healthier meats can make a difference, though, for your health and the planet.

Vegetarian Restaurants

Cooking at home is great. Realistically, though, many people want to go out for a meal. You can now find vegetarian options now at almost every place you want to eat, from hawker centers and fast-food joints to casual dining establishments and Michelin-starred restaurants.

Restaurants that serve only a vegetarian cuisine or that serve a vegetarian set menu include:

Casual Dining

- [Eight Treasures](#) serves creative vegetarian Chinese cuisine. It uses fresh vegetables as well as soy to prepare a variety of dishes, including an extensive menu of vegetarian meat replacements. 282A South Bridge Road.
- [Veganburg](#) is a vegetarian burger joint that offers plant-based burgers with fresh greens and whole meal buns. 44 Jalan Eunus 1 and 1 Bidadari Park Drive #01-37.
- [Elemen](#) is a very casual place that prepares wholesome meatless recipes using natural ingredients, from lasagna and quinoa salad to Asian curry with roti. HarbourFront, Millenia Walk, Paya Lebar, Woodlands Height and Great World City

Mid-Range

- [Joie](#), Located on the rooftop garden of Orchard Central, it specializes in modern meatless cuisine. It leverages dining trends in Europe and Taiwan, using fresh vegetables, fruits and herbs, for four- or five-course lunches and six- or seven-course dinners. 181 Orchard Road, #12-01 Orchard Central.
- [Whole Earth](#) is Singapore's only Peranakan-Thai vegetarian restaurant. It says it seeks to elevate the standard of plant-based cooking using fresh vegetables, legumes, mushrooms and grains. 76 Peck Seah Street.
- [Original Sin](#) offers a range of dishes that capture the essence of the Mediterranean vegetarian cuisines. #01-62, Blk 43 Jln Merah Saga, Chip Bee Gardens.
- [Ling Zhi Vegetarian](#), a vegetarian Chinese restaurant that has been around more than 30 years, has replaced its style of preparing vegetarian dishes with mock meats and shifted to a range of dishes that use premium and organic produce from specially contracted farms. Liat Towers #05-01, 541 Orchard Road.
- [Rang Mahal](#) offers authentic flavors from all the regions of India. Level 3, Pan Pacific Singapore, 7 Raffles Boulevard

Fine Dining (Vegetarian Set Menus)

- [Jaan](#) uses a seasonal philosophy to showcase innovative British dining in modern light, simple cuisine. Michelin [says](#) this two-star restaurant has it all – food, service, ambiance and spectacular views - and makes good use of top British produce and inspirations to turn out modern culinary creations. 2 Stamford Rd, Level 70, #70-01.
- [Saint Pierre](#) serves modern French cuisine with an Asian accent. Michelin [says](#) it offers modern French cuisine, underpinned by solid skills and characterized by Asian overtones that accentuate the natural flavors of premium produce. 1 Fullerton Road, #02-02B, One Fullerton.
- [Restaurant Jag](#) says its Vegetable Journey uses vegetables picked at their seasonal best and served in a variety of techniques. 41 Robertson Quay, 02-02.