

VEGETARIANISM

THE MEANS TO A MORE THOUGHTFUL, HEALTHIER END

TEXT BY TOM HAUGEN • PHOTOS BY SOUNEY

THERE EXISTS A COMMON MISCONCEPTION THAT VEGETARIANS ARE COMPRISED GENERALLY OF THE WEAK, EMACIATED, ULTRA-LIBERAL ILK, MOST OFTEN TOSSING A HACKY SACK AROUND WHILE DAYDREAMING ABOUT ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT AND SMOKING GREEN LEAFY PLANTS.

Thirty years ago this may have been more the rule than the exception, but in 2006, with more information and accessibility toward vegetarian foods and lifestyles, it's not uncommon to find people across all facets of life not eating animals. People of all ethnic backgrounds, political beliefs, ages, and backgrounds are making changes with what they eat. Even in action sports, where the general public considers the athletes to possess adolescent behavior well into their late 20's with little regard to their bodies, many athletes are taking their fitness and health into serious consideration. As a result more and more are opting for a simpler, less cruel diet.

Personally, this change toward simplicity happened 15 years ago at the inception of high school. The catalyst? Education. The more I read about how the meat industry works, how utterly inhumane the process of getting food to people's plates was, the more I knew I couldn't ever feel good about eating another animal. At that point it wasn't so much a decision as much as it felt like an obligation, as I became a compassionate and educated consumer.

But what started out strictly as an ethical idea soon began to have health benefits I didn't expect. In a very real sense, I felt better all the time; I had more energy, I seldom had stomach aches or felt uneasy after eating and I looked more trim. The transformation to a diet naturally lower in saturated fats and cholesterol and higher in vitamins, minerals and fiber ultimately left me feeling better all the time. I wouldn't go as far as to say it made me a better rider, but I certainly wasn't missing any time on my bike because the quarter pounder I had for lunch was making its second appearance.

'Isn't that hard?' That is the first question I get when people find out I'm a vegetarian. Not in 2006 it isn't. Most restaurants offer meat-less meals, and even chain stores sell meatless substitutes and have health food aisles. In 1998, when I first started traveling excessively, it wasn't easy. Unable to find any accommodating options, I was oftentimes relegated to eating side dishes when on the road. Now even Burger King has a veggie burger. The athlete tents at events that previously resembled White Castle's menu now offer veggie burgers and Clif Bars. People are becoming more aware.

And they should. Study after study has continuously shown that a poor diet is directly linked to numerous diseases and medical conditions. Spend your life eating steak and expect to find yourself in the company of defibrillators one day. Though it has taken much too long, people are finally starting to realize eating fruits and vegetables aid in a healthy body.

Of course I'm a little biased, but it's hard for me to fathom why more people aren't vegetarians. Every type of meat now has a vegetarian counterpart that tastes the same if not better (i.e. veggie chicken, bacon, turkey, etc.). The 'fake' meats are not only nutritionally better for you, but just as easy to find. Why would you eat bacon, a food so high in saturated fat and cholesterol, when you can eat vegetarian

bacon which tastes about the same and is low in fat, and high in protein? How can someone justify eating a hot dog, when a tofu dog tastes the same and isn't comprised of entrails and other questionable sources?

If you're involved in action sports now is a perfect time to think about a vegetarian change. ASEC (Action Sports Environmental Coalition), founded by pro skater Bob Burnquist, is heavily involved with catering events with healthy, vegetarian options. More and more people involved with action sports on every level are making changes with their diets every day and reaping the numerous benefits. Whether you're concerned with animal life or your own sense of well-being and self-preservation, I really can't think of something so simple that can yield such immeasurable effects. <SR>

FOR THOSE ON THE ROAD

BY JARED SOUNEY

In the past few years traveling as a vegetarian has gotten a lot easier, however, it still helps to do your research though before you go on a trip. Below are some of my "must hit" restaurants in different cities.

Buddha's Delight - Boston, MA (two locations)
Grasshopper - Allston/Brighton, MA
Cherry Street Vegetarian - Philadelphia, PA
Mother's Market - Orange County, CA (various locations)
Wheel of Life - Irvine, CA
Golden Era - San Francisco, CA
Herbivore - San Francisco, CA (two locations)
Veggie Heaven - Austin, TX
Bouldin Creek Cafe - Austin, TX

In addition, Whole Foods Markets and similar stores can be found in most major metropolitan areas, usually featuring a vast prepared foods section. A great resource for travelers is happycow.net. They have a fairly comprehensive listing of restaurants and stores broken down by cities and states, and is probably one of the best places to start your search.



THESE DAYS, **JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU CAN IMAGINE IS AVAILABLE IN A FAUX MEAT VARIETY**, INCLUDING EVERYTHING FROM JERKY TO BURGER PATTIES. THESE TASTY, HIGH-PROTEIN OPTIONS ARE USUALLY **MADE WITH TEXTURED VEGETABLE PROTEIN** IN PLACE OF ANIMAL PRODUCTS.

Suggested Reading:

John Robbins - Diet For A New America
 Peter Singer and Jim Mason - Animal Factories
 Tom Regan - The Case For Animal Rights

Information:

www.asecaction.org
www.happycow.net

TOM HAUGEN IS WITHOUT A DOUBT ONE OF THE MOST TECHNICALLY PROFICIENT AND DIALED BMX RIDERS THERE IS. **toothpick-to-barspins** ON A VERT RAMP AREN'T SOMETHING YOU'LL SEE MANY PEOPLE DOING, BUT HAUGEN HAS THEM ON LOCKDOWN. THE POWER OF THE VEGGIES PERHAPS?