



— This Picture Does Not Have Anything To Do With Vegetarianism

Even though Kate Starr, 25, thoroughly enjoyed the taste of meat, after being subjected to three separate cases of meat-related food poisoning, the SF State student decided to change to a vegetarian diet in order to live a healthier life.

According to Marcia Mogelonsky, financial analyst, in 2003, the vegetarian market in the U.S. rose 111.3 percent since 1998. Once thought of as another American fad, vegetarianism has become a mainstream and widely accepted way of life. And for various potential health risks such as heart disease, food poisoning, mad cow disease, and the most recent poultry bird flu, more Americans are flocking to what is perceived as a safe and healthy alternative – a vegetarian diet. A vegetarian, once thought of simply as one that avoids all meat by-products has become much more convoluted due to the various vegetarian subcategories. Out of vegetarianism sprung ovo-vegetarian (eats eggs), lacto-ovo vegetarian (eats dairy and eggs), lacto-vegetarian (eats dairy but no eggs), and vegan (eats plant sources only).

According to Teresa Leu, nutritionist at SF State, a healthy vegetarian diet is beneficial because it is generally lower in saturated fats contributing to a healthy weight thereby decreasing the chance of developing both heart disease and diabetes. Recently moving from the east coast to San Francisco, Starr noticed how much easier it is to find high-quality vegetarian meals at grocery stores and restaurants. This is partially due to the amount of vegetarians that reside in the west. A 2003 poll showed that at 4.2 percent, the western states have the highest amount of vegetarians. Even though vegetarianism is on the rise, according to information found in a survey produced in 2003 by the Vegetarian Resource Group, not all self-proclaimed vegetarians stop eating meat altogether. So in actuality, those who call themselves vegetarian are indeed only semi-vegetarians.

“I often have cravings for steak and a fatty cheeseburger, which up to now, I’ve been able to avoid. But I don’t know how long I will be able to abstain from some form of meat entirely, even though I feel healthier than ever before,” said Starr.

After seeing studies praising vegetarian diets, for eight years geography alumna Laurel Poeton, 28, was a lacto-ovo vegetarian, thinking that a vegetarian diet would be beneficial to her health. However, over the years, she noticed some adverse reactions. “I try to listen to my body and it was constantly telling me that I needed to eat meat. Besides the cravings indicating this fact, I noticed that my normal energy levels seriously declined. So I started eating meat again (although to a lesser extent), and I haven’t looked back,” said Poeton while ordering a chicken salad from the Gold Coast Grill in the Cesar Chavez Student Center.

Without the consumption of meat products, vegetarians may fail to obtain nutrients such as iron, vitamins D and B12, calcium, zinc and protein, making vegetarianism not a healthy lifestyle option. According to Leu, not all vegetarians are healthy, because they often eat high amounts of cheese (a food high in saturated fat), in the place of meat, and they avoid consuming legumes which are found in beans and nuts, but are often overlooked because beans causes gas and nuts are high in fat. “A student can be healthy on a vegetarian diet, but it does take more time, which many students do not have,” said Leu.

For student’s on-campus, there are various vegetarian options available with many foods and drinks accommodating to vegetarians. In response to vegetarian diets, Ortiz Vicente, employee at Gold Coast Grill said, “If you ask, we can make it, no problem.”

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Alameda County
00000 East 100th Street
Alameda, CA 94578
TEL: 510.000.0000
Fax: 510.000.0000