VEGETARIAN **NUTRITION** BOOKLET

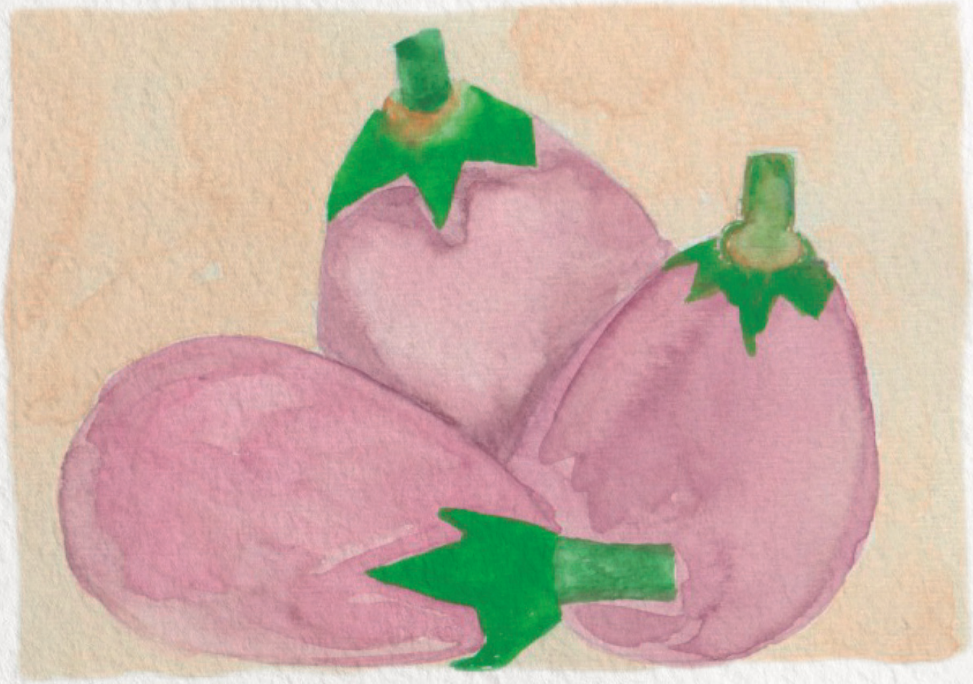
A dietary approach to **VEGETARIANISM** for kids and adolescents

The **intention** of this booklet is to **present** to you a **healthy vegan diet**.

Have you ever heard of veganism before?
Are you a vegan?
Do you know any vegans?
How about we start from the beginning?

Here's a video on the booklet

This resource contains information to help educate kids and adolescents about a vegan diet. It could be useful in teaching facilities as well as home and family environments. Its purpose is to serve as a guide to those who already chose a vegan lifestyle, to those who are interested in it and also to broaden inclusive vegan environments. Veganism is growing worldwide and although it is a lot more than a diet, here we will focus on the yummy food and nutritional quality part.



WHAT IS **VEGANISM**?

Veganism is a way of living.

Although it encompasses clothing, cosmetics, entertainment and other areas, here we will talk about food.

The vegan diet is the same as the strict vegetarian diet. It contains no animal-sourced products – no meat, no chicken, no eggs, no dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese, heavy cream and products containing these ingredients), no honey.

The International Vegetarian Union (IVU) states that this diet is an excellent way to benefit animals, people and the environment.

And don't worry about missing out on any of the foods that aren't included in this diet. As you will see ahead, there are many ways to substitute them.

WHAT IS **VEGETARIANISM**?

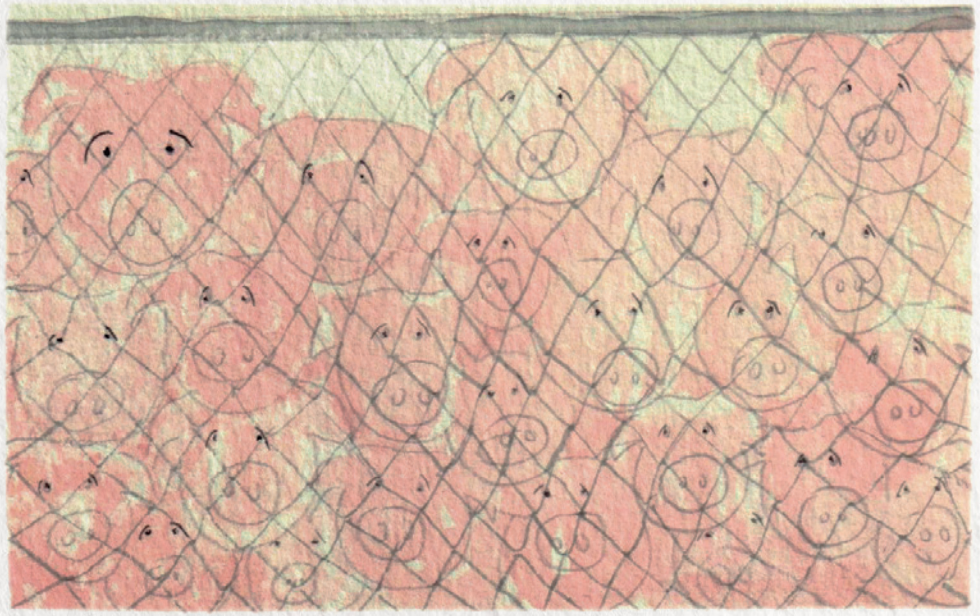
Vegetarianism represents those who opt to exclude absolutely any type any type of animal meat (this includes gelatin too, which is a product from boiled skin, tendons, and bones) from their plate.
Vegetarians may or may not include eggs, dairy and honey in their diet.

Ovo-lacto vegetarians
Consume eggs, milk and dairy products.

Lactovegetarians
Do not consume eggs, but do consume milk and dairy products.

Ovovegetarians
Do not consume milk and dairy products, but do consume eggs.

Strict vegetarian
As mentioned above, don't consume any animal-sourced products.



WHAT IS **WHOLE FOOD PLANT-BASED DIET**?

Whole food plant-based diet is the full name for what is also known as plant-based diet. This term was created to differentiate a healthy from an unhealthy strict vegetarian diet. It's also used by the industry to define food products that are made only from (edible) plants. These highly processed industrialized foods are not necessarily healthy so shouldn't be eaten too frequently.

WHY DO PEOPLE CHOOSE TO **STOP EATING MEAT**, **EGGS** AND **DAIRY**?

There are many reasons to make this decision.
Here we will discuss the 3 most frequent ones.

For **having better health**

A balanced vegan diet is naturally richer in fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals (all elements that are good for your body and helps maintain it's health), as well as lower in saturated fats and cholesterol (elements that are more difficult for the body to process). The only nutrient that needs to be supplemented is vitamin B12 – but this is not exclusive to vegans!

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics state that appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes.

And more recently, the World Health Organization classified processed meat as a type 1 carcinogen, which means that these meats are capable of causing cancer, and other red meat is also probably carcinogenic.

Having better health means having more energy to play, study and work, besides reducing risk for some diseases like type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer, obesity, and heart disease.

It is never too early to create healthy lifelong habits.

For **love for the animals**

Have you ever asked yourself:

Why do we treat cows differently than dogs?

Did you know that cows love to play with balls?

Why is it okay to eat pigs and not cats?

Did you know that pigs love to snuggle and are extremely smart?

Why eat fish from the ocean, but not the ones that become pets in tanks at home?

Why are salmon considered food, but dolphins not (in most parts of the world)?

What differentiates one animal from another?

Baby cows are separated from their moms just a few hours after birth so that the milk that would naturally go to them goes to humans instead.

Chickens are forced to produce as many eggs as possible, also for human consumption.

The procedure in chicken farms is to leave the chickens exposed to direct sun or artificial light most of day and night so they can produce eggs continuously for humans.

Therefore, some people believe that it is not fair to use animals for self-benefit and that is why they choose not to eat or use anything that comes from them

To **protect the planet**

Much of the land and water on Earth is being used for the animals. They need a place to live and also enough land to plant foods for them to eat. So our biggest (and smallest) forests are being destroyed to open clearings for these purposes.

Here is the catch; there are more than 7 billion people on Earth. Each year, approximately 70 billion land animals are killed to become food. This number would, at least, double if we were to add water animals.

It would make more sense to plant and feed humans directly instead of using animals as nutrient "crossovers", as it is stated in the IVU's Guide to Vegan Nutrition for Adults.

Humans do not need meat to be healthy, so the use of this land to plant foods directly for humans would be more productive and healthy for all – including the planet.

WHERE **TO START**?

You don't need to follow any specific order, but it is interesting to apply these tips to your life. You can learn something new, see on the list below what you already do and incorporate what you like into your routine.

The process of learning something new requires different tests and trials until you find what is comfortable for you. And it's always important to keep an open (non-judgmental) mind.

1. **Respect one another.** If you know that a person is vegan, don't offer them foods that contain animal products in it.

2. **Eat more plant-based natural foods.** Eat less meat, chicken, fish, dairy and eggs products.

3. **Try Meatless Monday.** A worldwide movement where no meat, eggs or dairy is eaten on Mondays – or another day of the week if that works better for you.

4. **Go to the supermarket, farm or street markets.** Look at the variety, color and texture of the different foods you find. Familiarize yourself with the names. Feel the different smells and textures.

5. **Try different foods.** May it be fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, grains. Find different recipes on the Internet or books or use your creativity. Open yourself to new tastes and textures.

6. **Don't give up if you don't like it at first.** Try again! On a different day, with different people, in a different dish.

7. **Read more about the subject.** In this document you will find a list of books that are adequate for children and adolescents. There is also a list on books and guides more adequate for older teenagers and adults.

HOW TO MAKE A **POWERFUL PLATE**

Think of eating colorful foods like a rainbow.

Your diet must include whole grains, legumes, nuts and/or seeds, vegetables and fruits. These food groups, in adequate amounts, guarantee the necessary nutritional balance for growing healthy and strong.

A good measure to know the adequate amount of each food group is to divide the plate in half and one of the sides in half again. This way your plate will have 3 imaginary compartments as shown in **Figure 1.**

In one of the smaller compartments you should put whole grains and/or potatoes and in the other smaller compartment, legumes.

Half of the plate should be filled with cooked and raw vegetables and you could also add some fruits and/or seeds/nuts.

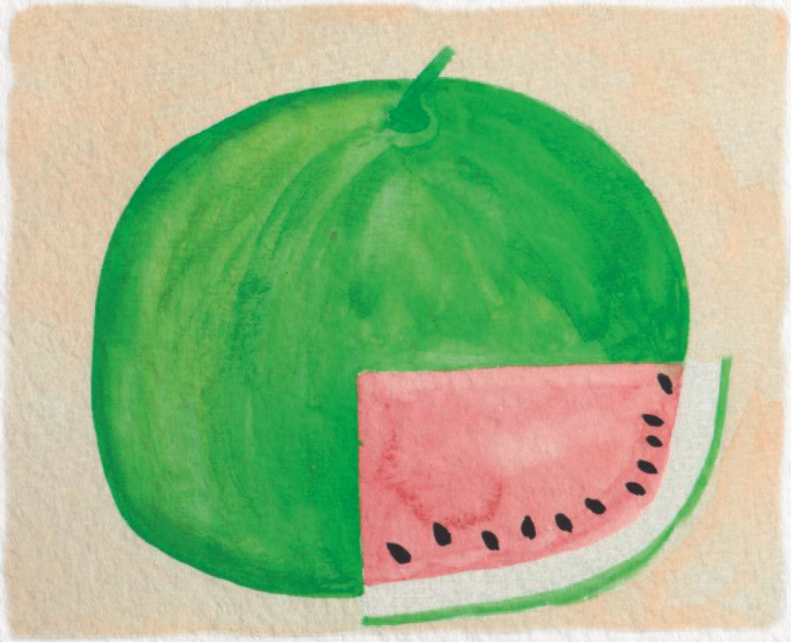
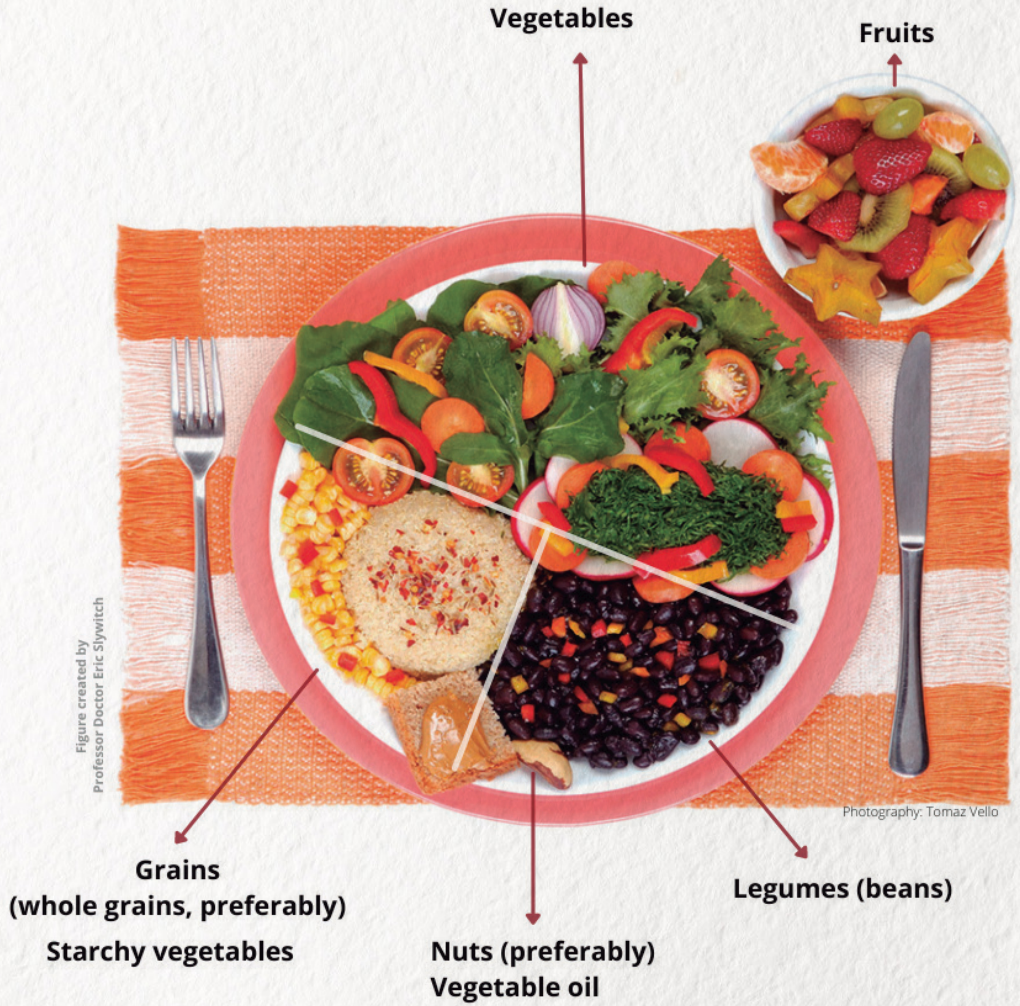


Figure 1. Construction of a vegan meal



Importantly, this arrangement does not imply the need to eat the amount of food pictured because the meal in the photo contains approximately 750-kcal. What matters is to organize main meals based on the **proportion of the food groups** as shown in **Figure 1.** At the next page, **Figure 2** shows possible substitutions within each food group.

Figure 2. Food substitutions within each food group

If you need more calories for specific reasons, you can divide your plate in 3 equal compartments in which 1/3 will be with whole grains and/or potatoes, another 1/3 would be filled with legumes and the other 1/3 with cooked and raw vegetables and you could also mix these with some fruits and/or seeds/ nuts.

Whole grains
- Brown / black / red / wild rice, quinoa, oats, corn, barley, wheat.
- Refined grains and sugars should be minimally consumed (candies, cookies, ice cream, cakes…).

Legumes
- Beans, lentils, chickpeas, soy, peas, and foods derived from these legumes such as tofu, seitan, tempeh, hummus.

Nuts and seeds
- Almonds, cashews, Brazilian nuts, walnuts, pistachio, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, chia seeds, flaxseeds, sesame seeds, hemp seeds.
- Peanut is a legume, but within a nutritional classification it is considered a nut because of its high fat content.

Vegetables
The variety of this food group is immense. The different combinations and preparations that could be made are never ending. That is why it is difficult for one not to like any vegetables.
- **Dark green vegetables** are important sources of calcium. Except spinach, Swiss chard and beet greens because the body does not easily absorb the calcium in these 3 vegetables.
- **Orange vegetables** – carrots, pumpkin, orange tomatoes, orange pepper
- **Red vegetables** – tomatoes, red pepper
- **Purple vegetables** – purple cabbage, red onions

Fruits
The variety of this food group is also immense and it could change so much from one place to another depending on climate and culture.
- Mango, banana, watermelon, apple, orange, jackfruit, grape, strowberry and pineapple are just some examples.

These food groups have important nutrients to maintain the human body functioning properly. And some of these nutrients deserve special attention.

*__Mushrooms__ are fungi – not animals – which means they could be part of any vegetarian diet. Nutritionally, they fit better in the vegetables category.

IMPORTANT **NUTRIENTS**

Protein: Every cell in the human body contains protein, even your hair! Part of its' job is to repair cells and make new ones.
Legumes are the most important source of protein in a vegan diet and you should know that the protein from plants has the same effect as protein from animals.
Plant sources that contain protein: legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains.

Calcium: The body uses calcium to form and maintain the bones and also for muscle contraction, so every time your heart beats and you walk, calcium is used.
Plant sources that contain calcium: legumes, dark leafy greens, sesame seeds and tahini, legumes and fortified foods like vegetable milk.

Iron: Very abundant in nature. Every blood cell in our body uses iron to spread oxygen and nutrients to all the other cells.
Plant sources: Legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains.

Vitamin C (abundant in fresh fruits and vegetables) helps increase iron absorption. So vitamin C food sources should be consumed in meals that have iron. It could be part of the meal, like fruit in the salad or as a dessert.

Vitamin B12: It participates in the formation of every blood cell and it is also part of the nervous system.
Plant sources: Vegan fortified foods or drinks and supplements.
Vegans usually have to supplement this vitamin.

Omega 3 fatty acids: Important for children in development; is has an anti-inflammatory effect and many other functions in the body.
Plant sources: flaxseed, chia seeds, walnuts, hemp seeds.

VEGAN COOKING **SUBSTITUTES**

Keep in mind that when substituting, you will get the same result in aspect and texture, but nutritional value and/or taste might not be the same.

Eggs
Aquafaba, applesauce, pureed soft tofu, egg replacer, flax seed *(1 tablespoon ground flax seeds plus 3 tablespoons water or other liquid, blended),* chia seeds or mashed bananas.

Milk
Any plant-based milk measure for measure. Examples: soymilk, rice milk, oat milk, hemp milk, or nut milk.

Honey
Molasses or maple syrup.

Gelatin
Agar flakes or powder.

FOODS THAT MAY BE **NEW TO YOU**

Aquafaba
Water from cooked or canned chickpeas. Substitutes egg whites in preparations.

Chia seed
Very small, black and round. Mild taste. Crunchy if used dried, soggy if used soaked or with humid foods. Source of protein, omega 3 fatty acids, fiber, calcium, iron.

Chickpea powder
Chickpeas, also called garbanzo beans, are very versatile. The powder is commonly used to make pancakes, pies, coat vegetables.

Jackfruit
Fruit that, when cooked while still green, is very similar to chicken.

Miso
Salty fermented soybean paste. Commonly used in soups and sauces.

Nutritional Yeast
yellow and flaky with a cheesy flavor. Commonly used in cheese flavor preparations or even as a topping on salads and pasta.

Plant milks (almond, cashew, hemp, oat, peanut, rice, soy, etc)
"Milk" extracted from different foods, instead of cows, sheep or buffalos. They have a similar appearance, but are not nutritionally similar to animal milk. Could be homemade, especially if intended for recipes, but it is ideal to use the calcium fortified store version.

Quinoa
Small round seeds, available in 3 colors – white, red, black. Cooks very fast and has similar use of the rice.

Seitan
Known as "wheat-meat" because of its meaty texture and flavor.

Tahini
Sesame seed butter. Can be made from white or black sesame. Has a nutty, intense flavor.

Tempeh
Traditionally it is a fermented soy product, but it could be made with any legume. Consumed in preparations or just grilled.

Textured vegetable protein *(TVP)*
Soy product, has similar culinary use of ground meat.

Tofu
Also known as soybean cheese. Its' bland flavor helps it absorb whatever flavor is added to it.

WHERE TO FIND **MORE INFORMATION** ON VEGANISM

- *Guide to Vegan Nutrition for Adults*
  International Vegetarian Union
  (available in English and Portuguese)

BOOKS FOR **OLDER TEENAGERS** AND **ADULTS**

- *Becoming Vegan* (Brenda Davis and Vesanto Melina)
- *How Not do Die* (Michael Greger)
- *The China Study* (T. Colin Campbell and Thomas M. Campbell II)
- *Vegan Reset* (Kim-Julie Hansen)
- *Why we love dogs, eat pigs and wear cows* (Melanie Joy)

BOOKS AND SHOW FOR **CHILDREN** AND **ADOLESCENTS**

- *Do Animals Have Feelings?* (David L. Rice)
- *Herb the Vegetarian Dragon* (Jules Bass)
- *Linus the Vegetarian T. Rex* (Robert Neubecker)
- *No Green Eggs or Ham* (Flora Lee)
- *That's Why We Don't Eat Animals* (Ruby Roth)
- *The Smart Parent's Guide to Raising Vegan Kids: Lessons for Littles in Plant-Based Eating and Compassionate Living* (Eric C. Lindstrom)
- *Valen's Happy Birthday* (Flora Lee)
- *So Many Cooks* (bimonthly kids show: bit.ly/SMKKyouTube)

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