

The Register-Guard

Cooking

Vegan Nation

Plant-based diets are becoming a larger part
of the U.S. food landscape

By **Cheryl Rade**

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“It’s about seeing the interconnectedness between our eating habits and how it affects the world.” — *Lin Silvan, Eugene Veg Education Network co-founder and executive director*

Veganism has come a long way in recent years. Once touted as a fringe dietary regime, it is fast becoming a mainstream lifestyle. Everyone from soccer moms to kindergarten teachers to former presidents are choosing a vegan path. Furthermore, vegan cookbooks are best sellers, many eateries offer meatless menus, and supermarkets are filled with vegan food products. In other words, it's a great time to go vegan.

So what does it mean to be vegan? For the most part, it means embracing a whole foods, plant-based diet (no animals and animal products, including eggs, dairy or honey) and refraining from wearing wool, silk or leather.

“Veganism is a lifestyle,” explains **Lin Silvan**, co-founder and executive director of **Eugene Veg Education Network**, also known as EVEN, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing information on the benefits of veganism. “It’s certainly about eating a plant-based diet, but there are so many other aspects.”

Some of those aspects, she says, involve having compassion for ourselves, as well as for animals and the planet.

“It’s about seeing the interconnectedness between our eating habits and how it affects the world ... It’s not about being perfect, but it is about making the most compassionate choices you can make at any given time.”

Silvan, a retired corporate trainer, adopted a vegan lifestyle more than 20 years ago along with her husband, **Robert Jacobucci**, a retired physicist and co-founder of EVEN. She notes that EVEN came about after she and Robert moved to Eugene in 2002 and learned there were no local organizations geared toward vegetarians and vegans. Eager to fill the void, they decided to establish their own resource group.

“We’ve been an official nonprofit since 2005, and we celebrated our 10th year in March 2015,” Silvan says proudly, noting the importance of being a resource for people who choose a vegan lifestyle.

“Being vegan is about being kind and helpful,” she continues. “It’s a win/win situation for everybody — for the animals, the planet and individuals who want to regain their health.”

Regarding the latter, my household recently started experiencing the effects of veganism when my husband, **David Rade**, embarked on a vegan diet last February. At 6-foot-2 and with his weight wavering near 300 pounds, he believed a plant-based diet would improve his mental and physical well-being.

“My purpose was to have more nutrients in my body and eat less things that can harm my body,” Rade says. “I’ve lost at least 30 pounds, but for me, it’s not about weight loss. I see weight loss as kind of a side effect of doing the right thing.”

Rade says his daily intake consists primarily of fresh vegetables (both raw and cooked) and fresh fruits, as well as lots of beans and brown rice. He avoids oil (too much fat and calories) and salt, along with processed foods like sugar and white flour. “My practice is that whatever food you put in your mouth, you should make it the highest quality you can find,” he said, noting that he always purchases organic produce whenever possible.

Going vegan, Rade said, has introduced him to new methods of cooking — sautéing with water instead of oil being one of them. Furthermore, he’s found an array of vegan dishes including cashew “cheese” sauce, tofu sour cream and ice cream made from frozen bananas.

“I think I eat a large variety of foods with excellent flavor,” Rade said. “My body has changed in the way that I carry myself and I’m more energetic and clearer thinking. ... At 62, I want the best health possible.”

Recipes

Chocolate-Peanut Butter Brownies

- 1-1/2 cups packed brown sugar
- 1 16-ounce jar creamy peanut butter, divided
- 3/4 cup margarine, melted and divided
- Egg replacer, equivalent to 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup silken tofu, puréed
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup dark chocolate chips
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 2-1/2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 3 tablespoons soy milk (more if needed)

Lightly oil a 9-by-13-inch baking pan and preheat oven to 350.

In a medium bowl, mix the brown sugar, 1 1/4 cups of the peanut butter and 1/2 cup of the margarine until smooth. Beat in the egg replacer, tofu and half of the vanilla until smooth.

In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Mix into peanut butter mixture and fold in the dark chocolate chips. Pour into prepared pan and bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the brownies start to pull away from the sides. Cool on a wire rack.

In a large bowl, combine the remaining peanut butter, remaining margarine, powdered sugar, cocoa powder, vanilla and soy milk. Beat until smooth. Stir in more soy milk until the frosting reaches spreading consistency. Spread over brownies.

Yield: 2 dozen

— *Recipe courtesy of eugeneveg.org*

Hash Brown Casserole

- 1 pound frozen hash browns, thawed
- 1/2 pound vegan sausage, crumbled
- 5 tablespoons margarine, divided
- 6 green onions, sliced
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 3/4 cup vegetable broth
- 3 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 1 tablespoon oregano
- 3/4 cup soy milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup soft bread crumbs

Lightly oil a casserole dish and preheat oven to 400 degrees. Gently toss the hash browns and vegan sausage together and place in a casserole dish.

In a saucepan over medium/low heat, melt 4 tablespoons of the margarine and sauté the green onions for 1 minute. Whisk in the flour, creating a roux, and cook for 1 minute or until browned. Gradually whisk in the broth, nutritional yeast, oregano and soy milk. Cook, stirring constantly until thickened (the sauce shouldn't

be too thick). Season with salt and pepper and pour over the hash browns/vegan sausage mixture.

In a small bowl, melt the remaining 1 tablespoon margarine and toss with the bread crumbs. Sprinkle over casserole and bake for 45 to 55 minutes or until the top is browned.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

— *Recipe courtesy of eugeneveg.org*

Rice, Bean and Kale Bowl With Lemon/Dill Tahini

- 1 can black beans
- 1 cup tahini or hummus
- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh dill
- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 1 bunch kale, steamed
- 1 teaspoon vegan Parmesan (optional)

Heat the black beans in a medium saucepan on medium heat. Mix tahini, lemon juice and dill together until the consistency resembles dressing.

Layer the brown rice, black beans and steamed kale in a bowl and top with the tahini dressing. Sprinkle with vegan Parmesan if desired.

Yield: 1 to 2 servings

— *Recipe courtesy of eugeneveg.org*

Cashew Cheese Sauce

- 1 cup raw cashews
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons water
- 1 medium red bell pepper (ribs and seeds removed), diced
- 3 large garlic cloves
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1/3 cup nutritional yeast flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika or chili powder

In a small bowl, combine cashews and 1 cup water. Set aside to soak for 6 hours or overnight.

Drain off soaking water, rinse cashews and drain again. In a blender, place bell pepper, garlic and lemon juice, and process for 1 minute. Scrape down sides of blender with a spatula and process for 1 more minute or until smooth.

Add cashews, remaining 2 tablespoons water, nutritional yeast flakes, sea salt, cayenne pepper and smoked paprika, and process for 1 minute. Scrape down sides with a spatula and process for 1 additional minute or until smooth.

— *Recipe courtesy of David Rade*

Tofu Sour Cream

- 1 12-ounce package silken tofu
- 2 to 4 ounces lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon distilled vinegar
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard powder
- Agave nectar
- Granulated garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried or fresh dill (optional)

In a blender, combine tofu with lemon juice, vinegar, salt, mustard powder, a few drops of agave nectar and a dash of granulated garlic powder. Blend until smooth and creamy. Taste and add more lemon juice and/or nectar if desired. Stir in dill (optional).

— *Recipe courtesy of David Rade*

Banana Ice Cream

- 2 frozen bananas (cut into small chunks)
- 1/4 cup nondairy milk
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

In a blender, place all ingredients and blend until mixture is smooth and creamy. Serve with fresh fruit if desired.

For a chocolate version, add 1 to 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa to the mixture.

— *Recipe courtesy of David Rade*

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