

# The Vegan Life

I'm a bit of a hypocrite. I admit it. I'm not a vegan, though usually my recipe searches use that adjective mostly because I don't really like to use applesauce or mix up egg replacer. The other day I made a comment on Facebook that pointed out that a vegetarian product someone was raving about included eggs. Somehow I've never understood how someone can be a vegetarian and eat eggs, though I do know this type of diet exists. Some people seemed to be upset by what they must have interpreted as my saying they are not true vegetarians. That wasn't my point at all. I was really just feeling sorry for myself that I am unable to try the product they were touting.

But sometimes the table is turned. Like when I went out to eat in Colorado last week. Wow! Colorado loves vegetarians! We had "veggie wings" – O.M.G.!!!! Pieces of seitan in a bowl with optional sauce. Wow!! There is a glimmer that I'm just like everyone else!

Actually, it surprises me that our society, our nation, our world, still consumes so much meat. It doesn't make sense on so many levels: health risks, implications of world hunger, not to mention that terrible lives that processed animals must endure. It is especially surprising to me considering how many yummy, nutritious, wholesome vegetarian options there are out there in the world. As I've been experimenting with some new recipes lately, I see that there are even more possibilities for variations to meat. I've been really impressed with creamy gratin alternative recipes I've found. Making comfort food from whole foods is one of my favorite things, especially when I cook that comfort for others. It isn't about tricking the eater, I'm not looking for a meat-alternate. I want people who eat my food to know they are eating whole, fresh food that keeps their stomach full and mouth happy.

Vegetables and fruits provide so many nutritional benefits. My

recommendation is to aim to make your diet as whole as possible. I saw a meme the other day: "Love your body. Eat whole foods." I can absolutely relate to that!

Whether it is a lacto-ovo vegetarian frozen product at the store or yummy veggie wings at an awesome brewery, these products are made to ensure we have some extra protein, needed fiber, and of course good flavor. So long as we eat them in moderation, I think they are a wonderful addition to our grocery stores and menus.

I think as a society if we can get past vegetarians being seen as wanting to eat something that looks like meat, it would help open minds of those who think it is unhealthy to not eat meat (cancer prognosis be damned!). But in the meantime, let's give some love to the chick'n nuggets and seitan wings out there, and encourage more restaurants and grocery stores to help support the market. The more money that goes into the industry, the better the products. I, for one, would like to see way lower sodium levels and fewer additives in future products. But for now, I eat these items like everything else not whole... in moderation.

#lovetheveganlife