

What Are Humans Designed to Eat?

by Delisa Renideo

It's a surprise to many of us to discover that a plant-based diet is actually more health promoting for humans than a meat-based diet.

We have grown up with images of early human "savages" eating animals and assume that is our natural diet. But if we were designed to eat meat, why would a plant-based diet support optimal



health while reducing the incidence of cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis and diabetes?

First of all, let me say that I recognize that humans have eaten both plants and animals for a long time, and fortunately for us, we have been able to adapt to a wide variety of whatever kinds of foods were available. The fact that we have large numbers of humans now subsisting on soda pop, French fries, chips, ice cream and candy attests to the fact that humans are able to survive, for awhile at least, on almost anything! But that doesn't mean it will support long term health, as our current sad state of health in the U.S. demonstrates.

Dr. Milton Mills has thoroughly researched the comparative anatomy of natural carnivores, (exclusive meat eaters), omnivores, (eating both meat and plants), herbivores, (exclusive plant eaters) and humans. I will summarize the main points here, but I encourage you to read the entire article at http://www.vegsource.com/veg_faq/anatomy.pdf.

There are many very distinct differences between the anatomy of meat eaters and plant eaters. Meat eaters have jaws designed to open very wide (look at your dog or cat and try to open your mouth that wide!) and teeth designed to tear flesh. They have large, sharp, pointed canines and short, sharp teeth in the rest of their mouths for shearing the flesh. They don't chew

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their food up; they rip off a large chunk and swallow it whole. When humans swallow a large

piece of meat whole, they generally need someone handy to perform the Heimlich maneuver to prevent them from choking to death!

see ***Designed to Eat***, continued on page 4

Can Vegans Be Successful Athletes?

by Toni Faubion-Truesdell

Who says you have to eat meat to be a successful athlete? Many notable athletes have dispelled this myth and are now among medalled Olympians and renowned sports figures.

Today we have the testimonies as well as the stats to substantiate the benefits of a plant-based diet.



Martina Navratilova

Dave Scott, considered to be the world's greatest triathlete states, "It's a ridiculous fallacy to think that athletes need animal protein." Two other Olympians concur, **Edwin Moses**, the gold medallist who won 8 years in a row in the 400-meter hurdle competition and **Murray Rose**, who at 17 years of age won 3 gold medals in the Olympic Swim Competition.

Olympic champion, **Carl Lewis**, won 10 Olympic medals, 9 golds and 10 World Championship medals, of which 8 were gold. Lewis retired in 1996 from track and field competitions. He held world rankings in the 100 meter and 200 meter sprints as well as long jump events. Lewis was named "Sportsman of the Century" by the International Olympic Committee and "Olympian of the Century" by Sports Illustrated. He attributed his success to the plant-based diet

he adopted in 1990. Lewis stated that, "My best year of track competition was the first year I ate a vegan diet." (http://www.wikipedia.org/carl_lewis)

Not only Olympians but also numerous athletes have adopted a plant-based diet to improve their performance in their chosen sport. To follow are but a few:

- **Peter Burwash**, Davis Cup Winner and professional tennis star
- **Nicky Cole**, first woman to walk to the North Pole
- **Desmond Howard**, professional football star, Heisman trophy winner
- **Ruth Heidrich**, six-time Ironwoman, USA track and field Master's champion
- **Martina Navratilova**, champion tennis player
- **Bill Pearl**, four-time Mr. Universe
- **Stan Price**, world weightlifting record holder, bench press
- **Scott Jurek**, World Class Ultra Marathoner
- **Cheryl Marek and Estell Gray**, world record holders, cross-country tandem cycling

(To research a list of such athletes see www.veganathletes.com.)

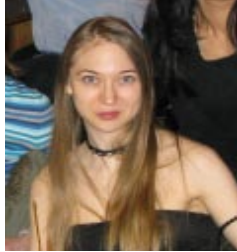
The greatest concern athletes voice is their need for protein to fuel their bodies and remain competitive. Old school thinking has taught that protein derived from *see **Vegan Athletes**, continued on page 6*

WHY I BECAME VEGAN

Michelle Scaman

This has to end, I thought. After nine dedicated years of being an herbivore, I realized I can no longer be a vegetarian. Instead, I realized, I need to be a vegan.

This shift in thought occurred one day very suddenly, taking me by surprise. I've always admired veggie diets, regardless of motive. Some people do it for health reasons, others for ethical, and many for both. I'd seen hours upon hours of propaganda footage; those animal snuff films. I'd seen leaflets, I'd been plied with reasons why one might want to be dairy and egg free.



Yet, I hadn't taken the leap. Why, I wondered did it take me so long? A year and a half later the answer still remains a mystery. I was too content, perhaps, and needed

an extra push. I began to realize the interconnection of factory meat farms and those same types of industries that also relied on animal products for profit. Profiting from animal suffering is not only limited to the mass marketing of flesh but also egg laying hens and milk producing cows. I sometimes joke with friends that there are no good retirement plans for senior cows or chickens. They all end up in the same place where we veggies hope they are spared from.

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Although my impetus is for ethical reasons, the health benefits cannot be denied. In an age where many get their nutrition in the drive through and ailments such as high blood pressure and heart disease are on the rise, this seems like a simple remedy. I knew some of my family members would be concerned, however, thinking on the contrary. They have fallen into the same myth that I had before my leap. This notion that one must eat certain animal products for nutrients or they will wither and die. So I made my family a meal one day and they barely seemed to notice the absence of what they thought were integral parts of a meal. But only time would convince them that I would

not suffer from malnutrition; that I would not be hospitalized because I lacked protein; my bones would not be brittle and crack when we hugged. Now they finally believe

me and reject the many myths surrounding this lifestyle. And they too seem to contemplate why they haven't yet embraced a plant based diet. I hope someday soon others will wake one day and think, this has to end.

Would You Like Your Story Here?

Every month we put someone's story of how they became vegan in the newsletter. Please call Delisa, 373-1526, if you are interested.

Designed to Eat, *continued from the front page*

Plant eaters have flat molars designed for grinding food before swallowing, and jaws that move both front to back and side to side for chewing. Meat eaters have jaws that only move up and down, which allow them to bite their prey and shear off a chunk of flesh.

Meat eaters have no digestive enzymes in their saliva because they don't chew their

And then there is the "yuck factor." How many humans would salivate at the sight of road kill?

food. Instead, they secrete very powerful hydrochloric acid in their stomachs and their gastric pH level is

only 1-2, which allows them to break down the protein in the meat and kill all the dangerous bacteria in the decaying flesh they are ingesting. Plant eaters chew their food thoroughly to break down the cell membranes and produce a salivary enzyme called amylase, which begins the digestion of carbohydrates. The gastric pH level in plant eaters is about 4-5, which isn't acidic enough to prevent them from getting sick from eating bacteria-ridden decaying flesh. If humans had the stomach acid of a carnivore, we wouldn't have to worry about e coli and salmonella!

The intestines of meat eaters are also extremely different from plant eaters. Carnivores have a very short small intestine, only 3 – 6 times their body length, whereas plant eaters have long, convoluted small intestines that are 10 – 12 times their body length, which allows the time and space for the slower absorption of the nutrients in fiber-rich plant foods. The co-

lon of a meat eater is very short and smooth and about the same diameter as the small intestine. Wastes are eliminated very quickly. The colon of plant eaters is much longer and often has pouches or sacs and is a larger diameter than the small intestine allowing for the fibrous residue of plants.

Omnivores, such as bears, basically have the anatomy of carnivores, with some small adaptations that allow them to chew and digest plants as well as meat.

Humans, like other plant eaters, have teeth designed for chewing and grinding, short, blunt canines, and amylase in our saliva for digesting carbohydrates. We also have the gastric pH level of 4-5, as other plant eaters do, and long, convoluted intestines for handling the more complicated digestion of fibrous plants.

Humans lack the sharp claws and powerful jaws of animals designed to kill other animals. Instead, our hands have the dexterity to pick fruits and leaves from trees.

And then there is the "yuck factor." How many humans would salivate at the sight of road kill?

All in all, the evidence is convincing that we are designed to eat plants, even though we have obviously been able to survive on meat when necessary. Since we now have a choice what to eat, why not nourish ourselves with the kinds of foods that provide optimal nutrition for our human needs?



One of the Family

by Rae Sikora

When Lora was a baby, she became separated from her mother, and was raised by a family in Northern Scotland. She and a young girl in the family, named Rowena, soon became best friends. Lora spent most of her time with Rowena and liked to rest in her lap when the family was relaxing together at home.



It rains often in Scotland and Lora quickly learned to dry herself off before coming in the house, so as not to track in water. She loved to help with everything around the house, including bringing in the mail from the mail carrier. A natural musician, Lora sang and was accomplished on the trumpet, xylophone and mouth organ. It wasn't very long after she learned to play the trumpet that she was able to play a perfect rendition of the song "Danny Boy" on it. At her first professional public performance, Lora played a variety of songs on the xylophone and ended with the national anthem. She was still very young.

Lora is a Harbor or Common seal who was washed away from her mother during a storm. The orphaned baby was adopted by Rowena Farre's family. Lora was more easily house trained than a dog, and would even pull a raincoat onto the floor in the entry and sit on it until she was dry, after which she could enter the house without making a mess. After years

with Rowena's family, Lora mysteriously disappeared in the waters near their home. Rowena says she lost the closest and most intelligent friend she ever had.

I thought about Lora when I was doing research this week on the Canadian seal hunt. We use words like "hunt" or "harvest" to soften the reality of killing other species. The seals are not running or hiding from the sealers and do not need to be hunted to be killed. They are there in the wide open as the sealers approach them. The true story of Lora the seal gets our attention because she can perform human tasks. Her intelligence is obvious to us because she is doing things that we can relate to. While intelligence is not a measure of worth, we often judge other species using the human intelligence yard stick. Many of



the sealers leave a day of killing and skinning seals to return home to their companion dog who is part of the family. A

group of veterinarians researched the Canadian seal hunt and found that over 40 percent of the seals were being skinned while still conscious. The sealers would not do this to their dogs.

If we substituted dogs for the seal hunt scenario it would upset most people and they would act to oppose it. These same people are often not moved to action to protect seals. In China, slaughtering and skinning dogs and cats see ***One of the Family***, cont'd on page 7

Vegan Athletes, continued from page 2:
 animal sources was imperative for the serious athlete to achieve. How else could they grow strong, muscular bodies without meat?

One look at the animal kingdom can give us the answer. Some of our largest land mammals derive all of their protein from plants. Who can dispute the strength and endurance of a horse at full gallop? From elephants to hippos and camels to cows, it's obvious that a plant-based diet is sufficient for these creatures to thrive.



Brendan Brazier

Ruth Heidrich, Ph.D. is a six-time Ironwoman triathlon finisher. She holds more than 900 gold medals from 100-meter dashes to 5K road races, to ultra marathons and triathlons. What sets her apart from other athletes is her incredible victory over breast cancer. At 47 she underwent

surgery to have a malignant lump removed. Further testing showed that the cancer had spread to her bones and lungs. Hendrich chose a most unconventional mode of treatment. Instead of the standard chemo or radiation, she instead adopted a plant-based diet. Heidrich is now 73 and still runs. She has never undergone any type of standard cancer treatment and has remained cancer free. "My body actually encapsulated the lesion in my lung," she said. "It's great what your body can do with the right type of nutrition." (www.ruthheidrich.com)

Leading nutritionist Dr. Doug Graham, who has trained many Olympic caliber athletes, explains: "Every nutrient known to be essential for human health is available, in proper concentration, in plant foods. This is not so with

animal-based foods, as there are many nutrients totally absent in them."

The science of vegan nutrition has become mainstream. Athletes have seen with their own eyes other prominent sports figures attaining incredible success. The proof is in the records broken and the medals won. Whether or not one is an athlete, it still remains an imperative that we nourish and care for our bodies properly. This requires a commitment to being good to our body and in doing so, it will be good to us and increase our longevity.

Recommended resources:

Books:

The Vegetarian Sports Nutrition Guide

by Lisa Dorfman

Thrive: The Vegan Nutrition Guide to Optimal Performance by Brendan Brazier

Senior Fitness by Ruth E. Heidrich

Becoming Vegan (chapter 16 - The Vegan Athlete)

by Brenda Davis & Vesanto Melina

Online Magazines:

www.vegparadise.com

www.vegetarianteen.com

www.organicathlete.org

Magazines:

VegNews

Get Fresh (raw food diet)

Who to Call

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Charlie Renideo: Bookstore and Website373-1526

One of the Family, cont'd from page 5:

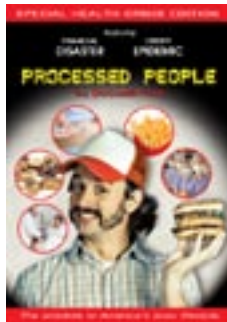
by the millions for the fur industry is upsetting to people who consider dogs to be one of the family. The difference between dogs and seals is not in their ability to feel, form relationships, communicate, or bond with humans. The difference that allows us to treat seals with such violence is our limited ability to understand them and their world. For some cultures and regions this is reflected in their lack of understanding and connection with dogs and cats.

We have yet to understand even a fraction of the complex relationships, desires and language experienced by other species. The more we understand of their world, the less we are able to justify causing them suffering.

Processed People **The Documentary**

Join us Saturday, March 14, at 7:00 p.m. at the United Protestant Church in Palmer to view this eye-opening documentary.

“Processed People” features in-depth discussions with leading health experts detailing why so many of us are sick, and offers solutions to our current devastating health crisis. Tragically, many Americans are victims of a “health care” system and way of life which is devastating to our overall well-being.



“Processed People” examines these topics:

- Why are we so fat?
- Are we what we eat?
- What is health?
- Health care or sick care?
- Do we need to eat animal products?
- What’s the role of exercise?
- Can you “de-process” yourself?
- What happens if we don’t change?

Nutrition Nuggets – Protein Myths **by Delisa Renideo**

Americans have a love affair with protein that is based upon several myths:

Myth 1. In terms of protein, more is always better. First of all, after meeting our body’s protein needs, excess protein provides no benefit and can actually cause harm. Our body does not store protein, so excess protein is either excreted in our urine (carrying calcium from our bones with it) or is converted to fat and stored.

Myth 2. You must eat animal products to get adequate protein. Plants all contain protein, and if we eat adequate calories, it is impossible to be deficient in protein. A mixed diet of vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts, and legumes provides an average of 100 grams of protein per 2000 calories. The government recommendation is about 54 grams of protein per day for a 150 lb. person.

Myth 3. For a plant-based diet to provide adequate protein, you must carefully combine certain foods, such as eating rice with beans, or you will be eating “incomplete protein.” The myth that we need to combine plants in certain ways has been debunked many years ago, but it continues to be spread in many circles. In 1952, William Rose completed research that determined the human requirements for all amino acids (the building blocks of proteins.) He determined that any single plant food or any combination of plants provides more than enough of all the essential amino acids.

For a summary of this info, visit: www.all-creatures.org/health/abrief-dr.html



Food for Life
Nutrition &
Cooking Classes
for Cancer Prevention
and Survival

**New series of classes
beginning in Anchorage
and the Valley**

• Anchorage •

Ak Center for Spiritual Living

929 E. 81st Ave., Suite 105
Thursdays, 6:30 – 8:30pm
Begins April 23, 2009

• Palmer •

**Mat-Su Regional
Medical Center (Hospital)**

2500 S. Woodworth Loop
Wednesdays, 6:30 – 8:30pm
Begins April 22, 2009

**Each class meets weekly
for 7 weeks. Cost: \$90**

Pre-registration required!

To register call Delisa or Charlie
at 907-373-1526

AVS is non-profit and under
the umbrella of Rays of Hope, a
501(c)(3) organization. To join
AVS, contact Peggy Robinson
at 373-1901, or send an email
to peggy@alaskaveg.org.

Upcoming Events



Friday, March 13

Rays of Hope board of directors' monthly meeting, 10:00am. If you are interested in knowing more about AVS' parent organization, call Delisa at 373-1526.

Friday, March 13

Deadline for articles and information for the April AVS newsletter. Call Elaine at 746-4668, or email to elaine@alaskaveg.org

Saturday, March 28

AVS potluck dinner, 6:00- 8:30pm at the United Protestant (Presbyterian) Church in Palmer. There will be information, an educational program and opportunities to meet new people. For information and a map, visit: alaskaveg.org/PotluckDinners.html or call 373-1526.

Saturday, April 25

Seventh Annual Earth Day potluck dinner, 6:00 to 9:00pm at the United Protestant (Presbyterian) Church in Palmer. RSVP required. Call 373-1526.

Alaska Vegetarian Society

Mission Statement:

To create a compassionate and sustainable world by inspiring and supporting reverence for all life and the adoption of a plant-based diet.

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