

Hogtown HomeGrown

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Omnivore, vegetarian or vegan?

As far as I know I am the first generation on either side of my family to choose to reject some of the food put in front of me. All of my grandparents certainly ate foods of all kinds, including seafood, lamb, pork, chicken and beef. My parents were also omnivores and they learned together to eat foods from many traditions.

So, I was raised as an omnivore. At times I was a complete carnivore—kibbeeh ney-yeh (raw beef, onions, cracked wheat and olive oil) from my dad's heritage, whole barbecued hogs from my mom's (we would eat the crunchy skin on the drive home), Granny's prime rib with garlic, and raw oysters, just because I liked the way they slid down my throat.

As a true omnivore I would eat anything and everything, so just before I met my husband in 1978, I considered myself fat and was on yet another diet. This time it was weight loss courtesy of Dr. Atkins. You remember him—all the meat and fat you can eat! For you omnivores, that may sound like paradise, but I was on my third week and sick of it. Believe it or not, there's only so much bacon one person can eat.

When my then boyfriend, now husband, told me he had eaten no beef, chicken, pork or other meat since 1973, that sounded good to me. I was ready! He recommended a book, *The Vegetarian Alternative*, which opened my eyes to the treatment of animals by agribusiness and the potential health hazards for those who eat their products.

And that was it—well, almost. Through the next couple of decades, I would sneak drive-thru burgers while living a granola lifestyle. A diagnosis of Type II diabetes stopped the fast food habit completely about 15 years ago. I was put on medication, but as my weight dropped, so did my blood sugar, and I could quit the meds. Shopping at farmers markets on a regular basis, I worked hard to replace the processed foods in our diet with real foods.

Today, I am a lacto-ovo-pesco vegetarian (yes, I know that because I eat fish, I'm not really a vegetarian), with occasional vegan tendencies (pronounced *vee-gun*; vegans eat no animal products.) I eat lots and lots of vegetables and fruit, some dairy products, eggs, seafood, and a few minimally processed foods. My weaknesses are great cheese, chewy bread, homemade cookies, real ice cream and a good dark beer from time to time. Even with those weaknesses, I have stayed off the diabetes meds, but still monitor my glucose levels.

Why did I share all this? As with many personal preferences, some people harbor animosity towards those who do not eat as they do. A reader verbally accosted me in public for lobster cruelty, based on a column I wrote. Folks, apparently food choices are like religion and politics—it's personal and we all need to practice acceptance, or at least, tolerance. So, in the spirit of treating others as you would like to be treated, here are a few tips:

OMNIVORES—having a bbq? clean an area on your grill for the vegan burgers
VEGETARIANS—vegetarians do not eat chicken, so tofu is the other white meat
VEGANS—invited to a bbq? tell the hosts and offer to bring vegan food to share



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What's Fresh Right Now?

Beans—green, roma
Blackberries
Blueberries
Broccoli
Cabbage—green head
Carrots
Chard—rainbow
Citrus—juices, grapefruit, oranges
Cucumbers—mini seedless, Kirby, slicers
Eggplant—white/purple/green, thai
Garlic—chives, elephant
Greens—dandelion, arugula, collards, turnips, callaloo, kale
Herbs—oregano, rosemary, dill, parsley, lime leaf, spearmint, cilantro, chives, sage, basil
Honey—orange blossom, gallberry, tupelo, palmetto, wildflower
Melons—orange/white/green cantaloupe, honeydew, crenshaw, red/yellow watermelon
Microgreens
Mushrooms—oyster
Onions—green/red scallions, red/yellow
Peaches
Peas—black/pink eye, white acre
Peppers—green/red sweet bell, banana, jalapeno, poblano, hot/sweet banana and cherry bomb
Potatoes—red, sweet, white
Radish—globe, breakfast, daikon, black
Rutabaga
Shoots—pea, sunflower, corn, spring mix
Sprouts—alfalfa, clover, quinoa, wheat, sunflower, garbanzo, mung bean, french lentil, green lentil, radish
Squash—pumpkin, zucchini, yellow, spaghetti, lemon, marrow, pattypan, acorn, butternut
Strawberries
Tomatoes—red beefsteak, grape, plum, cherokee purple, german stripe
Turnips
Wheatgrass

Local and Fresh— Pattypan Squash

Is that a squash or a miniature flying saucer? Pattypan, distinctive members of the summer squash family, are either white, green or yellow, with a round shape and a scalloped edge. Ranging in size from very small at 2-3 inches to large squash measuring 6 inches across, or more. Known to some as custard squash, the smaller, younger squash are prized for their sweet, tender and creamy flesh.

Look for firm squash with shiny skin, free from nicks and bruises. Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for one week.

Pattypan can be steamed, roasted, grilled, fried, mashed—you can even bake an egg in the hollowed-out shell. The skin is mild and edible, so prep time is reduced—no peeling!

Roasted Pattypan

INGREDIENTS

8 very small pattypan squash
2-4 Tablespoons olive oil
a pinch of salt (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Wash squash. Slice off stem and discard. Slice into circles about 1/2 inch thick.

Pile squash circles in a large baking dish. Drizzle with olive oil and use your hands to completely coat each piece with oil. (You have to work quickly because the squash is absorbing the oil as fast as you can pour.) Arrange squash into staggered layers in pan.

Place pan in cold oven. Set time bake or turn on to 350 degrees and bake for 1 hour. Turn off oven and allow squash to continue cooking with residual heat for up to 1 hour.

Add salt, if desired. Serve hot out of the oven or at room temperature. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Stuffed Pattypans

INGREDIENTS

- 8 small pattypan squash, about 3 inches across
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 cup mushrooms, chopped
- 2 scallions, quartered lengthwise and sliced
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme OR 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 cup walnuts, chopped finely
- 2 Tablespoons sherry OR 1 Tablespoon lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

Steam pattypan squash whole for 10 minutes—a knife should be able to easily pierce the skin, but meet some resistance in the center. Allow to cool. Cut a circle around the stem with a knife and then use a melon ball scoop or spoon to hollow out a cavity. Chop and set aside scooped-out squash.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Heat skillet, add 1 Tablespoon olive oil, mushrooms and scallions. Sauté until mushrooms are browned. Stir in chopped squash, thyme and walnuts. Cook until squash is soft. Remove from heat and stir in sherry.

Stuff mixture into hollowed-out pattypans. Place in oven-proof casserole or skillet. Drizzle with remaining oil. Bake for 15-20 minutes. Serve hot or at room temperature. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

NOTE: May be made in advance, covered and refrigerated until ready to bake. Bring to room temperature before baking.

Juicy Tomato Salad

INGREDIENTS

- 1-2 medium-sized heirloom tomatoes, peeled, if skin is tough
- 1 cucumber, peeled
- 1 small garlic clove, minced or grated
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pinch each of salt and cayenne OR red pepper flakes
- 1 scallion, sliced finely (optional garnish)

DIRECTIONS

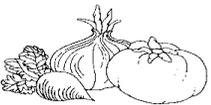
Chop tomato and cucumber into small pieces. Combine in bowl with garlic, oil, salt and cayenne. Allow to marinate 10-15 minutes at room temperature. If desired, garnish with chopped scallion before serving. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Tricks and Tips

I often watched Granny peel her tomatoes before slicing and serving. She grew wonderful heirloom varieties that survived the harsh mid-Georgia summers with thick skins that covered unbelievably red, juicy and sweet interiors. The skins of most modern tomatoes are very digestible and don't need to be removed, but if you do need to peel a tomato, be sure to use a small, sharp serrated knife. Cut around the stem and then peel or slice the skin from the top down, in sections. If you need to peel a large quantity, cut an "x" lightly through the skin on the bottom of each tomato and dip it into boiling water for one minute. Cool slightly before slipping the skins off.

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Tricks and Tips

It's peach season! Big baskets are hard to resist at roadside stands, but if you don't eat all the peaches immediately, they mold and spoil. When you bring your peaches home, eat or cook the ripest and imperfect fruit first. To keep peaches from spoiling, arrange them in one layer, not touching each other, in cardboard boxes placed in a cool room.

Summer Fruit Salad with Basil

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium cantaloupe
- 3-4 large peaches
- 1/4 cup honey
- 3 Tablespoons sour orange, lime or lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger root (do not use ground or powdered ginger)
- small pinch cayenne (optional)
- 12-16 large basil leaves
- 1 cup blueberries or blackberries

DIRECTIONS

Wash and peel both cantaloupe and peaches. Chop into bite-sized pieces. Place in a large bowl. Set aside.

Mix together the dressing of honey, juice, ginger and cayenne. Pour over the chopped fruit and stir gently to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or up to 12 hours.

Before serving, remove fruit from the refrigerator and stir to redistribute the juices. Reserving 3 basil leaves for garnish, roll together the remaining leaves and cut thin strips (chiffonade) with a sharp knife. Gently "fluff" the strips and sprinkle over the fruit salad. Add blueberries and gently toss to distribute both the basil and the blueberries thoroughly. Garnish with reserved basil leaves. Serve immediately. Leftovers may discolor, but taste just fine!