

“Wholesome Food, Wholesome Living”

In a world today where individuals are open to a diverse array of nutrient-dense foods, we begin to introduce new types of diets and food lifestyles, such as vegetarianism, pescetarianism, keto, and the Mediterranean diet as well. Of popularity and much controversy today is the vegan diet; to eat a vegan diet consists of an eating pattern based on plant-based foods with no animal-made products such as meat, dairy, honey, and eggs. As perceived by scientific studies, the execution of animals such as pigs and cows contribute to negative effects on our planet Earth, such as an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. As a consequence of this harmful result, many people who seek to improve the state of the environment have begun vegan, plant-based diets. Some do this to protest against animal cruelty in slaughterhouses, and others may even approach this just for the fun of introducing more fruits and vegetables into their diets. The term “vegan” is synonymous with the term “plant-based”, which connotes a “healthy” tone to it; however, this is not always the case. In order to fortify one’s body, we must supply it with the required and essential nutrients, protein, carbs, and fat. To stay full for longer, we rely on eating protein; can you guess which food groups protein is most dense in? Meat and dairy products, which both go against the ideology of veganism as they are both animal products. To continue a happy, healthy, and wholesome lifestyle, we human beings should focus on allowing all food groups into our body such as these wholesome animal products compared to vegan foods that lack the required necessities for our body to function properly.

To start, vegan products use processed protein contrary to wholesome protein from meat products in order to make up for the lack of actual protein in the ingredients to begin with. The most popular meat substitute today for non-meat eaters is the “Beyond Burger” brand. The “meat” is made of potato starch, giving it its chewy consistency similar to what we get when we grill a hamburger patty. The levels of protein compare by three grams; a regular 100% USDA certified beef patty has twenty-three grams while the “Beyond” patty has twenty grams for around the same amount of calories. The question here is: how does the “Beyond” patty have nearly enough protein if its number one ingredient is potato? Well, the “Beyond” patty uses pea protein as its main supplement in replacement of the wholesome protein coming from meat. The problem with pea protein is that it is highly processed in order to gain its texture and taste as it is the extracted protein from yellow and green peas. Some may argue that this is not necessarily unhealthy because it is from peas, a vegetable, but the name itself is misleading to begin with. Pea powder, although made from peas, is difficult for the gut to digest because of the cooking methods it undergoes. It also does not move as smoothly through us as our bodies recognize that it lacks real amino acids compared to meat and dairy products that our bodies are used to their intake. Not only

is this an issue, but because of its bitter pea-like taste, it requires the usage of several different food chemicals to cover up its taste. “Beyond” burger patties, for example, have what is called “grill flavor” added to them which creates a char-like flavoring to enhance the meat experience consumers are lacking. This seasoning is one to be cautious of however because it mimics a literal smoke flavor which can be deadly if over consumed. Consuming vegan substitutions can be dangerous at times if the consumer is unaware of the risks they put their bodies in compared to the reliable meats which can provide us with high quality protein that does not disrupt our gut.

Another issue of the lack of nutrients in vegan products is the overuse of fats and oils in their products to make up for the creaminess consumers would be tasting in dairy products such as cream cheese and butter. Cream cheese and butter both contain natural fats from cows’ milk; it is not considered unhealthy as it is easily digestible by our immune systems unless overconsumption is encountered. Because vegan dairy products aim to mimic a similar creamy texture, they resort to oils, specifically canola in this case to create a smooth and rich texture. The problem with canola oil is that it can lead to many health problems due to its high fat and saturated fat contents. Consuming more than the daily requirements for fat intake can cause diabetes and an increased risk of heart failure, lung congestion, and even strokes. Speaking from my own personal experience at the grocery store, when I compared the vegan scones to the non-vegan dairy scones, the vegan scones contained over one hundred percent of my daily intake for saturated fats; canola oil was the second most used ingredient in this scone to produce its buttery texture. On the other hand, the non-vegan scones were a good balance of carbs and fat like one should be. The heavy amounts of oils as substitutes for dairy are unhealthy for our human bodies in comparison to dairy which contains healthy fats and proteins.

In conclusion, the concept of veganism is deceiving in the way that it creates this belief that it is healthier because its main focus is on plant-based foods. Others need to take in account the substitutions that will have to be made to provide essential nutrients that plant-based foods cannot provide. By eating wholesome, nutritious foods that come from our animals, we prevent ourselves from more health-related risks and create wholesome lives.