

Greetings From Planet VeeGah

Written by Bob Alexander

Monday, 24 November 2014 21:49 - Last Updated Monday, 24 November 2014 23:04

It's been over a month since we watched *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* and turned ourselves into veganistas. And It's been ... um ...
interesting

On the culinary front it's been a pretty easy ride. Y'see, right after we watched the movie we didn't march into the kitchen, swing wide the doors to the refrigerator and freezer, and toss all our meat, dairy, and eggs into the garbage. That'd be *crazy*. We spent *money* on that stuff!

But soon ... there went the last of the butter ... hello, Earth Balance Buttery Spread. Not bad at all. After the last egg had been scrambled, I found a recipe for a great breakfast hash made from mushrooms, bell peppers, onions, garlic, fried potatoes and tofu. Yeah ... tofu. I have been making fun of tofu for *years*. But when it works ... it works.

Since I do the cooking around here the challenge was to make breakfast, lunch, and dinner just as satisfying as before. Food isn't just fuel ... it has to be fun too. All our good intentions would slide right out into the street and get hit by a bus if the food doesn't taste good. So far the transition from animal based meals to vegetarian to vegan has been fairly smooth.

The first Real Vegan Test for me happened when the mayo ran out. As far as I'm concerned the basis for the perfect sandwich, whether it's a cold cut sub or a cheeseburger, is mayonnaise. There must always be mayonnaise. It is not a subject open to debate. I was skeptical that an egg-less mayo could substitute for the king of condiments, but score one for team vegan with Vegenaise. There *is* life after Hellman's. Or if you live west of the Rockies, Best Foods.

Epic Fail Department:

Marinate extra-firm tofu in your favorite home-made or bottled BBQ sauce, and bake in a 350-degree oven until the tofu is heated through and the sauce is cooked into it. Then take it out of the oven and when cooled ... throw it away. Serve with a Cannellini Bean Salad with Fresh Herbs and go to bed hungry, filled with despair. A few nights later I made a soup that was just slightly more interesting than a bowl of hot water. But that's about it on the *Who The Hell Wants To Eat This?* front.

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The rest of the meals have worked. After dinner we take a poll. If everyone wants to eat this again the recipe goes into the winner pile. The goal is to get at least a dozen winners we can rotate through and not feel like we're missing something from the old routine.

I've been fooling around with seitan (sey-tan) and grilled onions and peppers, topped with non-dairy cheese ... a Philly Cheese Steak sandwich. A

good

Philly Cheese Steak sandwich.

My long-term goal is to come up with a showstopper of a dinner. Y'know ... the kind of meal that only comes out of a kitchen a few times throughout the year, like the Thanksgiving turkey, Easter ham, or the celebratory Prime Rib roast. Somewhere in a pile of vegan recipes is a dinner that will amaze and satisfy on that level, and when I find it I'll let you know. I think it has something to do with mushroom gravy.

Here are interesting facts I've accumulated on our vegan journey. It's cut and paste time from the writings of Michael Greger, M.D. regarding trans fats:

"Trans fats are basically found only one place in nature, animal fat. The food industry, however, found a way to synthetically create these toxic fats by hardening vegetable oil in a process called hydrogenation, which rearranges their atoms to make them behave more like animal fats. Although most of America's trans fat intake comes from processed foods containing partially-hydrogenated oils, a fifth of the trans fats American adults consume comes from animal products.

According to the official National Nutrient Database, 5% of the fat in a burger is trans fat. The fat in cheese averages 3% trans fat and butter can be up to 7% trans fat. Hot dog and turkey fat average about 4% trans fats, and the fat in pork rinds ... is 1% trans fat

*Is 1% a problem, though? The most prestigious scientific body in the United States, the National Academy of Science, concluded that **the only safe intake of trans fat is zero**. In their report condemning trans fats*

they couldn't even assign a Tolerable Upper Daily Limit of intake

because "any incremental increase in trans fatty acid intake increase coronary heart disease risk."

Trans fats, according to the report, "are unavoidable on ordinary, non-vegan diets..." One of the authors of the report, [Eric Rimm ScD] a nutritional epidemiologist at the Harvard School of Public Health, explained why they didn't recommend a vegan diet: "

We can't tell people to stop eating all meat and all dairy products

," he said. "

Well, we could tell people to become vegetarians

," he added. "

If we were truly basing this only on science

,

we would, but it is a bit extreme

."

So let me get this straight ... The most prestigious scientific body in the United States concluded that the only safe intake of trans fats is ... zero. Seems pretty straightforward, doesn't it? And we're not just talking about the risk of heart disease when it comes to trans fats. A 2013 study from Vanderbilt University suggests a diet with trans fatty acids may contribute to death from *any* cause. Except if you're hit by a truck.

To sum up: Your daily intake of trans fats should equal your daily intake of plutonium. Zero. And the only way I know of to completely eliminate trans fats is to adopt a vegan diet. That is, if I were basing my decision only on y'know ... *science*.

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Margo Wootan, policy director of the *Center for Science in the Public Interest* said in a statement on July 10, 2002:

*“The National Academy of Science’s report is the first attempt by a panel of experts to set a safe intake level for trans fat. The ... panel concluded that the only safe intake of trans fat is ‘zero.’ However, because it would be **impractical** to eliminate all trans fat from the diet, the panel recommended that people consume as little trans fat as possible
.”*

Well the question arises ... impractical for whom? My family has certainly been able to kick trans fats out of our diet no problemo. It was a simple matter of finding vegan recipes (they’re all over The Internet) and buying different stuff at the store. And switching to a vegan diet was pocketbook practical as well. But if we all eliminated trans fats from our diets it would be *incredibly* impractical for the bottom line of the Animal Agriculture and processed foods industries.

But we didn’t start going down the vegan route for health reasons. It was because Animal Agriculture is the most destructive industry operating on the planet. And it was something we could do about it. *Anyone* can. *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* is now available at cowspiracy.com as a downloadable video or you can purchase the DVD. Get a copy and watch it. It’s the most compelling documentary I have ever seen.