Hows about being a Flexitarian?

Whether you're concerned about your carbon footprint, your health or rising food costs, there are plenty of reasons to eat less meat. But going full-time vegetarian (or vegan) may not be the best choice for everyone and can seem impossible to those who enjoy the occasional meaty meal.

It's not just a love of meat which make it difficult. Other factors, such as cooking for family members, concerns about nutrition (getting enough protein, for example) and a lack of inspiration when it comes to cooking veggie, can make it difficult to change the eating habits of a lifetime.

The good news is that cutting down your meat consumption, rather than cutting it out completely, can still make a big difference to your health and the environment. Now, many people are following a 'flexitarian' or 'casual vegetarian' diet, which focuses on upping the amount of plant-based foods you eat – and reducing the amount of meat.

Here are some suggestions from BBC Good Food for upping your plant-based food intake and eating less meat (and fish).

10 Ways to eat less meat

https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/health/healthy-food-guides/ways-to-eat-less-meat

1) Explore veggie recipes

2) Stretch the recipe - *make your meat go further by adding rice, lentils, pasta, beans, grains or root vegetables to a recipe.*

3) Use meat as a flavour enhancer -*meat doesn't have to be the main event -use small amounts of ham, bacon, chorizo and other strongly flavoured meats to bring out the flavours of your dish – while allowing the other ingredients to shine e.g fry slices of salty prosciutto until crisp and top a vegetable soup.*

4) Create a meal plan for the week - *By planning what you'll eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner throughout the week, you're more likely to stick to a flexitarian diet, even when you're busy or hungry. Consider keeping the same days or meals meat-free every week.*

5) Be flexible with your cooking - *Choose recipes that can be adapted depending on whether you've planned for a meat-eating day or meal, or a veggie one.*

6) Choose better quality (& more sustainably produced) meat - *If your budget allows, buy better quality meat and plan to use all of it across two or three recipes.*

7) Opt for eggs- *Like meat, eggs are a rich source of protein – as well as many other important vitamins and minerals.*

8) Use meat alternatives - *From tofu, tempeh and soya to wholegrains, nuts and pulses, the options for meat alternatives are endless.*

9) Get comfortable with vegan cooking - *Why not set yourself the challenge of going meat and dairy-free once or twice a week?*

10) Use vegetables with a 'meaty' quality - *Mushrooms and aubergines can have a similar taste and texture to meat.*

Further reading

What is a plant-based diet?
https://zoe.com/learn/what-is-a-plant-based-diet

How to stay vegan after veganuary
https://www.vivolife.co.uk/blogs/news/how-to-stay-vegan-after-veganuary?

See our other handout with information about Meat free alternatives and vegan recipes

Background on the Issues

FILM - Eating Our Way to extinction
https://eating2extinction.com/
UK, 2021 Director: Ludo Brockway, Otto Brockway

Zoe video discussion about why eating 30 plants per day is good for your health
https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=olKsStenYug&pp=0gcJCfwAo7VqN5tD

Plant-based diet can fight climate change - UN (2019)
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-49238749

Reducing Meat Consumption: NFU challenges Times article (Sept 2023)
https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/reducing-meat-consumption-nfu-challenges-times-article/

Animal Aid - why Veganism
https://www.animalaid.org.uk/veganism/why-veganism/going-vegan-animals/

George Monbiot explores the facts(2022)
https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/may/13/george-monbiot-vegan-planet-britain-farming-fuel-plant-based-food

Fishers' & TV Chefs' plea to eat local fish to save Britain's fishing communities (2020)
https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/fishers-and-tv-chefs-plea-to-eat-local-fish-to-save-britains-fishing-communities/

The Planetary Health Diet - reduce your meat & dairy intake to help the Planet and feed to world :
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-46865204