



H Jay Dinshah, who founded the American Vegan Society in 1960 linked veganism to the Jain concept of *ahimsa*

KITCHEN FUNDAS



Sous-vide

In this method of cooking, food is kept in airtight containers and placed in a *sous vide* machine filled with water. The heat generated by the water helps to cook the food. Several hours are taken to cook the food although the texture of the food is retained. Here, food is not over-cooked, keeping the consistency of the inner and outer layers the same. The temperature used to cook meat is relatively lower than other methods, although vegetables are cooked at a higher temperature. A portable miniature of *sous vide* machine, Nomiku, can be attached to any pot and it will keep the water heated.

healthy wealthy

Eat, drink and be slim

Nandita Iyer

The last three months of the year are like a merry go round of festivals. It's a non stop calorie binge that ends in a rude shock in the new year that your favourite jeans no longer fit you. So, a preventive strategy is needed.

Before leaving for a dinner party, eat a healthy snack like an apple or a cup of yogurt. Also, before you start eating, drink a tall glass of water so you won't have all that big an appetite to eat everything you want to. Try to make some of the goodies yourself and substitute with healthier ingredients. Beware of the so-called welcome drinks, juices and sherbets that are served at most parties. They are mostly colour, sugar and artificial flavour. Moreover, the mixers in cocktails are more calorific than the alcohol itself. Also, look for nuts, dressing-free salads, vegetables, lean protein such as grilled chicken, meatballs or paneer over fried stuff. Choose any one dessert and walk away.



RECIPE FOR DIWALI OKKARAI

Ingredients

1 cup chana dal 1 cup jaggery 5-6 cardamoms 1/2 cup freshly grated coconut 2 tbsp gingelly oil/ghee 1-2 tsp ghee for frying cashews 10-12 cashews, halved 2-3 tbsp of raisins

METHOD Dry roast the chana dal till golden brown and aromatic. Soak this roasted dal in lots of water for 3 hours or so. Dry roast the coconut flakes till golden and aromatic. Remove the skin, grind the seeds along with one tsp coarsely granulated sugar in mortar-pestle till you get a fairly fine powder. Heat 1-2 tsp ghee and fry cashews till they are golden.

Directions: Grind the soaked chana dal, adding as little water as possible, to get a fairly thick, doughy paste. Place 3 cups of water in a big pressure cooker/steamer. Make loose dumplings of the ground dal and place in a deep, big vessel that fits in the cooker. Close the lid of the cooker without the weight. Steam for 20-25 minutes on medium flame. Open the cooker after a few minutes and let these steamed dumplings cool. Crumble the dumplings or grate them. In a large wok, heat 2-3 tsp of gingelly (til) oil and fry the crumbled / grated dal mix on a low flame for 5-7 minutes. Keep aside. To make jaggery syrup, place 1/2 cup water in a heavy bottom pan. Add 1 cup of crushed jaggery to this and let it melt on a high flame, with constant stirring. Once the jaggery has melted thoroughly, lower flame and keep stirring. The mixture will get a deep colour and start thickening. Keep a small plate handy, and pour a drop or so of this onto it, every two minutes. Roll this drop between your thumb and index finger. If it turns into a ball and makes a sound when you drop it on the plate, the syrup is ready. Remove this from the flame and start adding the ready dal crumble in batches, giving it a good mix to coat evenly. Once the crumble is all evenly mixed with the jaggery syrup — it will be soft, sweet and not sticky. Add the roasted coconut, cardamom powder, fried cashews, raisins and mix gently. Serve warm.

SOCIAL Vegetating

Vegans are networking to come up with interesting ways to compensate for the absence of meat and dairy products in their diet, reports Shikha Kumar

Monika Siriya, 29, eagerly awaits the monthly vegan potluck lunches in Mumbai. At these lunches, a group of 20 vegans in the city bring along a vegan food dish they have prepared, leading to a sumptuous spread of dishes like tofu bhurji, mock meats like sausages (prepared with wheat and soya), Gujarati kadhi (made with groundnut milk), baked potatoes, salads, various kinds of cheese, cakes and even vegan ice-cream.

"At one of these lunches, someone brought a delicious masala milk, where cow's milk was substituted with milk from almonds and brown rice. There is so much creativity," she says. Siriya confesses that these monthly affairs are a great opportunity for vegans to come together on a common platform. "It's a very light atmosphere. We share tips, recipes, talk about challenges faced while cooking, health problems, and also interact with non-vegans who are interested in this lifestyle."

Siriya and her husband have been strict vegans for two years now and she feels that her food options are anything but restrictive. She makes all the dishes that a non-vegan would eat by finding suitable alternatives. "I make tea with cashew milk. You just have to blend the cashews with water and it tastes exactly like milk tea," says Siriya.

VEGETARIANS LIVE LONGER

Results from a new study conducted by researchers from the Loma Linda University in California have revealed that vegetarian Adventist men live to an average of 83.3 years and vegetarian women 85.7 years, 9.5 and 6.1 years, respectively, longer than other Californians.



MASHED AND SWEET POTATO BAKE

Ingredients
5 medium potatoes 2 sweet potatoes 1 cup spinach 10-12 baby corn Pepper powder Olive oil Salt Tabasco sauce Bread crumbs

METHOD Preheat oven to 225°C. Boil, peel and mash potatoes and sweet potatoes. Blanch spinach and chop roughly. Slice baby corn into rounds. Mix all the ingredients except tabasco sauce and the bread crumbs. Press into a baking dish. Sprinkle with bread crumbs and press lightly. Bake at 225 °C for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 180 °C and continue baking for 30 more minutes. Let it cool in the oven for 5-10 minutes. Serve hot with tabasco sauce.

Courtesy: Susmitha

These vegan communities are not restricted to Mumbai alone. Cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and New Delhi have their own vegan groups that interact on a regular basis. The roots of veganism in India can be traced back to 1957 when the country played host to the first major event by the International Vegetarian Union, says Shankar Narayan, president of the Indian Vegan Society. Susmitha, a jewellery designer based in Bengaluru, is an active member of the Bengaluru Vegans group and made the switch to veganism 9 years ago. On her blog called blog.veganosaurus.com, Susmitha regularly posts interesting recipes of dishes like *gulab jamun* made with sweet potatoes, rolls with spicy peanut sauce and baked *akki* (rice) rotis. The dishes made by vegans vary according to the palates of the cities they live in. Vegans in south India look at interesting twists to the regular curd rice and idlis. "When I turned vegan, my first thought was how I would survive without curd. But curd rice is a common dish at our monthly lunches. The curd in the curd rice is made from peanut milk and the texture is near-perfect, apart from the taste," asserts Susmitha. There are also desserts like vegan chocolate mousse, which is tofu or avocado-based and chocolate truffles made with dates, cocoa powder and walnuts.

Like the Mumbai group, the Bengaluru vegan meet-up is open to everyone ranging from vegans, vegetarians and people who would like to learn about veganism and sample some dishes. "Apart from sharing experiences, we also have movie screenings, distribute leaflets and discuss how we can promote veganism," says Susmitha.

Most vegans ardently take up the challenge of working their way around non-vegan food. When Rithika Ramesh turned vegan three years ago, she took her love of cooking further by starting The Green Stove, a first-of-its-kind vegan bakery in Mumbai. "A vegan cake, that's made without eggs or butter, tastes equally delicious," she says.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Until eight years ago, macrobiotic counselor and chef Shonali Sabharwal was a hardcore non-vegetarian. However, she suffered from candida, a kind of yeast infection, and frequent trips to different doctors didn't help get rid of the problem. Her research revealed that dairy aided candida and meat led to a lot of toxic buildup in the body. "Cows are given growth hormone injections, the end products of which end up in our diet," she says. "I made the switch in phases, giving up my most favourite meat first and least favourite, last." The candida disappeared shortly after she turned vegan, apart from helping her lose a lot of weight. Today, Sabharwal prepares dressings like mayonnaise with silken tofu.

Vegans attribute a reduction in stress levels to a non-dairy diet. "When calves are separated from their mother, the cow undergoes a

CREAMY VEGAN TOFU MAYONNAISE

Ingredients
1 pack of silken tofu or any tofu which has a creamy consistency (you may need to add soy milk to get this) 2 tbsp lemon juice 1 tbsp miso (white) 2 tsp of olive oil

METHOD Steam tofu in a steamer for 3-5 minutes; let it cool for a bit. Add all the ingredients to your whipper and whip together. The mayonnaise is ready to eat. Variation: You can also 1 tsp of mustard to it to give it a twist (especially good for your liver)

Courtesy: Shonali Sabharwal



From top: Carrot Hesarubele Kosumbari; the spread at the potluck lunch in Mumbai

lot of stress, just like a human mother would. This stress hormone is passed on in the milk we consume," explains Monika Siriya.

There are a lot of myths associated with a vegan lifestyle, especially of not getting enough nutrients and vitamin B12 deficiencies, says Dr Nandita Shah, a vegan and founder of SHARAN, a non-profit organisation aimed at spreading holistic health awareness. "B12 deficiencies are common even in non-vegans. Alcohol consumption and microwaving products destroys the B12 vitamin," she points out. shikha.kumar@dnaindia.net



We're surrounded by unhealthy food — in our office canteens, restaurants that are more interested in our palates than our hearts, and supermarkets hard-selling processed ready-to-eat junk. Even when we try to make healthier choices, we often don't know how to go about it because of conflicting messages coming at us. Or we quickly tire of the health regimen because the food seems dull.

So, as a service to those among you who want to eat healthy, DNA Sunday's food mag will help you make smarter choices. We will provide you with the latest in nutrition research. But more importantly, we will tap the knowledge of experts in nutrition and cooking to give you a selection of recipes in each food mag which will not just be healthy but also tasty and simple to make. Look for our Health Factor page in the mag that fits the bill on these counts.

But what is healthy? Based on advice from experts, we have come up with five basic guiding principles that are accepted as being healthy food choices. Here they are:

- 1 Vegetables can deliver vital micro-nutrients if they're not overcooked.
- 2 Fish is a good protein source if it is not fried, because it has a healthy fat, Omega-3.
- 3 Whole grains are more nutritious and fibrous than polished or processed grains.
- 4 We want to minimise frying and grilling because of their oxidation and carbonisation effects.
- 5 Sugar is the unhealthiest thing we can have because of the insulin response it provokes. Our recipes from master chefs and nutrition experts will adhere to these principles. We hope this initiative from DNA Sunday will help you in your quest to be healthier.

Chimta Sriyaya

DIVINE FOOD



The simplest of food cooked with love and devotion can make all the difference to its taste. Two chefs try to replicate these principles in the modern kitchen. R Krishna reports

There are several things that go into the making of any delicious meal — fresh ingredients, the utensils, cooking techniques and finally, the presentation. Yet, there is one intangible factor that many chefs say makes all the difference, and that's love.

According to Hemant Oberoi, executive chef, Taj Group of Hotels, it is love and devotion that differentiates food served at temples. "I have visited kitchens of *langars* at Vaishno Devi, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the Balaji temple in Tirupati, and many others. In each temple, people cook with a belief that the food is an offering to God," says Oberoi, who recently put out a menu for the nine days of Navratri offering four *thalis* with items that are usually served at temples. The cooking techniques used at the temples impressed Oberoi. In the Puri Jagannath Temple, for instance, they cooked *khichdi* in earthen pots stacked one on top of another. And at the Golden Temple, Oberoi was taken aback by the size of utensils. "I expected them to be big, but I couldn't imagine *dal* being cooked in a vessel that was 2m in diameter."

THALIS FROM ALL OVER

Oberoi tried to recreate these dishes at the Taj Mahal

Palace, Mumbai. To sample them, we walked into Masala Kraft one afternoon. I ordered the *thali* from Jagannath Puri, which had an assortment of simply prepared dishes. There was a cabbage *santula*, where *urad dal* and coconut brought out the flavour of cabbage. Then there was the *bhaja moonger dal*, where yellow *moong dal* was roasted before being boiled, giving it a nutty flavour. The *begun bhaja* — slices of brinjals coated with chilli and turmeric and pan-fried — was the perfect accompaniment to the *dal*.

My colleague ordered the Tirupathi *thali*. The dishes that stood out were the beans *thoran* — beans and carrot tossed with mustard seeds and coconut — and *puadwal kuttu*, which was squash cooked with split bengal gram and curry leaves. Predictably, the South Indian *thali* was spicier than the one from Jagannath Puri, but equally light.

AND A SATVIK TOUCH

At Taj Land's End, I started cross-examining Chef Sidharth Kumar Sinha who put together a Benarasi *Satvik* meal, devoid of onion and garlic. Onion and garlic form the base of so many Indian dishes. Apart from the taste factor, the medicinal benefits of garlic are well-known and noted even in Ayurveda. Why

exclude this wonderful seasoning? "The principles of *satvik* food deal more with the effect that food has on our minds. Garlic may have nutritional benefits, but it also excites our senses," explains Sinha, adding that in preparation for the food festival, he skipped using onion and garlic in his diet for nine days. "I find myself shouting less in the kitchen. I usually perspire a lot. That has come down too."

For flavour, Sinha says, *satvik* food uses fresh green chillies, coriander, ginger and asafoetida. The use of these spices means that the food cannot be cooked at a high temperature, so that the flavour is retained. Even the *tadka* should be made over a medium flame. Not over-

cooking the food means less salt, all of which add up to significant health benefits.

SWEETENING THE MEAL

Surprisingly, there were sweet dishes like *laung latica* and *makhane ki kheer*. "Satvik cooking doesn't really prohibit the eating of sweets or fried food, but does prescribe that it should be eaten in smaller quantities," clarifies Sinha. Another dessert on offer was the *ganne ka murabba*, which is unfamiliar outside Varanasi. Sugarcane was cut into pieces and boiled for a long time in a sugary syrup until it became soft and pulpy, with rose water providing the aroma. As for our minds, obviously one *satvik* meal was not going to have too much of an effect. Sinha asked us to quit onion and garlic for a week to see the difference. Any takers?

r_krishna@dnaindia.net

THE FOOD-MIND CONNECTION

