In this issue:

1. Highlights from State Meetings 2013
2. Message from the Chair
3. From the Past Chair
4. From the Editor
5. What’s New in Research?
6. VN Members Attend the 6th International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition
7. Students Use Food Choices to Reduce Impact on the Natural Environment
8. Meet Our Members - Monique Richard
9. VN Member Guide to Staying Up to Date on Legislative Issues
10. Vegan Meals at Public Policy Workshop 2013: A Harbinger of Future Progress?
11. Have You Read?
12. Save the Date for the VN Member Reception at FNCE!
13. Pediatric Vegetarians: Weight Management for the Overweight Vegetarian Teen
14. State Coordinator Spotlight
15. Bookshelf - The Plant-Based Power Diet: 10 Simple Steps to a Healthier, Leaner, Energetic You
16. Meet Your Executive Committee

**Highlights from State Meetings 2013**

Carolyn Tampe, MS, RD, LDN, CDE

This year a record number of State Coordinators exhibited at their state’s meeting. The Vegetarian Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group (VN) was represented in 13 states: Georgia, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Illinois, California, Colorado, Texas, Maryland, Arizona, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Oregon, and Ohio.

**Highlights:**

“Having the opportunity to speak to enthusiastic dietetic students who are very interested in vegetarian nutrition. It makes me realize that our practice group will continue to grow well into the future.”

–Jill Nussinow, MS, RD, California

“Several attendees didn’t know that VN DPG existed, therefore they were excited to learn more about our membership benefits and available resources.”

–Mitali Shah, MS, RD, New Hampshire

“The VN DPG table was one of the busiest. So many non-vegetarians came over and expressed how they were trying to implement some meat-free days into their personal or work environments.”

–Ginger Hultin, MS, Illinois

continued on page 12
Message from the Chair

Gita Patel, MS, RD, CDE, CLT, LD
2013-2014 VN DPG Chair

Albert Einstein said, “Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances of survival for life on earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.” In a way, the father of the theory of relativity was correct, especially when considering the relationship between food intake and chronic disease outcomes.

As I begin my term as Chair of VN, I would like to thank Christine Bou Sleiman, the Executive Committee, appointed committee members and volunteers for their service to VN. This past year has been a great learning experience for me as Chair-Elect. I encourage you to get involved with volunteer activities within VN. As you give your time you will notice you also learn a lot of valuable skills that will help you in other areas of life. I look forward to your input and feedback so we can increase membership in our DPG and increase awareness of the health benefits of a vegetarian lifestyle.

In April we had our Executive Committee meeting in Houston, TX. We accomplished everything on our agenda and are now planning for the Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE) in October. I hope to see many of you there at our networking event, our DPG booth, or just walking in the convention center.

My goal for this year is to educate fellow colleagues and the public about the health benefits of plant foods and promote healthy vegetarian eating. In April, I spoke about the “Benefits of Vegetarian Nutrition for Feeding Health” at the New Hampshire Dietetic Association Spring Meeting in Concord, NH. I presented research studies that covered obesity, overweight, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, vision (age-related macular degeneration), and cognitive decline, and how a vegetarian diet can provide so many health benefits to combat these conditions. Hippocrates said, “Leave your drugs in the chemist’s pot if you can heal the patient with food.” My message was loud and clear about the health benefits of eating a variety of whole, unprocessed plant foods.

Summer is a great time to encourage our patients, friends and colleagues to enjoy the fresh produce available to all of us. Share simple ideas for preparing fresh vegetables in different ways. For a neighborhood potluck I created the following recipe:

I sautéed in olive oil finely shredded red cabbage with a slit jalapeno and sugar snap peas for 4 minutes, I added cooked white cannellini beans I had in the refrigerator, a dash of salt and some rice vinegar, stirred to mix and added fresh cilantro. This was quick, simple, colorful, packed with antioxidants and a delicious way to use a cruciferous vegetable. The slit jalapeno just adds flavor without the heat.

We have no control over many things in life; however, we do have control over the foods we choose to eat. We need to eat daily, several times each day; why not choose healthy plant foods? Let’s make it our mission to educate and inform our patients, friends, families, and yes our colleagues too. Because… “To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art.” La Rochefoucauld, Maxims, 1665

I look forward to serving you, members of the VN DPG, during my term as Chair.
From the Past Chair

Christine Bou Sleiman, MS, RD

I can’t believe my year as VN Chair has come to an end. This has been such an exciting year for VN, and I am honored to have been able to play an active role in this amazing group. Some of the highlights of the year include:

* Celebrating our 20th anniversary at FNCE 2012 with various educational sessions and fun events. We hosted a pre-FNCE movie screening of Vegucated followed by a panel discussion that included Sharon Palmer, author of Plant-Powered Diet, our Newsletter Editor, Reed Mangels, and Vegucated Producer Frank Matasaka. We also had a pre-FNCE educational session called “Powered by Plants: What We Know about Vegan Athletes” with Matt Ruscigno and Enette Larson Meyer and “Vegetarian Nutrition: What the Experts are Saying” with Ginny Messina and Jack Norris. During FNCE we had a Hot Topic Session – “Vegetarianism, Mortality and Metabolic Risk: The New Adventist Health Study” with Gary Fraser and Ella Haddad. The icing on the cake was our member reception where VN members celebrated 20 years of VN. Many members who were there the first year were back and still active with us in 2012.

Thank you to everyone on the VN Executive Committee that stepped up to help organize these events. It was definitely a team effort! A special thanks to Matt Ruscigno for all of his hard work and dedication in making sure these events were a success. Also, thank you to Gita Patel for stepping in for me since I could not be at FNCE this year. I was busy preparing for the arrival of baby Gavin who was born on October 14th.

* We updated the look and feel of our professional website www.vndpg.org. It now includes a forum for members to chat and share information.

* The consumer website continues to get traffic from many sources: www.vegetariannutrition.net

* Our Facebook account grew from 1,000 to 5,500 followers in the past year (www.facebook.com/vegetariannutrition)

* Our Twitter following is up to 585 followers. Follow us at @VNDPG.

* We updated our mission and vision to better represent our goals as a practice group.

* A project near and dear to my heart is the RD Resources project that I have been in charge of for the past few years. I am proud to say that we released six new RD Resource handouts in the last year on the following topics: Infants (professional and consumer versions), Safety of Soy (consumer), Vegetarian Myths (professional and consumer versions), Iron (consumer), and Choline (consumer). The Vegetarian Diets in Infants resource was featured in Today’s Dietitian. We also created a handout for Food Day about Meatless Meals for the Kids Eat Right website.

Although I feel sad to leave my role as Chair, I am happy to pass the torch to Gita Patel, who I am certain will do a great job as the new Chair of VN. I want to thank everyone on the Executive Committee and Board who helped me along my journey as Chair. I hope we will continue to get new and dedicated members to take on more leadership roles within VN. This will help to keep us innovative and up to date on the needs of our members. I look forward to continuing to serve on the Executive Committee and helping to build on the successes we have had so far.

From the Editor

Reed Mangels, PhD, RD

VN's dedication to the environment and sustainability has led us to make some changes in our newsletter printing process. We will provide 2 print and 2 electronic issues of Vegetarian Nutrition Update each year. Student members will receive all newsletters in electronic format. As always, back issues of all newsletters are available on our website, vndpg.org. Print issues (Winter and Summer) will be printed on FSC-certified paper which means that the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certifies that the paper we use comes from responsibly managed forests and verified recycled sources.

This will be my last year as Newsletter Editor. It’s a terrifically fun job and one that is only made possible by the hard work of many volunteers, including our fantastic Assistant Editor, Hollie Gelberg, PhD, RD, who will be continuing in this position. If you are interested in working with us this year and then assuming the role of Newsletter Editor in 2014, please be in touch. Qualifications for the position include VN membership, at least a master’s degree, registered dietitian, organizational skills, ability to work on a time schedule, and experience with writing and editing. A minimum two-year commitment is required. If you’d like to know more about this opportunity, please contact me at reedmangels@comcast.net.
Looking to build your resume this summer with positive nutrition-related experiences? Whether you are preparing to apply to dietetic internships (DI), or simply looking for a better understanding of what a dietitian does, it is important to be exposed to the myriad of opportunities for dietetic professionals to determine what areas of practice are most appealing to you.

If you plan to apply to a DI, the areas of experience particularly valued by internship directors are clinical, community, and food service. Although these areas of practice employ the majority of nutrition professionals, you shouldn’t shy away from experience in the emerging fields of nutrition in media and business. Here are some ideas for summer experiences:

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<td>Local Hospitals</td>
<td>Weight Loss or Diabetes Camps</td>
<td>Campus Dining Hall</td>
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<td>Health and Wellness Facilities</td>
<td>Meals on Wheels</td>
<td>Local School District Food Service</td>
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<td>Dialysis Clinics</td>
<td>Women, Infants and Children (WIC)</td>
<td>Local Head Start Preschool Food Service</td>
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<td>Dietetic Private Practice</td>
<td>Community Health Departments</td>
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<td>Senior Centers or Nursing Homes</td>
<td>Restaurant or Bakery</td>
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<td>Nutrition Classes (in local elementary, middle-school, and high-schools)</td>
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<td>Food Banks or Homeless Shelters</td>
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<td>After School Programs</td>
<td>Nutrition Education for a Local Sports Team</td>
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The opportunities to enhance your knowledge of dietetic practice are endless and right at your fingertips. If you are interested in a non-traditional dietetic experience in an area specific to your passions, look at this as an opportunity to research, network, and explore the possibilities!

**Surf the Web**

The Internet is your best friend when it comes to exploring ideas and opportunities. Use the web to search for RDs in your area, look for specific experiences that interest you, and to explore different internship search sites. Resources like internships.com and indeed.com provide postings representing the great variety of roles for a dietetic professional. All Access Internships, created by Jenny Westerkamp RD, LD, is another site that provides resources to help you increase your chances of finding internships in your particular areas of interest. They offer coaching and provide a list of available opportunities.

**Make Connections**

Don’t be afraid to reach out to dietetic professionals in your area or propose ideas to organizations that you feel could use nutrition services. While networking, remember to be professional, concise, and confident in your abilities. As the saying goes, “It doesn’t hurt to ask;” so take the plunge this summer and your extra effort may just pay off!

Best of luck on your search for summer experiences! If you have questions about finding experiences, contact me at wagneror@miamioh.edu.
What’s New in Research?
Compiled by Virginia Messina, MPH, RD


Researchers from Loma Linda University (LLU) conducted a 24-week randomized clinical trial among obese subjects (BMIs between 30 and 44) comparing the effects of a high-protein, high-fat diet with a high-fiber bean-rich diet on weight loss, glucose control and lipid levels. Fifty-nine subjects followed the high-protein diet (28.4% protein, 38.4% fat, 17.3 grams of fiber) and 64 followed the bean-rich diet (19% protein, 28.4% fat, 37 grams of fiber). Five follow-up visits were scheduled to track participants’ progress and to reinforce their diets between baseline and 16 weeks with an additional visit at 24 weeks.

During a three-week preparation phase, the subjects in the bean group began consuming a half cup of beans per day. Intake was gradually increased to a half cup of beans with each of three meals per day. Those in the high-protein group began to reduce intake of carbohydrate-rich foods and increase their consumption of fish, eggs and lean meats during the preparation phase. This was followed by a three-day induction phase during which subjects in both groups were provided with meals from the LLU Research Kitchen in order to educate participants about portion sizes and menu options.

At the end of 16 weeks, LDL-cholesterol had decreased in the bean group and increased in the subjects following the high-fat, high-protein diet. However, while both groups experienced decreases in blood pressure, weight, body mass index (BMI), and waist and hip circumferences, there were no significant differences among these parameters between the two groups after controlling for baseline measures. At the end of 52 weeks, among subjects who had continued with the diets, retained weight loss was better in the high-protein group, but total cholesterol was lower among those consuming the bean-rich diet.


Using data from 23,531 participants of the EPIC-Potsdam study, investigators analyzed the associations between 45 single food groups and risk of chronic disease, which included cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer. During follow-up, 363 incident cardiovascular disease, 837 type 2 diabetes and 844 cancer cases were identified. Higher intakes of whole grain bread, raw vegetables, coffee and cakes and cookies were found to be significantly associated with a lower risk of chronic diseases. Higher intakes of low-fat dairy, butter, and red meat were associated with higher risks of chronic diseases. There were no associations for any of the other food groups including fresh fruit, mushrooms, legumes, high-fat cheese, and soft drinks, (although some food groups were associated with risk of specific diseases but not overall chronic disease risk).

While coffee contains bioactive compounds and has been linked in other research to lower chronic disease risk, the findings regarding cake and cookies were more unusual. The researchers suggested that one reason might be selective under-reporting of the intake of “socially undesirable foods.”


BMI alone does not predict disease risk, particularly since body fatness appears to differ among ethnic groups even when BMIs are similar. This study aimed to determine whether these same differences might occur among various Caucasian populations within Europe. This was a secondary analysis of the baseline data from the SEAFOODplus YOUNG intervention study, which measured effects of seafood consumption on weight loss in young adults from Iceland, Spain, and Ireland.

Fasting blood glucose, blood lipids and body composition were measured, and insulin resistance was calculated in subjects in the three groups. For a given BMI, participants from Ireland had higher body fat percentages and waist circumferences compared to participants from Spain and Iceland. They also were at greater risk for cardiovascular disease based on higher levels of LDL-cholesterol and higher fasting blood glucose levels. The findings suggest that different populations in Europe may have different cardiometabolic risk profiles despite similar BMIs.


Two recent studies examined factors affecting commitment to vegetarian diets, primarily among young people.

In the first, researchers from the University of Guelph in Ontario examined the reasons why people stop being vegetarian. This was a cross-sectional exploratory study that included people who had adopted vegetarian diets for both ethical and health reasons, but excluded those who were vegetarian for religious reasons.

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling using personal contacts and also through advertising. Nineteen ex-vegetarians and 15 continuing vegetarians were interviewed. Among ex-vegetarians, major themes that emerged included the hassle of maintaining a vegetarian diet, a decline in self-perceived health, major life changes, and the perception of vegetarianism as a path to their current food choices. Among continuing vegetarians, the moral reasons for choosing vegetarianism were almost evenly split between a belief in animal rights versus a commitment to animal welfare and the environment. In contrast, the ex-vegetarians had nearly all become vegetarian because of concerns about animal welfare/environment.

In the second study, researchers from Winthrop University in South Carolina examined the differences between health-motivated (n=49) and ethically-motivated (n=232) vegetarians regarding conviction, nutrition knowledge, dietary restriction, and years as vegetarian. Conviction was assessed using a questionnaire extrapolated from the Dimensions of Religiosity Scale. Participants were recruited primarily through a Facebook advertisement. Vegetarians motivated by ethics scored higher on
the conviction instrument, although the responses were fairly close, and showed greater dietary restriction. They had also been vegetarian longer. There was no difference in nutrition knowledge between the groups.

Participants in both studies were predominantly young females, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings to other vegetarian populations.

**Walnut consumption is associated with lower risk of type 2 diabetes in women.** Pan A, Sun Q, Manson JE, Willett WC, Hu FB. *J Nutr* 2013;143:512-8.

Walnuts have been shown to improve various cardiometabolic risk factors in part because of their high content of polyunsaturated fatty acids. In this study, researchers investigated the association between walnut intake and incidence of type 2 diabetes in women enrolled in the Nurses’ Health Study (NHS) and NHS II. There were 58,063 subjects aged 52–77 years in NHS (1998–2008) and 79,893 women aged 35–52 years in NHS II (1999–2009) who did not have diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or cancer at baseline.

Consumption of walnuts was assessed every 4 years using validated food frequency questionnaires. During ten years of follow up, there were 5,930 cases of type 2 diabetes. Compared to women who never or rarely ate walnuts, those who consumed them at least twice per week were 33 percent less likely to develop diabetes. After adjusting for BMI, the relationship was attenuated somewhat and women who consumed walnuts had a 24 percent lower risk for diabetes. Total nut consumption was also associated with a lower risk for diabetes, but this was largely explained by body weight.

The higher polyunsaturated fat content of walnuts might confer benefits for diabetes prevention since consumption of these fats may have favorable effects on insulin resistance. The fiber and phytosterol content of walnuts may have favorable effects as well. Walnut consumption has also been shown to improve endothelial function.


Findings on the relationship between dairy food consumption and weight management have been conflicting. In this study, researchers from the University of Calgary assessed the effects of a dietary pattern high in dairy and calcium on weight loss and subjective appetite.

Forty-nine subjects were randomized to one of two treatment groups, each consuming a weight loss diet with a 500 calorie deficit. Those in the control group consumed a diet low in dairy products (one serving per day) providing approximately 700 milligrams of calcium per day. Subjects in the treatment group consumed three to four servings of dairy per day and also took a supplement providing 350 milligrams of calcium.

Body composition, subjective ratings of appetite, food intake, plasma satiety hormones, glycemic response and inflammatory cytokines were all measured at baseline and after twelve weeks. Those consuming the high dairy diet reported better satiety and had lower fat intakes. Analysis also showed that this group had higher blood levels of peptide YY (a hormone that may reduce appetite) when given a meal tolerance test at week 12. However, despite these findings, weight loss was similar between the two groups. The researchers concluded that dairy foods did not improve weight loss, although they may have had beneficial effects on satiety.

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**VN Members Attend the 6th International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition**

compiled by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD

Every five years, Loma Linda University organizes and hosts the International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition (ICVN), the premier scientific conference on the health effects of plant-based diets. This year’s Congress took place in February. Among the more than 700 attendees were many VN members. Our members were also actively involved in planning, organizing, speaking, and presenting poster sessions at ICSVN. VN volunteers staffed a VN table in the exhibits area and promoted RDs and RDNs as experts in vegetarian nutrition.

A comment by VN member Vesanto Melina, MS, RD exemplifies the way many attendees felt, “I was so excited that I could barely sleep the preceding night, like a little girl invited to a special birthday party!” It’s almost impossible to describe the wealth of information that was provided at ICSVN. Several VN members have written about experiences that were especially meaningful; complete proceedings will appear in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* in 2014.

Amanda Sager, RD, MS, Major, USAF was impressed by a pre-conference session:

**BLUF (bottom line up front): the entire congress impressed me! I had multiple opportunities to meet and mingle with professionals I’ve respected and admired for years. I engaged in conversations that connected me to the greater community, and absorbed enough research and inspiration to carry me forward for 5 years. I found the pre-conference panel session to be especially powerful, Vegetarianism: the Interface of Science and Values. I was moved by all panelists, but particularly Marianne Thiem. As a law student in the Netherlands, she was concerned by the lack of attention paid to animal rights issues and she was compelled to change Dutch legislation. Since 2006 she has co-chaired a parliamentary group in the House of Representatives — the Party for the Animals (http://www.**

continued on page 7
Sharon Palmer, RD described a session that she attended on the history of vegetarianism:

One session stood out for me - Vegetarian diets: Past, present and the future, presented by Claus Leitzmann, PhD, from Justus Liebig University, Germany. Leitzmann described how ancient cultures, such as in Egypt, China, India, Peru and Mexico used a predominantly plant-based diet. Plato (Greece, 428-348 BCE) said that the town people should eat vegetarian because meat eaters needed the doctor more often. Ovid (Italy 47-17 AD) made strong arguments against eating meat, and the poet Plutarch (Greece 45-120 AD) was a vegetarian due to his love of animals.

There were vegetarians during the Renaissance, including Leonardo da Vinci, who was famously quoted as saying, “The time will come when we will condemn the eating of animals just as today we condemn the eating of our own kind, the consuming of humans.”

During the Age of Enlightenment (17 – 18th century), vegetarian influences included Voltaire and Jean Jacques Rousseau. In 19th century Europe, the lawyer Gustav von Struwe believed that plant food was the basis of a new world view. Things were also happening in the US during the same period; Sylvester Graham believed in eating plenty of raw food, and John Harvey Kellogg founded his sanitarium in Battle Creek on the ideals that vegetarianism could heal people of diseases. George Barnard Shaw famously said, “Animals are my friends and I don’t eat my friends.” And Albert Einstein said, “Nothing will increase the chance of survival for life on Earth as much as the evolution of the vegetarian diet.”

In the 1950s, few really talked about vegetarian nutrition. By the ‘60s, vegetarian nutrition started making an appearance in western societies. Still, in the 1990s the opinion was that the vegetarian diet had a greater risk, while the risk of meat-eating was small. But flash forward to the 21st century, when we entered into an era that saw headlines that said plant foods could help prevent certain diseases, and a 2002 Time magazine cover asked, “Should you be a vegetarian?”

“The future for vegetarian nutrition is bright. People no longer want animals to suffer, to be killed, and to live miserable lives to please our own taste buds. Who needs that?” asked Leitzmann. “The future for vegetarian nutrition also includes issues of health and hygiene. People no longer want to suffer from the obesity epidemic, especially for their children. They are concerned about sustainability; people want a stable quality of life for themselves, their children, and for years to come. We, as consumers, have to build the future.”

Irana Hawkins, PhD, MPH, RD commented that the Congress reaffirmed the vital importance of what we eat—and the foods we recommend as Registered Dietitians and added:

There was an impressive array of data supporting the merits of plant-based dietary patterns as being good for human health, and the health of the natural environment. For instance, there was evidence of the role of berries and walnuts in decreasing cellular oxidative stress and inflammation. VN member Ginny Messina reminded us of the many nutritional benefits of beans and pointed out that less than 8% of Americans consume beans. Dr. Sharon Ross made an impressive case for nutrigenomics and the ability of bioactive food components to reconstruct our cellular make-up. Dr. Bharat Aggarwal stated while 75% of the nation’s healthcare budget is spent on chronic diseases, the risk of cancer can be reduced 30-40% by adopting healthier eating behaviors. Finally, Dr. Samuel Soret found that vegans not only experience lower rates of mortality than non-vegetarians, but vegan dietary patterns account for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

All of this data reiterates the importance of the foods we eat—and our role as dietitians in disseminating data in a way that entices positive dietary and lifestyle changes. Not only does conveying the scientific evidence of why plant-based dietary patterns improve health clearly align with the mission and ethics of our profession—but also it reinforces the importance of our profession as we lead the charge for creating healthier people on a healthier planet. The data presented help us fulfill our mission of optimizing the nation’s health through food and nutrition, while also striving to reduce impact on the natural environment.

Vesanto Melina summarized a couple of presentations on epidemiological studies of vegetarians:

As we replace animal products with plant foods, we significantly reduce our risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes. This was clearly shown by Oxford University-based research that has tracked the dietary choices, diseases, and causes of death for people eating a variety of diets for the past 20 years. The four dietary groups were 34,000 meat eaters (of a particularly health-conscious variety, compared with the general population); 10,000 people who eat fish but not other meats; 19,000 lacto-ovo-vegetarians; and 2,500 vegans. These findings were backed up by the Adventist Health Study-2 that included 96,000 generally health-conscious people of various dietary patterns from across Canada and the US.

Both of these large and very well designed studies showed vegans to have a lower average BMI, with body weights that are typically in the healthy range, rather than overweight. Vegans also have significantly lower blood pressure, serum cholesterol levels, rates of diabetes, and female cancers. Lacto-vegetarians have reduced risk of gastrointestinal cancers. Vegetarians and vegans have far less likelihood of developing heart disease (as long as they have a reliable source of vitamin B12) and of cancers in general, compared with non-vegetarians.

The 7th ICVN will be held in February, 2018. For more information, go to the Congress website - http://www.vegetariannutrition.org/.
Students Use Food Choices to Reduce Impact on the Natural Environment

Irana Hawkins, PhD, MPH, RD

As a teaching assistant for an undergraduate and interdisciplinary Religion and Ecology course at a private university in the Pacific Northwest, I devised an assignment in which students first documented their ecological footprint using an Internet-based ecological footprint analysis (EFA) quiz. The students were then charged with reducing their ecological footprint by the end of the term in whatever manner resonated with their respective lifestyle. They were also asked to recalculate their EFA at the end of the term, and reflect in writing upon the changes they made throughout the term.

The EFA utilized was designed by the Center for Sustainable Economy (myfootprint.org). This EFA estimates the area of land (cropland, pastureland, forestland) and ocean required to support one's consumption of food, goods and services, housing, and energy—and to assimilate one's waste. More specifically, this EFA is broken down into four consumption categories: your carbon footprint (representing home energy use and transportation), your food footprint, your housing footprint, and your goods and services footprint. Figure 1 demonstrates an example of the results of an EFA:

While dietary factors were not emphasized as a way to reduce one's ecological footprint, more than half (54%) of the 26 students completing the assignment used food choices to reduce impact on the natural environment. These are some excerpts of the diet-related actions that students used to reduce their ecological footprint:

- Purchased food in less packaging
- Increased support of local food producers
- Ate one less meal a day that contained meat
- Composted food waste
- Walked to grocery store
- Ate less
- Used reusable mugs and water bottles
- Switched to a vegetarian diet
- Ate less soy due to rainforest destruction
- Bought in bulk and used fresh ingredients
- Bought foods that created less trash
- Carried and used my own silverware
- Reduced meat intake from three times a day to one time a day
- Took less food from the buffet
- Stopped wasting food—ate everything on my plate or found someone else to eat it
- Stopped “take-out”—stayed and ate at the restaurant to reduce unnecessary packaging
- Started walking or biking to restaurants to reduce carbon emissions
- Ate at home more often
- Ate more vegetables and less meat (cut meat to ½ pound per week); ate lower on the food chain; went meatless for one meal to make a difference
- Started eating more in-season foods to reduce the amount of transportation
- Reduced coffee intake to reduce mileage since coffee is cultivated in the tropics
- Reduced mean intake [of food]…
- Shopped at Farmer's Markets and Cooperative Markets
- Started a small backyard garden
- Started doing more vegetable shopping at Farmer's markets

While time did not permit discussing the rationale for students’ dietary actions in class, an EFA assignment appears to be a useful way to introduce students to personal actions to reduce impact on the natural environment in ways that fit their respective lifestyle. Students may have selected dietary factors as an easy target over which they perceived they have more control versus housing or transportation options. Certainly, further research is warranted to understand why students selected diet-related behaviors to reduce impact on the natural environment—and to understand if such behaviors became a permanent addition to their lifestyle. Additionally, fostering student-led research that uses dietary measures to reduce the impact on the natural environment would be beneficial. In conclusion, an EFA can inform and engage students in connecting dietary choices to reducing impact on the natural environment.
Meet Our Members

Amanda L. Sager, Maj, USAF, MS, RD

Monique Richard is a Second Year Dietetic Intern and MS Candidate (May, 2013) at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). She was the first Student Member columnist for Vegetarian Nutrition Update.

Monique, how did you become interested in plant-based nutrition?

My husband likes to joke that “we ate better when you were not as smart and didn’t know so much.” My interest in plant-based nutrition progressed from curiosity to countless questions on vegetarianism around the time I started my dietetic education and was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. The more I learned about how our environment was impacted from factory farming practices and meat consumption, the more I could not accept eating the typical American diet. When I realized the cruel, inhumane, and unconscionable conditions we put animals through, and the grotesque amounts of meat being produced, I knew I no longer wanted to contribute to any part of it. Cutting out meat and focusing more on a plant-based diet was no longer an option; it was a personal mission.

Please tell us about your training background, and the nutrition-related jobs that you’ve held including your current job.

I have had the pleasure of being part of VN for several years now, becoming their first appointed Student Editor for a term. I have held positions with the Dietitians for Integrative and Functional Medicine DPG which enhanced my dietetic education. I have found an abundance of information to supplement these groups through the Physician’s Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) and the Vegetarian Resource Group (VRG), among many others. I also have good friends who work with Mercy for Animals and others who are vegetarian or vegan, as well as registered dietitians as resources. I use all of this information and experience to counsel patients on plant-based diets throughout my clinical rotations, which take place in a variety of hospital, food-service, and long-term care settings.

What would a day in your life look like?

My days are never boring! I write blogs, do a lot of reading, have conference calls (I am part of many associations, committees, and DPGs), attend board meetings, create projects, presentations, and programs all while finishing up my full-time clinical rotation requirements, Master of Science requirements, and my thesis.

Do you have any recommendations or advice for anyone with a desire to be involved in plant-based nutrition?

Just dive in! There are wonderful resources to take advantage of, including books, magazines, and websites addressing the benefits of going veg, the “how-to” questions, providing recipes, and a foundation of research. You can be as creative or as structured as you want, but understanding the advantages of plant-based nutrition is essential to fully embracing it. Your daily diet and consumer choices really do matter. You can make a difference in the lives of animals, the environment, and your health for life!

Do you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet? Do you favor one over the other?

I follow a vegetarian diet that I would describe as “flexi-vegetarian-vegan” (my own definition). I am not extreme or rigid in my diet choices and menu planning, as I strongly believe in intuitive eating. I think it is a personal decision. As long as a person is getting everything they need nutritionally speaking, in appropriate proportions, both can be equally beneficial.

Do you have any projects in the works you’d like readers to know about?

I am working on a Food Safety Program with ConAgra and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and I am publishing my thesis with ETSU: http://dc.etsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2264&context=etd. I also blog on http://www.allfoodscanfit.com among other publication work, and I am searching for employment opportunities.

What do you like to do outside of work?

Right now “outside of school and work” there is barely enough time for sleep! I do love to travel, to watch movies with my husband, go for walks, and play outside with our dog. I also love anything that challenges me or opens my mind such as learning a new sport or hobby, going to an art gallery or museum, learning a new language or volunteering to help those in need.

What is one of your favorite vegan/vegetarian meals?

Great question—there are so many options! In the winter I love making a huge pot of vegetarian chili with a variety of beans, spices, textured soy protein, onions and mushrooms. It is so deliciously satisfying and healthy, it’s almost like I can feel the nutrients working when I dive into a piping hot bowl! I’ve heard some great feedback about my vegetarian lasagna, pumpkin ‘cheesecake’ (the versatility of soft tofu is amazing), and chickpea couscous salad.

Do you aim to follow any particular ratio of raw to cooked foods? What is your opinion of the raw food diet?

I honestly do not see the long-term benefit or sustainability of a raw food diet or the point of tracking the ratio of raw to cooked foods. It is not to say that it cannot be healthy or does not work for people, but really again it is personal and you have to ask yourself if it can be done (AND ENJOYED) for the rest of your life. Yes, there are enzymes that are not destroyed from being cooked, but heat also has the power to bring out nutrients and kill harmful bacteria, which is not a negative thing. A crisp apple, a crunchy salad, and a variety of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds can be enjoyed in their natural state, preservative-, heat- and process-free, so why not mix it up, and go for balance?

What advice would you give to dietitians who would like to work in the area of vegetarian nutrition?

There is definitely enough research and a basis to promote the benefits of plant-based nutrition—we really can take it into every aspect of dietetics. Get creative and be the influential expert that can help bring about change. I am inspired by all the registered dietitians and health care professionals that are encouraging plant-based diets to their clients everywhere. We can make a difference!
VN Member Guide to Staying Up to Date on Legislative Issues

Catherine Conway, MS, RD, CDN, CDE

Staying up to date on legislative issues both nationally and within your state is becoming more and more important for registered dietitians and registered dietitian nutritionists as it directly affects both our employment and the services the public needs and deserves. Each Academy member receives Eatright Weekly every Wednesday afternoon. The On the Pulse with Public Policy section provides updates on legislative and public policy activities.

This article is a “how to” guide to help you become more familiar with the section of the Academy’s web site that makes it easy for members to be politically active.

Log onto www.eatright.org. Go to the Member section and click on Public Policy. The many sub-topics within this section provide invaluable information for staying current on both national and state legislative issues. Below is a brief description of each sub-topic.

Priority Areas

This section provides detailed information on the Academy’s legislative and public policy priority areas on the following:

- **Consumer and Community Issues**
  1. Prevention and treatment of chronic disease, including health care equity
  2. Meeting nutrition needs through the life cycle: Maternal and child nutrition to healthy aging
  3. Quality food and nutrition through education, production, access and delivery
  4. Nutrition monitoring and research

- **Professional Issues**
  1. Licensure: Protection of the Public
  2. Workforce demand: Assuring the Public has access to nutrition services delivered by qualified practitioners
  3. Outcome driven nutrition services in changing health systems

**Legislative and Public Policy Committee**

The Legislative and Public Policy Committee (LPPC) guides the establishment of the Academy’s public policy work including (but not limited to) activities related to national and state public policy, legislative and regulatory issues. The LPPC reports to the Academy’s Board of Directors and House of Delegates. The LPPC meets monthly via conference call, and at the annual FNCE and Public Policy Workshop events.

State Affairs

State governments play a vital role in creating and implementing policies that serve and protect the public. This section provides information on licensure and certification as well as contact information for your state affiliates.

**Testimony and Statements**

Here you can access any statements or testimonies given by the Academy to various legislative and regulatory committees.

**Rules and Regulations**

Once legislation is signed into law, it is sent to the appropriate government agency to write supplemental rules and regulations so the law can be implemented. Rules and regulations provide the means by which the government can administer a law. These rules are extremely important to the practice of dietetics as they often define requirements for specific services and identify qualified individuals to deliver these services.

The Academy follows the federal rulemaking process daily. Academy affiliates follow state rulemaking.

Academy members should monitor Eat Right Weekly for current information about the Academy’s progress with regard to Federal regulations. At the state level, members are encouraged to work with the affiliate’s State Regulatory Specialist (see State Section for contact information). Members can access current state regulatory activities by visiting the Academy’s CQ State Tracker (see CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY STATE TRACK Section).

**Public Policy Workshop**

This section provides information on the yearly Public Policy Workshop.

**Take Action**

This is one of the most important sections. It contains a link to Grassroots Manager. With Grassroots Manager you are a click away from writing your legislator a letter, sending a fax or direct e-mail or calling an elected official directly. This makes it easy for us to be politically active when the Academy initiates an action alert.

**Legislation**

This section contains the Academy’s position on major legislation and a legislative toolkit to assist RDs in being effective champions of nutrition legislation.

**Congressional Quarterly State Track System**

The CQ Tracker is a wonderful benefit for members with just a few clicks to stay current on your state’s legislation and regulatory reports. On the map you can click on your state and get the current status of legislation and regulatory reports. Another click will give you detailed information.

Cathy Conway is the past Public Policy Chair and is currently VN’s House Delegate.
Vegan Meals at Public Policy Workshop 2013: A Harbinger of Future Progress?

Mark Rifkin, MS, RD

At this year’s Public Policy Workshop (PPW), we were blessed to have successfully arranged for vegan menu options. Progress for this year started at last year’s PPW where others and I suggested changes to the menu to better match not only vegetarian and vegan interests, but also issues of food sustainability and healthy food guidelines.

We were fortunate that these concerns fell upon the ears of Jeanne Blankenship, Academy Vice President for Policy Initiatives and Advocacy. While not a vegetarian, Jeanne saw the merit of the concerns and reached out to see that the concerns were addressed. She invited me to review possible menus, then join her and another Academy staffer at the Omni Shoreham Hotel before PPW to meet with Baris Agacuken, the hotel’s Director of Convention Services. We met at the hotel about a month before PPW and sampled numerous vegan dishes, most of which were far beyond anything one could expect. The mushroom tart was particularly delicious. Baris was very gracious and open to any suggestion we offered. Jeanne also announced her intention to make menus for the second day of PPW totally meatless, in honor of the Meatless Monday campaign. This was even more shocking—I had to take a breath to ensure this was not a dream. Indeed, it was a dream of sorts, but it was also reality.

At PPW, the vegan options were plainly evident. On Sunday, breakfast featured scrambled tofu with mushrooms, carrots, asparagus and red pepper; soy milk was also offered. Sunday’s lunch included a fantastic butternut squash soup with coconut milk, followed by a Portobello mushroom with black beans and steamed veggies. On Monday, soy milk and flax seeds were offered for breakfast with the oatmeal, while lunch included a spinach salad with caramelized pecans and dried cranberries with a raspberry vinaigrette, lentil stew and an apple tart. It was a joy not to be compelled to bring a vegan protein food from home (as I did last year), or bother the staff to ask about ingredients or alternate plate options. As is frequently the case, some attendees at my table were curious how they could obtain a plate similar to mine, since their omnivorous meal was less appealing.

Several take-home messages come to mind: 1) In the words of the writer H.L. Longfellow, “If you only knock long enough and loud enough at the gate, you are sure to wake up somebody.” Or, in the words of Jeanne, use “Consistent Application of Appropriate Pressure” (CAAP). 2) The knocking must be conducted politely and professionally in appropriate settings and with concrete suggestions for improvement; suggestions such as “How about we add spicy lentil soup to our lunch menu?” will be far more effective than demanding “Can’t you offer anything else besides chicken?” Remember, a complaint without a suggested solution is only a wish. 3) Be prepared to expend time and effort to negotiate and discuss options and possibilities. One cannot simply make suggestions and walk away. 4) Be grateful to those who assisted your efforts or helped implement the suggestions. In many cases, they put forth extra time and effort as well—perhaps with resistance from other parties.

I was both honored and humbled to be invited to participate in the process. If we remember that change tends to occur incrementally, and that true change happens at the table of discussion and negotiation, our possibilities are limitless. As your new Public Policy Chair, I look forward to being a part of change for 2013 and beyond.
"We had an activity called “Guess the Grains.” We placed different grains such as barley, bulgur, quinoa, etc. in clear glasses. The activity was a big hit! Many RDs realized that they didn’t know much about the versatility of plant-based diets." - Parul Kharod, MS, RD, LDN, North Carolina

"I invited participants to complete a 7 question vegetarian nutrition quiz to enter a drawing to win a cookbook. Many were surprised by the answers but were happy to learn something new about vegetarian nutrition." - Nicole Lawrence, MPH, CHES, RD, LDN, Arizona

"We were the only DPG represented so we really stood out. Everyone loved the magnets!" - Amber O’Neal, MBA, Georgia
Letters to the Editor

Have you ever wanted to comment on something you read in Vegetarian Nutrition Update? Wanted to share a new resource? Please drop us a note – we welcome letters to the editor. Please send any questions or comments to the Vegetarian Nutrition Update editor at reedmangels@comcast.net.

“In Maryland, the VN display went very well. I chose beans as my focus, with the title "Beans Beans Good for Your Heart." I featured labeled samples from 18 different types of beans, and guests were asked to identify the 19th bean (which was the soybean).”

-Mark Rifkin, MS, RD, LDN, Maryland
Have You Read?

Compiled by Virginia Messina, MPH, RD

**Bone Health**


**Cardiovascular Disease**


Blood pressure decreases more after high-carbohydrate meals than after high-protein meals in overweight adults with elevated blood pressure, but there is no difference after 4 weeks of consuming a carbohydrate-rich or protein-rich diet. Teunissen-Beekman KF, Dopheide J, Geleijnse JM, et al. *J Nutr* 2013;143:424-9.

**Cognitive Function**


**Diabetes**


**Diet Behavior and Nutrition Education**


**Food Allergies**


**Glycemic Index**


**Pregnancy**


**Protein**


**Reproduction**


**Research Issues**


**Soyfoods**


**Vegetarian Diets**


**Vitamin D**


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**Save the Date for the VN Member Reception at FNCE!**

Join us for VN’s Member Reception at FNCE 2013 on Saturday, October 19 6:30-9:00 pm.

There will be complementary food, drinks, music and great company.

Exact location details coming soon!
Pediatric Vegetarians: Weight Management for the Overweight Vegetarian Teen

Julia Driggers, RD, CNSC, LDN

When children hear the word “snack,” what do they think of? Potato chips, fruit snacks, toaster pastries? Most likely, yes! These common items, in addition to other prepackaged goods high in saturated fat and sugars, are typically thought of as snacks. Over the past 30 years the number of snacks Americans eat during the day has increased in both children and adults (1). With this rise, it is vital for parents and health care providers to promote and teach healthy snacking habits to children. This concept is especially important considering that food choices during the early stages of life are often carried on into adulthood (2).

Defining a Snack

It is key that children learn what a snack is. By definition, a snack is a small portion of food eaten between regular meals. It is important to explain to children the difference between a snack and a treat. Snacks are mini meals made up of whole, nutritious foods that are eaten daily while treats are fun foods like cookies and ice cream that are eaten occasionally. Marketed “snack foods” like cakes and bagged chips are in fact treats, not snacks, and should not be eaten daily.

Planning Snacks

When planning snacks, consider the child’s age and preferences. For preschool and grade school children, taste is the most important factor for food acceptance (2). To add flavor to snacks, incorporate fruits like berries, bananas, pineapples, melons and dried fruits. Nut butters as well as honey and agave nectar can make foods sweet using only a small amount. Other factors in food acceptance include texture and smell. Crunchy textures like crisp apples, bell peppers, and celery, as well as ground nuts, flax seeds, and granola can increase palatability. Enticing smells from the kitchen can also intrigue youngsters to sample foods being prepared. Cooking aromas from baked apples, poached fruit, and quick breads could encourage children to taste new snacks.

For adolescents, besides taste, the appearance of the meal and the presentation of food are influential in food choice (2). To make snacks appetizing for teens, use colorful foods like fruits, vegetables, sauces, and cheeses that are pleasing to the eye. Make sure vegetables are served fresh and crisp, not soggy. In addition, adolescents should be taught how to create their own snacks. Try to encourage teens to prepare snacks at home for the school day in order to limit purchasing of prepackaged foods.

Snack Ideas for Children

Children of different weights and ages should be fed different snacks. Children who present as underweight should eat high calorie snacks with added fat. Overweight children should eat lower calorie snacks with bulk from fruits, vegetables, and fiber to help promote satiety.

When choosing a snack for a preschooler, keep it simple with just two or three ingredients, and make it easy to hold. Snacks for school should be able to fit into snack bags or small plastic containers. For grade-school children, try snacks that are fun like mini pizzas, dips, or “ants on a log” to make snack time exciting. Adolescent snacks can look like mini meals with a combination of ingredients and flavors. Because of increased calorie needs during the teenage years, snacks can be accompanied by a glass of milk or milk alternative. The table on the following page provides ideas for snacks and for ways to boost and reduce calories.

Conclusion

Snacks can be real foods made of whole fruits, vegetables, grains, and even dinner leftovers! It is important for parents and healthcare professionals to offer children healthy snacks and teach the difference between a snack and a treat. By learning healthy choices early in life, children and teens will have the tools they need for healthy eating throughout their lives.

References


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Snack</th>
<th>Additions to boost calories</th>
<th>Substitutions to reduce calories</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>5 cucumber slices</td>
<td>3 slices pita bread</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3 cherry tomatoes</td>
<td>½ tsp oil (olive, canola) to be mixed with dressing</td>
<td>2 TBSP low-fat dressing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1/2 celery stick, sliced with 2 TBSP ranch or goddess dressing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 graham crackers with 2 TBSP nut buttern</td>
<td>1/2 banana sliced 1 TBSP honey/agave</td>
<td>4 saltine crackers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 oz yogurt with 1/3 c. berries</td>
<td>2 TBSP ground flax seed 2 TBSP granola</td>
<td>4 oz low fat yogurt</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>½ c. air popped popcorn with 1/2 TBSP oil (canola, vegetable)</td>
<td>Nutritional yeast to taste</td>
<td>No added oil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade School</td>
<td>2 large celery sticks with 2 TBSP cream cheese*</td>
<td>½ c. raisins 1/4 c. dried sweetened cranberries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1/2 slice pita bread</td>
<td>1 TBSP Oil (canola, flax) to be mixed with hummus</td>
<td>5-7 slices cucumber</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8-10 carrot sticks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>with 4 TBSP hummus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veggie Pizza with 1/2 English muffin &amp; 3 TBSP red sauce</td>
<td>1 slice cheddar cheese*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 slice cheddar cheese*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 TBSP bell pepper chopped with 3 sliced mushrooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oatmeal and Fruit with 1 pkt oatmeal</td>
<td>2 TBSP dried fruit</td>
<td>Plain Oatmeal cooked</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 TBSP berries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 TBSP chopped walnuts</td>
<td>1 TBSP chopped walnuts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>Mexican Bowl with ¼ c. black beans</td>
<td>½ c. guacamole 2 TBSP sour cream*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 c. lettuce shredded</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>½ c. bell pepper sliced</td>
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<td></td>
<td>¼ c. corn</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1/4 c. salsa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 pinches cheddar cheese* shredded</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apple Pocket with 1 pita pocket</td>
<td>½ c. ricotta cheese*</td>
<td>2 TBSP unsweetened apple sauce</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 large apple sliced</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 TBSP apple sauce</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1/2 TBSP honey/maple syrup Pinch of cinnamon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trail Mix with ¾ c. almonds</td>
<td>½ c. chocolate pieces</td>
<td>No ready-to-eat cereal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>¾ c. peanuts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>½ c. ready-to-eat cereal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¼ c. dried fruit</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit Pizza with 1 pita pocket</td>
<td>Cream cheese*</td>
<td>1 c. unsweetened apple butter</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 c. apple butter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 c. mixed fruit sliced</td>
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<td></td>
<td>¼ tsp cinnamon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 glass Milk</td>
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*Non-dairy products can be substituted for dairy-containing foods
State Coordinator Spotlight

Michele Damon, RDN, a VN member from NJ, responded to NJ State Coordinator Renee Pieroth, RD’s request for help organizing networking meetings. Michele arranged an Indian vegetarian cooking class for VN members and other RDs in NJ and PA. Rita Shastry, a scientist and cooking instructor taught the 12 enthusiastic attendees about Indian cooking techniques and spices. Participants received 2 CEUs.

Are you interested in getting active in your state but not sure who your coordinator is? Please visit the State Coordinator page on the website (www.vndpg.org) or email State Coordinator Chair, Carolyn Tampe (ctampe@gmail.com). Connect with other members in your state on Facebook! The following states have active VN DPG Facebook pages: Illinois, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

Bookshelf

The Plant-Based Power Diet: 10 Simple Steps to a Healthier, Leaner, Energetic You


Leslie Beck is a Canadian registered dietitian nutritionist. She has written 12 bestselling books, writes a weekly column in the Globe and Mail, and is a regular guest expert on CTV News Channel. This book is divided into three main parts: “A Plant-Based Diet in 10 Simple Steps” (with each step being its own chapter), “The Plant-Based Power Diet” (including food groups, serving sizes, meal plans, and a 7-day menu), and “The Plant-Based Power Diet Recipes” (salads, main dishes, vegetable sides, snacks, and desserts). Part 1 really sets the foundation for the plant-based diet by detailing how it can improve one’s health and the environment. Covering more than half of the book, part one provides information on why a plant-based diet makes sense, how to meet your protein needs, choosing the best carbohydrates and fats, information on supplements, and transitioning to a plant-based diet. I really appreciated that at the end of each “step” (or chapter), she includes a “quick tips” section instructing the reader how to easily implement that particular step. Part 2 is a bit more of the actual “how to” when it comes to meal planning, determining what a serving is, and how many servings of each food group one should consume daily to meet nutrient needs. Part 3 contains 45 recipes, all of which also contain the nutritional information per serving. Overall, I think this is a great book that can be useful to both experienced plant-based eaters as well as people who are transitioning to that type of eating plan. It provides a lot of nutrition information that the average person consuming a vegetarian or vegan diet may not be aware of, while at the same time giving information to the “new” plant-based eater in such a way that does not bore the more knowledgeable reader. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to increase his or her knowledge of a whole-foods, plant-based diet.

Reviewed by Christine E. Marquette, RD, LD, CLT, ACSM Certified Health Fitness Specialist

Vegetarian Resource Group Holds Vegan Networking Dinner at FNCE

The Vegetarian Resource Group (VRG) will hold a vegan networking dinner during the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics’ Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE). The dinner will be on Sunday, October 20, at 6:00 pm at Café TH (a Vietnamese restaurant), 2108 Pease Street, Houston, TX.

For more information, please see http://www.vrg.org/vrgnews/2013apr.php#10 or contact The Vegetarian Resource Group at vrg@vrg.org or (410) 366-8343.
Meet Your Executive Committee

Chair
Gita Patel, MS, RD, CDE, CLT, LD
Etna, NH

Gita was raised in India in a traditional vegetarian family that practiced Ayurvedic medicine so her first experience with food involved health and medicine. For most of her adult life, she has helped individuals enjoy the health benefits of a vegetarian lifestyle. She has taught nutrition through vegetarian cooking in a variety of venues including television. Gita provides medical nutrition services for various health conditions, she is an author of Blending Science with Spices and also speaks at state and national conferences promoting plant-based eating for health, prevention and managing chronic diseases. Gita partners with individuals and organizations that need the science of nutrition translated into a healthy vegetarian lifestyle. For fun she enjoys gardening, golf, hiking, friends and family.

Chair Elect
Amy Rose Sager, RD, LDN, CLT
Osterville, MA

Amy Rose is a Registered Dietitian and Certified LEAP Therapist who enjoys helping individuals improve their health through lifestyle changes. Her experience in leadership at district and state levels in Massachusetts provides her the enthusiasm and vision to work with VN and promote vegetarian diets.

Past Chair
Christine Bou Sleiman, MS, RD
Los Angeles, CA

Christine is the director of the Network for a Healthy California program whose goals are to transform the norm in low-income communities by doubling fruit and vegetable consumption, increasing daily physical activity and reducing hunger and food insecurity. She became a more active member of VN when she served on the Nominating Committee. Shortly after, she became the RD Resources Coordinator and facilitated the publication of various fact sheets which are posted on the VN website (www.vndpg.org). She is currently working on a cookbook with her mother that will highlight the plant-based Lebanese cuisine of her childhood. One of her passions is to show people how delicious a plant-based diet can be and to encourage them to lower their intake of animal products in order to feel healthy. At age fifteen, Christine did a complete turnaround and switched to a plant-based diet. Health concerns had prompted her search toward a healthier lifestyle and the results prompted her lifelong mission to teach healthy living to others.

Secretary
Debbie Petitpain, MS, RD
Charleston, SC

Debbie has been a Registered Dietitian for ten years and works with weight loss surgery patients at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) in Charleston, SC. Debbie joined VN in 2000 and has written for the newsletter and served on the Nominating Committee. In addition to her work as an outpatient dietitian, she has been professionally involved in sustainability efforts at her worksite and is part of the leadership team for the MUSC Urban Farm, a half-acre parking lot turned green space that serves as a hands on environment for education and inspiration.

Treasurer
Linda Rankin, PhD, RD, LD, FADA
Pocatello, ID

Linda is a Professor and Assistant Dean at Idaho State University (ISU). She teaches classes in the Dietetics and Health Education programs and manages student affairs in the Division of Health Sciences. Within VN, Linda is a grant reviewer for VN’s Research Award and a member of the Education Fund Oversight Committee. She has previously been Chair, Treasurer, Student Membership Chair, and Idaho State Coordinator. Notable accomplishments include spearheading the first strategic plan for the VN DPG, organizing the first spring transition meeting, and developing the Speaker Stipend Award Program. Linda received the VN Award of Excellence in Leadership and Service in 2011. Food is her passion as well as her professional interest, and she regularly teaches a class entitled, Healthful Cooking, where students learn how to make healthy food that tastes good. She produced and hosted the television show “What’s Cooking at ISU” from 1999 – 2002 and regularly appears on ISU’s current television show, “Idaho State of Mind.” When she’s not cooking or eating, Linda enjoys traveling, hiking, and playing the flute.