A global phenomenon, the Meatless Monday movement benefits human health, animal welfare, and the environment

BY RUTHANNE JOHNSON

First-grader Jayden Ochoa's school, the Academy for Global Citizenship in Chicago, has joined the international movement to go meatless on Mondays.
The appeals for support came from the top. First during World War I and again during World War II, when three American presidents urged the nation to adopt voluntary meatless days to conserve food for the troops and allied countries. The response was overwhelming—during WWI, more than 13 million families pledged to reduce their meat consumption.

Generations later, Meatless Monday was back—but not because of scarcity. This time it was spawned by an overconsumption of meat that’s contributing to record numbers of cases of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and a litany of other diseases. Backed by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health’s Center for a Livable Future, Meatless Monday is now standard fare in corporate cafeterias, restaurants, schools, health institutions, and home kitchens.

As the nation’s second largest public school system, Los Angeles Unified School District is one of many institutions proving that Meatless Monday is feasible even on a broad scale. “We cook from scratch, too,” says LAUSD deputy director of food services David Binkle. “So no one can say they can’t do it when here we are doing it 600,000 times a day.”

Over the past two years, HSUS food policy manager Kristie Middleton has helped shepherd more than 100 schools, school districts, universities, and hospitals into the program. In her outreach to large-scale food service operations, Middleton emphasizes that current levels of meat consumption—9 billion animals raised for food each year—are directly tied to industrial factory farm practices that value efficiency over animal welfare. By helping to reduce the numbers, these companies can pave the way for more humane methods such as those practiced by traditional family farms.

“These institutions can sometimes serve hundreds of thousands of meals in a single day,” says Middleton, “meaning a significant reduction in the amount of meat served, and thus, animals raised in intensive confinement.”

Meatless Monday goes hand in hand with The HSUS’s Three Rs approach to humane eating: reduce consumption of animal-based foods, refine the diet by selecting products from producers who follow higher welfare standards, and replace animal products with plant-based foods. HSUS toolkits provide step-by-step instructions, marketing ideas, and recipes.

The campaign goes beyond the mass market to reach the family dinner table: Roughly one in five Americans participate in Meatless Monday, according to a meat industry study. Some have even tried the following recipes gleaned from weekly HSUS e-newsletters that promote healthy, humane eating. We’ve collected our farmer’s-market-fresh favorites and dished them up here with a side of inspiration: profiles of institutions that have helped make Meatless Monday a cultural phenomenon.
PEANUT SAUCE
2 tablespoons fresh ginger, minced
¼ cup hot water
½ cup peanut butter
2 tablespoons soy sauce
4 tablespoons rice vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar
1 garlic clove, minced
¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes

SERVES 8

PREVIOUS SPREAD: JASON GEIL/FOR THE HSUS. THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT: DAN SCHNITZER/ACADEMY FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP; MICHELLE RILEY/THE HSUS. OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM LEFT: MEREDITH LEE/FOR THE HSUS; VICTORIA COHEN/HUNTS POINT ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN

TO MAKE THE DIPPING SAUCE, COMBINE THE FIRST SEVEN INGREDIENTS IN A SMALL BOWL AND SEASON TO TASTE WITH RED PEPPER FLAKES. SET ASIDE.

TO MAKE THE ROLLS, COMBINE THE BEAN THREAD NOODLES, CABBAGE, CARROTS, BELL PEPPER, GREEN ONION, AND SESAME SEEDS IN A LARGE BOWL. PLACE THE CILANTRO, BASIL, AND TOFU IN SEPARATE WORK BOWLS NEARBY.

TO SOFTEN THE RICE PAPER, FILL A PIE PLATE OR SHALLOW BAKING DISH WITH TEPID WATER. PLACE 2 OR 3 RICE PAPER SHEETS IN THE WATER AND ALLOW THEM TO SOAK ABOUT 45 SECONDS TO 1 MINUTE. REMOVE ONE AT A TIME AND CAREFULLY STACK BETWEEN SHEETS OF PAPER TOWELS. CONTINUE SOAKING AND DRAINING UNTIL YOU HAVE SOFTENED 16 SHEETS.


KEEP THE ASSEMBLED ROLLS UNDER WET PAPER TOWELS COVERED WITH PLASTIC WRAP. STORE AT ROOM TEMPERATURE UNTIL 3 HOURS; DO NOT REFRIGERATE BECAUSE THIS WILL DRY OUT THE ROLLS.

Recipe adapted from Wedding Showers by Michele Adams and Gia Russo.
Estimated Meals Served Daily: 4,000

The Inspiration: The Hunts Point Alliance for Children—a partnership of six schools and other nonprofits—is dedicated to providing youth opportunities, including a summer camp for humane living. “Middle and elementary school is the prime time to educate kids about being kind to animals …” says HPAC managing director Maryann Hedaa. “They get it.”

After an HSUS presentation last fall, partner school St. Ignatius became HPAC’s pilot for the Meatless Monday initiative and now offers vegetarian options most Mondays. JVL Wildcat Academy, an alternative high school, is now developing vegetarian recipes in its culinary arts program.

Meatless Faves: Tacos packed with marinated veggies and textured vegetable protein, created by sous-chef Luis Novoa, a former JVL student

Bringing It Home: At St. Ignatius’ cooking classes, parents and kids learn how to make “healthy, nutritious meals that are within their economic means,” Hedaa says.

Top Tips: JVL principal Marc Donald suggests enlisting the support of community leaders and parents. Meatless Monday also leads to teachable moments, says HPAC board member Michelle Icahn, by providing a hook for classroom discussion.

Did You Know?

It can take up to 50 TIMES more water to produce meat than plant-based foods.*

3,600 schools, hospitals, and restaurants participating in Meatless Monday!


Black Bean, Mango, and Avocado Salad

One 15- or 16-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 medium avocado, cut into ¼-inch dice
1 mango,* cut into ¼-inch dice
½ red bell pepper, cut into ¼-inch dice
1 to 2 green onions, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons lime juice
Fresh cilantro, minced (optional)

1. Combine all the ingredients in a serving container.
2. Stir together and serve.

* If fresh mango isn’t available, substitute frozen (thaw overnight before using).

Recipe adapted from Vegan Express by Nava Atlas.

NEW YORK, N.Y.

DID YOU KNOW?

SERVES 6

It can take up to 50 TIMES more water to produce meat than plant-based foods.*

3,600 schools, hospitals, and restaurants participating in Meatless Monday!

Estimates of Meals Served Daily: 3,000

The Inspiration: When dining services marketing manager Rebecca Sexton read an email about Meatless Monday from The HSUS’s Kristie Middleton, she was immediately intrigued. “It was the healthy thing to do,” she says, especially in one dining hall dominated by meat and comfort foods.

The food service team experimented with plate presentation, offered samplings, and broadened the recipe palette. Their strategy worked, as evidenced by the small uproar when the vegetarian entrée was relocated on the serving line and students feared it had been nixed. Two years later, Meatless Monday is going strong. “It truly resonates with our population,” says Sexton.

Meatless Faves: Scratch-made falafels drizzled in cucumber sauce and tucked in a pita pocket

Bringing It Home: Sustainability interns blog, tweet, and post on Facebook every week about upcoming vegetarian entrées and the benefits of healthy eating; the college also educates students about the environmental impacts of factory farming. In the main dining hall, a media station broadcasts the day’s vegetarian dishes on two flat-screen televisions, helping build interest and tantalize taste buds.

Top Tips: Be creative, advises Sexton. “If you make recipes presentable and tasting good, your battle is won.”

Preheat oven to 325°F. Trim about 3/8 inch off the top of each tomato and discard. Use a small spoon or melon baller to remove the seeds and most of the flesh, leaving a clean shell. Lightly salt the inside of the tomatoes and place upside down in a colander to drain off some moisture.

Put the onion, garlic, olives, and 1 tablespoon of the oil in a medium pan and cook on low heat for 5 to 6 minutes to soften the onion completely. Remove from heat and stir in the panko, herbs, capers, and pepper. Taste and add salt if desired.

Wipe the insides of the tomatoes with a paper towel, then fill them with the herb stuffing, pressing down very gently as you go to get a nice dome of stuffing on top.

Place the tomatoes in a greased ovenproof dish and drizzle lightly with the remaining oil. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until the tomatoes soften. Serve hot or warm.

Recipe adapted from Plenty by Yotam Ottolenghi.

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Trim about 3/8 inch off the top of each tomato and discard. Use a small spoon or melon baller to remove the seeds and most of the flesh, leaving a clean shell. Lightly salt the inside of the tomatoes and place upside down in a colander to drain off some moisture.
2. Put the onion, garlic, olives, and 1 tablespoon of the oil in a medium pan and cook on low heat for 5 to 6 minutes to soften the onion completely. Remove from heat and stir in the panko, herbs, capers, and pepper. Taste and add salt if desired.
3. Wipe the insides of the tomatoes with a paper towel, then fill them with the herb stuffing, pressing down very gently as you go to get a nice dome of stuffing on top.
4. Place the tomatoes in a greased ovenproof dish and drizzle lightly with the remaining oil. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until the tomatoes soften. Serve hot or warm.

Recipe adapted from Plenty by Yotam Ottolenghi.

**U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization 2006 report.**

**2011 online poll by FGI Research.**

**2006 study sponsored by the American Meat Institute and Food Marketing Institute.**

Sign up for a weekly Meatless Monday recipe at humanesociety.org/getrecipes.
The Inspiration: Dawn Cascio’s interest in Meatless Monday was sparked at a “Healthy Kitchens, Healthy Lives” conference, which highlighted research showing that plant-based diets are the healthiest. “We knew Meatless Monday was a great way to spread that message,” says Cascio, director of food services at the 451-bed hospital.

The kickoff menu included flavorful Asian lettuce wraps, while interns donned farm animal costumes. Cascio says the vegetarian meals are so appealing that few even notice they’re meat-free. Since the program began, more than 400 employees have signed the Meatless Monday pledge.

Meatless Faves: Black bean quesadillas, noodle bowls, and wheat berry salad with spinach, blueberries, pineapple, molasses, and mint

Bringing It Home: Email blasts and recipes posted on Facebook and the hospital’s Intranet educate people about meatless menus and the benefits of plant-based diets. Banners, buttons, and aprons advertising the program keep staff and diners engaged in healthy dialogue.

Top Tips: Cascio first pitched the idea to her boss before sending letters and Meatless Monday buttons to the executive team—“because if they buy in, the employees will buy in,” she says.

KUNG PAO TOFU

SERVES 5

| 2 tablespoons sesame oil | 1 teaspoon garlic, minced or powdered | 1 cup roasted peanuts, salted or unsalted |
| 1 small onion, diced | ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste | ½ cup chopped green onions |
| 5 ribs of celery, diced | 1⅛ cups cold water | Optional add-ons: Grated ginger, diced peppers, or chopped broccoli |
| 8 ounces ready-to-serve teriyaki tofu, diced medium | 2 tablespoons cornstarch | |
| ¼ cup peanut butter | | |
| ½ cup soy sauce | | |

Recipe adapted from The Vegan Family Cookbook by Brian P. McCarthy.

SHARE YOUR RECIPE!

Already a Meatless Monday fan? We’re collecting favorite winter comfort food dishes for our November/December issue. Send us your tastiest plant-based recipe, and you may be featured in All Animals! See humanesociety.org/recipecontest for rules.