

Vegvibe

MAY 2010

**We go
Pasta-manic
this month!**

Also in this issue:

The Conundrum of Doing Good, Awesome Auckland, Knowing Your Shiitake, Raw Foods and Our Survey to Establish the Number of Vegetarians in Singapore

The Chief Veggie Speaks!

Things are hotting up over at **VegVibe** as we proceed to the next stage - bringing this virtual phenomenon into the physical realm. The decision has been made to launch a print issue and the first edition can be expected sometime in the fourth-quarter of this year. Yes, I know this is an enigmatic timeline that doesn't say much, but hey - no suspense, no fun!

In the meanwhile, we continue to create quality content in our online issues and this month is no different. From covering all the wonderful experiences that Auckland, New Zealand, has to offer (*Page 06*) - which is surprisingly vegan-friendly by the way, to getting hold of a revealing report on the incredible amount of unnecessary waste that goes on in Singapore supermarkets (*Page 02*), we have kept our eyes out for the important and our ears on the ground for the current.

We also go Pasta-crazy in this issue and offer up some delectable dishes for you to try at home (*Page 16*). In addition, we are honoured to feature a poignant reflection by Ms Veron Lau of the *Cat Welfare Society* (*Page 10*) on how activists can get in the way of one another, and commemorate Mother's Day by featuring a dotting vegetarian mother as our Vegetarian Hero for May (*Page 14*).

Finally, we are embarking on an important project to find out how many vegetarians there are in Singapore (*Page 18*) and intend to present our findings in our inaugural print issue. Thus a hectic second half of the year awaits the team at **VegVibe** and we are still as excited as we were when our first-ever issue was released 10 issues ago!

As ever, we continue to include updates and breaking news stories on the **VegVibe blog** at <http://vegvibe.com/blog>, and remain contactable via email at vision@vegvibe.com and through our website at <http://vegvibe.com>, thank you.



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*The editor would like to thank
Ms Tan Chia Ling for graciously agreeing
to be featured in this issue.*

The Era of Supermarkets

Three journalism students from NTU discover how flawless food and fully stocked shelves at major grocery stores are grooming a generation of spoilt, picky shoppers

A well-coiffed, savvy shopper with a mission, Sandy Teo picks up a roll of lettuce and turns it around to check for tints of yellow. Once she spots the slightest sign, it gets tossed back to the rack like a basketball.

The process continues until she finds her ideal lettuce – perfectly green, flawless, free of worm bites. Back home, the 35-year-old peels off the first two layers as they are deemed unclean to eat.

Unknown to her, the first two layers were once the fifth and sixth layers of the lettuce two days ago. From farm to fork, food goes through progressive rounds of cosmetic filtering, where it gets discarded for looking less than perfect according to market standards.

Before Madam Teo's supreme roll of lettuce hit the rack, it went past the sharp eyes and skilful hands of vegetable sellers at Pasir Panjang wholesale market, where the first phase of cosmetic filtering takes place. Every day, 250 vegetable sellers at the market spend dusk to dawn trimming, preening and discarding "ugly" vegetables (below) to prepare



By Estelle Low & Miak Aw
with photos

them for sale to hawkers and wet market sellers.

The criteria: vegetables must be free of pest marks, be in the right shade of colour and not look too ripe. "Of course I've to make my vegetables look nice. If not, who will buy them?" says stall owner Albert Li, 60. He estimates about one-third of all vegetables at the wholesale market get thrown away for not meeting the mark.

Based on our observations at food waste recycling company *IUT Global*, the market discards up to 30,000 kilos of unwanted vegetable parts and blemished fruits every day.

Beauty Showdown at Supermarkets

On a quiet Monday afternoon in Vivocity, three China-born ladies huddle at the vegetable section of Giant hypermarket, where a massive pile of caixin and lettuce were carelessly strewn on three makeshift tables.

In one second flat, the fate of those vegetables, which formed a good quarter of the pile, was sealed. Over an hour, the ladies fill up two large trash bags, enough to supply a family of four for one month, assuming an individual eats 300 grammes of vegetables a day.

By 5pm, more than 20 trash bags – weighing an average of 20 kilos each – were tossed into the food waste dump. After the first round of stringent vegetables screening by Pasir Panjang wholesale sellers, supermarkets take on the judge's role.

Staff who are employed to filter off defected or damaged fresh produce, can be found at all six major supermarket chains – *Fairprice*, *Cold Storage*, *Shop N Save*, *Sheng Siong*, *Giant* and *Carrefour*. Fairprice has "procedures and audits in place to ensure only good quality items are displayed for customers," says its spokesperson.

Once fresh produce show the slightest defects or are deemed unsellable by supermarket staff, they will be thrown away. Most often, vegetables and fruits form the bulk of the unsellable fresh produce due to their perishable nature. This constitutes 10 to 15 per cent of the total fresh produce stock at Sheng Siong.

At Carrefour, a manager estimated that the hypermarket loses about \$12,000 worth of fresh produce and dry groceries (canned, bottled and pre-packed) every month (Carrefour did not officially confirm this figure).

Food suppliers are expected to clear their goods at least one week before their stated expiry dates, according to Mr Ang. These goods are usually brought back to their warehouse to be resold to food establishments or manufacturers. The leftovers are dumped.

Singapore generated 570 million kilos of food waste in 2008, according to figures from the *National Environment Agency*. In the same year, statistics from *International Enterprise Singapore* show that Singapore's net food imports amounted to 3,000 million kilos. Using back-of-the-envelope calculations, Singapore may be throwing away up to 20 per cent of its overall food supply every year.

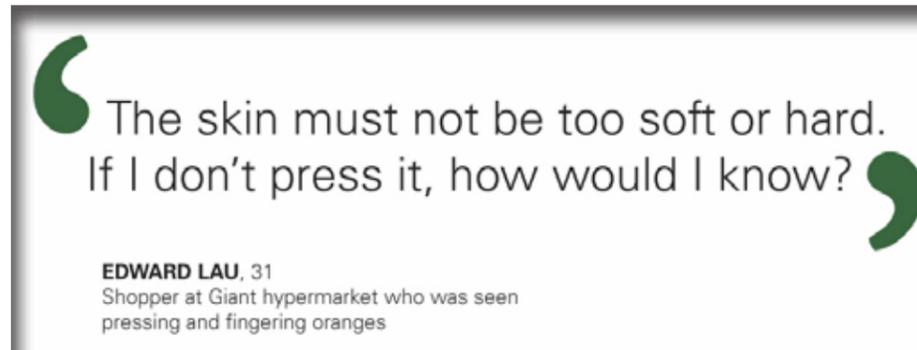
Shoppers' Quest for Perfection

At Carrefour in *Plaza Singapura*, Korean strawberries are going at \$1.99 per pack. But there is a catch. The strawberry packs are slightly ajar. Upon closer look, the lush red strawberries already bear dent marks formed by human fingers.

Those peering at the dented strawberries turn away instinctively. Those who prefer to stretch their dollar start kneading the strawberries, whose juices have seeped out, forming light pink pools in the packs. Half an hour later, the number of dented strawberries has multiplied threefold.

Apples are fingered for dent marks, an indicator of

damages; oranges get pressed to feel the thickness of their skins, an indicator of juiciness; peaches are pinched to test their softness, an indicator of ripeness.



An informal survey of 174 Singapore residents found that four out of five make a conscious effort to pick the best-looking food

while grocery shopping. Those who say so believe that food that looks good tastes fresher.

But vegetable stall owner Lee Nguan Kheng, 64, says it is pointless to be obsessed over the cosmetic appearance of groceries. "Everyone thinks that green lettuce is the best but the inside is still tough. Older people will prefer ugly-looking lettuce because after removing the outside, the inside is soft and good."

Operations control manager for fresh produce, Maggie Tan, 51, who has been with Giant for eight years, notices that Singaporeans are a "strange bunch" who like to press their fruits before buying them. "But we can't ask them to stop pressing. We can only stand there and watch," she says in dismay.

Buy Two, Waste Three

It is every shopper's delight to see items on "sale", "promotion" and "offer". But those great deals are also ingenious ways to clear excess stock at supermarkets.



Eco-Living

Under the terms of the contract between supermarkets and food suppliers, it is the latter's responsibility to keep shelves well-stocked at all times or risk getting "blacklisted", according to former frozen seafood supplier Joseph Quek, 42.

This means the suppliers' contracts could get terminated or they could face other forms of penalty. This pushes suppliers to constantly replenish their shelves with newer products even before the expiry dates of the older ones draw near, leading to a pile up of soon-to-be-expired stock.

"When unsold food is not utilised or resold to someone else, that's food wastage. But there's no consolidated government body to monitor that,

1) ANNUAL NET FOOD IMPORTS

3,799 (imports)
- 766 (exports)

3,033 million kilos

2) PERCENTAGE OF FOOD WASTE

570 (annual food waste)
/ 3,033 (net food imports)

18.8%

not that I'm aware of at least," says Nichol Ng, 32, managing director of food distribution company *FoodXervices*.

Assistant manager Vernon Ling, 32, who shops at Carrefour once every week, admits to overbuying when supermarkets tout promotions to clear their goods. Once or twice a year, Mr Ling discards forgotten bottles of sauces and condiments that have gone past their 'use by' dates.

The era of supermarkets is now. Simply put, the more we want, the more we waste.

This article was first published on **Food Waste Republic** on 25th March 2010 and the original report is available at www.foodwasterepublic.com

Uniflora® Acacia Honey (500g bottle) - S\$30 (organic option available)

Hailed as 'liquid gold' in Europe, Acacia Honey carries a light floral aroma and is said to improve digestion, regulate intestinal activity and assist liver and kidney detoxification. It also contains a lower GI value (at one teaspoon a day) than other types of honey, which makes it a suitable sweetener for *Type II* diabetics.

Uniflora® Linden Honey (500g bottle) - S\$20 (organic option available)

Linden Honey carries a unique lime aroma due to the fact that the Linden tree is a species of lime, and helps to relieve cold, flu, cough, sinusitis, headache, sleeplessness and anxiety.

Buy both the Uniflora® Acacia Honey and Linden Honey as a set and get 10% off with free delivery and a complimentary wooden honey stirrer - call 6227 9812 to place your order now! enquiries@api-uniflora.com www.api-uniflora.com



Know Your Shiitake!

First cultivated in East Asia over 6000 years ago, shiitake mushrooms were considered medicinal and a symbol of longevity.

Shiitake mushrooms are high in iron, proteins and vitamin C.

Higher grade shiitake mushrooms have flower-like cracking patterns on the mushroom caps.

Choose shiitake mushrooms that are firm and plump and avoid those with slimy spots.

Shiitake mushrooms have one of the highest concentrations of L-ergothioneine, a powerful antioxidant - 40 times more than wheat germ.

Consuming shiitake mushroom oil has shown to be able to reduce deep vein thrombosis.

Drying shiitake mushrooms is a common method of preserving them indefinitely - they can also be pickled or frozen.

Shiitake mushrooms contain lentinan known for its immunity enhancing properties.

Extracts of shiitake mushrooms are now used in cosmetics to enhance youthful appearance.

The capital of New Zealand at one point in its history, Auckland may be currently home to one-third of the country's population but the actual number of residents is only 28% that of Singapore's.

Awesome Auckland

By Ganga

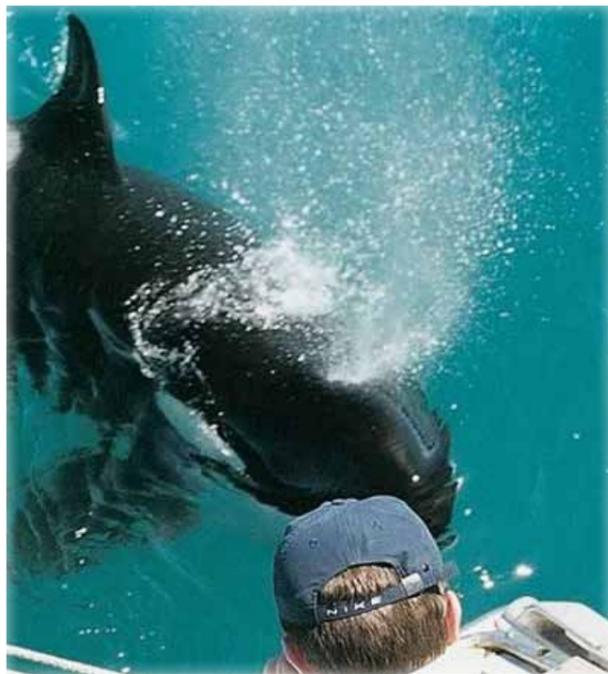
Covering an area that is 1.5 times bigger than our own island state, Auckland is a popular destination for honeymooners, what with the scenic locales and a host of activities from bungee-jumping to spa treatments awaiting the traveller, and promises to be that exotic holiday you've always wanted at a fraction of the cost - the New Zealand dollar is only at 99 Singapore cents, whilst the Australian dollar is at S\$1.25!

From backpacker hostels to lodges and serviced apartments, there is something suitable for everyone and anyone visiting Auckland. Weather-wise, reaching only as high as 24°C during the summer months and a not-too-low 7°C during winter, travellers from Singapore or Malaysia would find the difference in climate a welcome change (especially from these recent months of intense heat).

Best of all, with 1 in 5 residents being of Asian origin, there is bound to be a level of familiarity whilst moving amongst the people there.

Things to do

Known as *The City of Sails*, Auckland lays claim to the honour of being the most yacht-rich city in the world. And unsurprisingly, it offers a range of sailing-related adventures such as yacht cruises to enjoy the sunset (NZD\$60 onwards) as well as the *Whale & Dolphin Safari* which promises to show you (right) whales, dolphins



and other marine animals in their natural environment (NZD\$150) - boasting a sighting rate of 90% for dolphins and 75% for whales.



The *Auckland Museum* (above, admission donation of NZD\$10 required) and *Auckland Art Gallery* (admission is free but NZD\$7 is required for special exhibitions) meanwhile offer the record of New Zealand's heritage, including *Maori Performances* (NZD\$25), whilst guided *Heritage Walks* are separately available to bring tourists around a few historic suburbs.

And for those who want to take in the beauty that Auckland's nature has to offer - not to mention, without having to feel all hot and sweaty due to its mild climate - there are several parks and beaches to visit such as the *Auckland Botanic Gardens* (free entry).

As for the more specific appreciation of roses, the *Dove Myer Robinson Park* (more commonly known as the *Parnell Rose Gardens*) showcases new and old rose varieties, many of which have been bred by internationally celebrated rose breeders (the recommended visiting period is between October and April, and entry is free).

Adventure seekers can seek out *Sky Walk* and *Sky Jump* which is literally a no-holds-barred adrenaline rush-filled activity (NZD\$260) atop the 192-metre *Sky Tower* which is located within the city itself.

For sports enthusiasts, you may even be able to catch the *All Blacks* (reknowned New Zealand national rugby team) in action if you plan your holiday dates in advance - they play friendly games in Auckland once or twice a year.

Shopping & Entertainment

There is no shortage of shopping choices and Auckland offers both the 'night market' atmosphere at the sea village of *Devonport* and *Howick Village*, as well as the more upmarket experience at *Chancery*. In addition, the suburban areas of *Ponsonby*, *Parnell* and *Newmarket* are also well known for their fashion shopping.

Thus, from unique arts & crafts and Pacific Island

themed treasures, to typical mall shopping not unlike Orchard Road here in Singapore, to markets that cater to bargain hunters seeking fresh food, collectibles, clothing and secondhand goods, Auckland certainly offers all this and more.

For the Veg Traveller

Vegetarians will be pleased to note that the *New Zealand Vegetarian Society* itself is based in Auckland and runs *The National Vegetarian Centre* at Warborough Avenue in Epsom.

There are in fact many options all over Auckland available to those who require vegetarian cuisine. In addition, there are a host of department stores and convenience shops that offer vegetarian snacks and even those who specialise in whole foods and organic produce (as ever, *Happy Cow* offers the comprehensive list).

With a welcoming environment gifted by nature that has all the trappings of an urban jungle to boot, coupled with a well-developed landscape that provides for the dietary needs of the vegetarian and vegan community, Auckland is definitely one worry-less destination for all travelling vegetarians.



Places to Eat in Auckland



Photo courtesy of Animal Freedom Aotearoa

From the organisation that operates the *Loving Hut* franchise here in Singapore, the *Golden Age* restaurant is a vegan outlet that offers Chinese-styled cuisine comparable to the Chinese vegetarian food found in Singapore. *Golden Age* is located conveniently near the *Sky Tower* and is open on Mondays from 10am to 4pm; on every Tuesday to Friday from 10am to 9pm; from 11am to 9pm on Saturdays; and from 4pm to 8pm on Sundays.

Golden Age

61 Victoria Street West, Auckland City

Tel: +64-09-3032531

www.veganrestaurant.co.nz

Blue Bird Vegetarian Café
299 Dominion Road, Mt Eden
Tel: +64-09-96234900
www.thebluebird.co.nz

A vegetarian restaurant that prides itself on being vegan-friendly, the *Blue Bird Vegetarian Café* is owned by an inspired follower of Sri Chinmoy, a philosophical guru. Originally by a different name at a smaller location, the cafe at its present location continues to have a strong following since 1997. *Blue Bird Vegetarian Café* is open from Monday to Saturday from 10am to 8pm, except on Wednesday and Saturday when it closes earlier at around 3pm.



Using a social-enterprise approach, *Wise Cicada Wholefood Café* is a community business that provides a organic wholefoods store, bookstore and naturopathic health clinic all under one roof. Rated as a place where you can always feel at home, it is also a place to connect with like-minded vegetarians. While the establishment does not use meat, dairy or eggs, it does use honey so do countercheck with the staff. *Wise Cicada* is open Monday through Saturday from 8.30am to 6pm and from 10am to 4pm on Sunday.

Wise Cicada Wholefood Café

23 Crowhurst Street, Newmarket

Tel: +64-09-5299529

www.wisecicada.co.nz



Photo courtesy of InDesign

Almost all parents invariably suffer the torment of unsolicited criticisms when they choose to raise their children as vegetarians - from the anxious grandmother to the 'knowledgeable' experienced parents among co-workers and friends, everyone will have something to say and rarely will it be support.

By Ganga

Such is societal pressure today that many women succumb to this unfounded notion that a vegetarian diet for an unborn or newborn child is somehow detrimental to its health, and start consuming meat or meat-derived by-products from pregnancy to the child's first few years.

It is therefore heartwarming to note that a very useful resource is available to new parents who are embarking on a brave journey to bring up their children vegetarian in this judgemental world - simply titled *Raising Vegetarian Children*.

From outlining the philosophy to providing a handful of recipes, *Raising Vegetarian Children* offers a holistic presentation of the concept of vegetarianism and how one can prepare the mind and body to adopt such a lifestyle. It reads more like a well-researched textbook with a clearly marked content page.

This is not surprising as the authors are renowned experts in the field of nutrition - Joanne Stepaniak is the author of several best-selling cookbooks, whilst Vesanto Melina is a nutrition consultant who has worked with the *American Dietetic Association* among others.

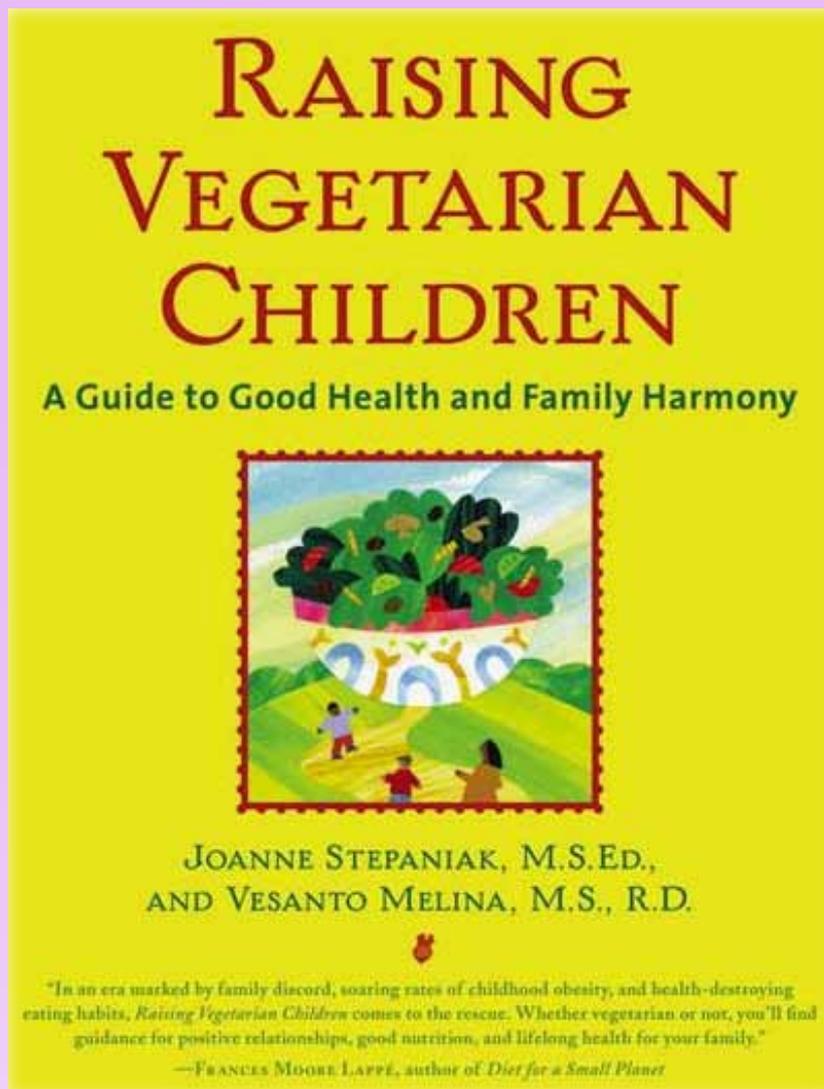
With the voluminous (almost) 400-page book divided into 3 main sections which tackle the philosophy (*Approaches to Vegetarian Living*), nutrition (*Nourishing Our Children*) and the necessary tools in the kitchen (*Recipes for All Occasions*) respectively, the in-depth discussion for each section alone can qualify as a book in itself!

Most parents though will zero in on the second section which starts by allaying the fear that a vegetarian diet is somehow less than ideal. It then goes into the description of all the different types of non-meat sources of nutrition available before discussing the nutritional needs of babies (up to 3 years of age), growing children aged between 2 and 12 years of age, and finally, the dietary needs of teenagers.

The discussion also covers the psychological needs of children during these growth stages and offers strategies to manage anticipated challenges such as eating whilst on excursion away from home and addressing eating disorders which may manifest under the guise of vegetarianism.

Finally, in addition to the plentiful information contained in the book, there is also a relatively comprehensive list of resources for those interested to seek out further information.

Raising Vegetarian Children: A Guide to Good Health and Family Harmony is available via Amazon.com for USD\$17.56 (S\$25) and there is a copy each at the National Library and Bishan Library available for loan.



The Conundrum of Doing Good

We are bonded by a common goal - the welfare of animals - but not too surprising, there are also hot buttons that constantly feed an adversarial, even self-destructive undercurrent within the community. These buttons surround what constitute doing right by the animals and are also entangled with what we expect of the people trying to do right.

There are three schools of thought:

NO KILL, FULL-STOP - we do not 'play God' by shortening the lives of the animals under any circumstances. This philosophy subscribes to the notion that PTS (*Put To Sleep*) is taking the easy way out. The rescue efforts of such volunteers have brought back animals from the brink of death but there are also questions about whether animals are put through extreme suffering.

NO KILL FOR HEALTHY ANIMALS - all abandoned animals without health issues deserve a chance at life. Stepped up fostering and rehoming efforts result in many animals finding new homes or shelter care. The flip side is the inevitable overcrowding of shelters and over-stretching of resources.

RIGHT TO QUALITY OF LIFE - animals are assessed on whether they can live free of suffering and with care and love. Whilst this enables saved animals to enjoy high standards of care, it can be argued that many animals are denied a second chance.

The arguments for *Life* versus *Quality of Life* deserve grave thought, dialogue, and even tension, to achieve the clarity that leads to better understanding and outcomes.

But more often than not, we smother the complexities of these views with an uncompromising certainty and conviction that

By Veron Lau

spark hostility and mistrust towards those who should make better allies than enemies against a larger wrong - apathy and malice.

It's bigger than our differences

This predicament is somewhat tied to the expectation we place on people who profess to do good - we expect them to be saints. This unrealistic expectation then leads to a disproportionate disappointment when we realise that they are exactly like everyone else - just human.

This is certainly not unique to those involved in animal welfare. But when differences in opinions arise about the welfare of an animal, a person's character, decision and position can so easily be called into question and used against them - as they often are.

The sad fact is that we can never do right by an animal completely because we will never truly be sure what is 'right'. The animals cannot tell us and we only presume by intuition and experience.

Anyone can be assassinated on the fact that they do too little or too much, their methods are wrong, their actions ill-informed. The fact that the person chooses to care as compared to the multitude of people who clearly do not is totally lost in the whole circus show of reproach.

The stress and burden a caregiver undertakes is considerable, and the urgency and immensity of the problems can drive the best people a little off the wall. Belligerence, arm-twisting and emotional blackmail are therefore part and parcel of the rigmarole of negotiations that go on daily in the quest by animal activists to secure the limited supply of help and support that is available; it is practically in the job description.



But crossing the line to spread vitriol and venom, whether deliberate or on impulse, takes the entire movement backwards. It makes people defensive and wrecks the opportunity to build trust and relationships, share valuable information and learn from one another which is what we all need.

Committed or Obsessed?

Every movement needs its hardcore battleaxes who take on a lion's share, have a voice and aren't afraid to use it. But a new generation of animal welfare advocates must make a conscious effort to allow room for moderate views into leadership.

This new generation may not be inclined to downgrade their jobs for the flexibility of time to save cats or sell their house to treat a cat without a leg and bladder function. They may even forthrightly admit that they are not out to save every cat.

There is *commitment and dedication*, and then there is *fixation and obsession*. Many of us traverse this fine line in the murkier phases of our life's work. I am not yet 40 and I have 10 cats so I know something about fixation and obsession!

Different Peas in a Pod

There are several broad types of animal people and, like it or not, they all have something to offer.

1. There are those who believe that suffering is part and parcel of life. They do what they can, when they can, for their pets or the small circle of community animals near them.

2. Then there are those who believe suffering can be defeated if everyone can do their part. They want to help as many animals as they can but at the same time believe that sustainability is important to the welfare of the animals under their charge. They are mindful of not biting off more than they can chew.

3. Others believe suffering is the bane of life and that animal suffering mirrors the ills of this earth. They go to great lengths to save the animals. They believe that few people will do as they do but largely accept this.

4. There are also those who expect that others who dare to call themselves animal advocates go as far as they do.

5. Finally, there are a handful who would go to extraordinary lengths to save animals, even to the point of their own destitution.

Hard questions but respect the answers

How do we weigh spending on the emergency treatment of one cat against the sterilisation of 10 others who have been targeted for culling? How do we weigh taking in a family of abandoned kittens and working intensively on a responsible ownership campaign? These are difficult questions that 100 people will have 1,000 opinions on.

Ideally, people of all strengths and convictions should step forward to do one thing or another, recognising that everyone's views are equally as important. We will never be able to resolve all our differences but we can be mindful of how far we should take our words and actions with regard to others, remembering that there are the multitudes out there that deserve more of our energy for indignation.



Art by Rheann Kester

Out & About

Enticed by a deceptive lunch buffet advertisement on their website, I ventured to the Suntec branch of *Bombay Cafe* to test the buffet which boasts an ensemble of 8 curries, countless desserts and a myriad of *naans*.

The advertised price was S\$9.90 but unfortunately, it was not mentioned that this only applies to take-away orders. The dining-in price for the buffet is in fact S\$14.40+, which is a stark difference to the price in the advertisement.

As for the food, the *naan* was well-cooked, although perhaps not that aromatic. All the curries were certainly competent with the *mutter paneer* hosting a generous amount of paneer, although I found the curry to be too creamy and bland. On the plus side, starters such as *pani puri* and *papdi chat* are also offered as part of the buffet.

Whilst the decor and ambience of this eatery



*Review with photos
by Luke Otter,
blog author of
The Hungry Ang Mo*

exudes luxury and originality, the price might be considered too steep for some, especially as comparable quality food can be found at other eateries. Definitely worth going for the dining experience or whilst doing some shopping at Suntec City Mall, just don't expect a value-for-money experience.

Bombay Cafe Xpress' Bombay Buffet Promotion is available on Monday through Thursday from 11.30am to 2.30pm.



Bombay Cafe Xpress
Suntec City Mall #B1-020
3 Temasek Boulevard
Tel: 62388239
www.bombaycafe.com.sg

Review with photos
by Luke Otter,
blog author of
The Hungry Ang Mo

**Sagar Ratna
Vegetarian's Paradise
103 Syed Alwi Road
Tel: 63417797**

Syed Alwi Road is synonymous with an abundance of vegetarian restaurants, and *Sagar Ratna* is probably the most impressive eatery on the stretch - especially so for its buffet. At a total price of S\$10 per person, the buffet spread certainly offers an incredible value-for-money. With unlimited *naans* at your beck and call, and the smell of creamy mouthwatering curries drifting throughout the restaurant, it is indeed a paradise of sorts.

on the flip side, very little paneer can be found. The paneer itself is made fresh, and is thus soft and viscous. Pots of Chinese-style noodle and rice options are available but the Indian pots are the highlight of the spread. The free-flow of *naans* were enough to get me giddy, especially as they might very well be the finest *naans* in Singapore - charred more than usual whilst being crisp and fluffy, all packaged with a divine aroma. A definite hit for value and quality, *Sagar Ratna* is a real gem of a restaurant.

Sagar Ratna Vegetarian's Paradise is open daily from 10am to 1am, and the buffet is available every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 7.30pm onwards.



The *daal makinni* is a delightfully thick and creamy curry which is quite different to the more conventional *daal*. The *mutter paneer* meanwhile is a titillating medley of spices, but



*Tan Chai Ling, 38
Homemaker*

It's never easy raising children as vegetarians and that much more difficult when you're the only parent who is the vegetarian. But that's exactly how Chai Ling manages with her 2 young children, Lee Jia Le (2 years & 9 months) and Lee En Le (1 year & 4 months).



A vegetarian for half her life, she credits her eldest sister for being the catalyst - she had once lent Chai Ling the book *Monkey God's Tour of the Hell*. While admitting that she did not exactly read the story, she was nonetheless drawn to the illustrations which depicted animals in tears when they were being slaughtered.

This instigated her compassion and she remembers one particular caption in that book vividly - *'To cultivate a heart of compassion, start from the dining table where no blood was shed for your meal'*.

An Inspiration for All Mothers

It is obvious that Chai Ling is sincere about being compassionate to other sentient beings and being practical and realistic at the same time.

From defending the choice to raise her children on a vegetarian diet against criticisms from relatives, to rejecting her gynaecologist's earnest suggestion to "not be vegetarian for this period", she says, "How can I rejoice in the life of my child knowing that it ends the lives of other beings?"

At the same time, she is mindful that her children may choose not to be vegetarians one day and although she'd be heartbroken and hopes such a day never comes, she has a contingency to patiently wait for her 'stray' children to "eventually learn to show empathy towards the animals and find their way back".

But for now, in anticipation of her children to start schooling soon, she has been studying and experimenting with lunchbox recipes and hopes to be ready to whip up some healthy dishes for them to pack to school.

She is happy to share her little darlings' favourite food - Jia Le is besotted with muffin and barley whilst En Le's favourites are avocado and potato.

Journey of Challenges

As to the constant battle against criticisms from non-vegetarians, Chai Ling simply arms herself with enough knowledge on nutrition so that she knows exactly what to say to debunk the misconceptions people rely on to challenge her children's diet.

She advises other parents who intend to raise their children as vegetarians to believe in themselves. with the knowledge that "you are giving your child the best start of its life when you raise him/her as a vegetarian, or better still, a vegan".

She is clearly driven in observing her philosophy - "I want to teach my children from young that it's wrong to take lives, be it humans or animals, like what we have been taught by our mum since young that it's wrong to steal, to fight, and to kill".



Poignant Questions

Chai Ling feels disturbed when she hears meat-eaters justify their dietary choice by saying, "I only eat it. I didn't kill it." She asks why it has not dawned on them that when they consume meat, they are encouraging the abattoirs to slaughter more animals. "Why have they failed to see that

when there's a demand, there's a supply?"

She also cannot comprehend why some people practise double standards. She recounts an incident when a relative once shared with her how she prefers fish to be cooked but who was also against fishing which this relative felt was cruel. On another occasion, she witnessed someone exclaim, "Hey, the sheep are so adorable!" upon seeing a herd of sheep wandering around in a farm, and at the next moment, that very person was helping herself to the lamb chop on the table!

Finally, with a question that will make any parent sit up and think about their actions, Chai Ling asks, "To those parents who think that meat should form an integral part of your diet, how would you feel if your child were gobbled up by a tiger?"

1) *What is one veg food that describes you best and why?*

Plain white rice. On its own, it can be a dish; it doesn't need any other ingredients, seasonings or spices. I'm plain and simple just like the rice.

2) *If you were given one wish for the world, what would it be?*

I hope people will come to the realisation that animals do have the right to live in this world.

3) *What misconception about vegetarianism gets your goat?*

It's unhealthy to be vegetarians. "If you don't eat meat, where are you going to get your protein from?"

4) *What is your favorite book or show on vegetarianism?*

Finding Nemo - I like the way it shows the fish gasping for air when they were being caught and how worried the papa Nemo was when he found his son missing.

5) *What would be a 'Quotable Quote' to you?*

*"Think of me tonite, for that which you savor
Did it give you something real, or could you taste the pain of my death in its flavor?"*
- Wayne K. Tolson, from "Food Forethought" -



Pasta-Mania!

Method

- 1) In food processor, blend baby spinach leaves, laksa leaves, cashews, garlic and chilli padi until smooth
- 2) In pan, sauté onion in olive oil over low heat until it browns, then add blended ingredients and salt, and allow to warm through (do not bring to high heat), before setting aside
- 3) Boil pasta according to package instructions but reserve 60ml of pasta cooking liquid
- 4) Mix pasta and cooking liquid into prepared pesto sauce, then serve warm with some sprinkled laksa leaves



Laksa Spinach Pesto

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <i>120g baby spinach leaves</i> | <i>1/2 tablespoon olive oil</i> |
| <i>45 laksa leaves</i> | <i>1 small onion, diced</i> |
| <i>80g raw cashews, soaked</i> | <i>1 teaspoon salt, or to taste</i> |
| <i>3 cloves of garlic</i> | <i>250g angel hair pasta</i> |
| <i>2 chilli padi</i> | <i>laksa leaves and chilli padi for garnish</i> |



Method

- 1) In pot, heat olive oil and sauté onions until brown
- 2) Add garlic and ginger, then sauté until fragrant before adding tomatoes and cooking until soft
- 3) Add remaining vegetables, bay leaf and soy sauce with water, then bring to boil
- 4) Add pasta and boil until cooked before removing from heat
- 5) Stir in miso paste and adjust seasoning before serving immediately

- | | |
|--|--|
| <i>1/2 tablespoon olive oil</i> | <i>1 litre water</i> |
| <i>1 medium onion, minced</i> | <i>1 bay leaf</i> |
| <i>3 cloves garlic, minced</i> | <i>100g canned button mushroom, sliced</i> |
| <i>1/2 thumb sized ginger, minced</i> | <i>1 tablespoon soy sauce</i> |
| <i>2 tomatoes, diced</i> | <i>200g macaroni pasta</i> |
| <i>50g baby corn, sliced</i> | <i>3 tablespoons miso paste</i> |
| <i>50g carrot, diced</i> | <i>salt and pepper to taste</i> |
| <i>50g snow peas, sliced into half</i> | |

Hearty Macaroni Stew

300g beancurd, cubed 150g cabbage
 1/2 tablespoon olive oil 10 dried chilli, ground into flakes
 1 medium onion, sliced 3 tablespoons soy sauce
 3 cloves garlic, sliced 200g shell pasta
 1 tomato, diced salt to taste
 80g chye sim

Spicy Pasta Shells



Method

- 1) Deep fry beancurd and drain on paper towel
- 2) In pot, boil shell pasta according to package instructions
- 3) Meanwhile, heat olive oil in wok and add onions before sautéing until brown
- 4) Add garlic and sauté until fragrant before adding tomatoes and cooking until soft
- 5) Add remaining vegetables, deep-fried beancurd, chilli flakes and soy sauce and cook until soft
- 6) Add cooked pasta to mixture and stir-fry until well mixed and adjust seasoning

Olive Couscous (RECIPE BY NUR AISHAH)

1/2 tablespoon olive oil 20g raisins
 1 medium onion, diced 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 3 cloves of garlic, diced 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1 tomato, diced 200g couscous
 1 small carrot, diced 250g water (or as directed on package)
 10 canned olives, sliced

Method

- 1) In pot, heat olive oil, then sauté onion and garlic until brown and fragrant
- 2) Then add tomatoes, carrot, olives, raisins, cayenne pepper and salt before adding water and bringing to boil, then remove from heat
- 3) Add couscous and allow to sit in hot water for 2 to 3 minutes (refer to package instructions for cooking couscous)
- 4) Rake with fork until fluffy before serving hot



So, how many vegetarians *are* there?

In spite of the growing number of vegetarians, vegans, and people who are neither but still are deeply concerned and mindful of healthy living, an indicative number of vegetarians in Singapore - as well as what types of vegetarians make up the community - has never been compiled.

Meanwhile, in the United States, the *Vegetarian Resource Group* regularly (about once in 3 years) commissions the research firm *Harris Interactive* to conduct online surveys on its behalf and the latest poll of 2,397 US adults (aged 18 years and above) in 2009 puts the estimate at 3% of the population as observing a vegetarian diet.

Unfortunately, there exists no figures for the community in Singapore with which we can attempt to make a reliable comparison. If one were to start asking around, the information would be hardly conclusively and would be best-guess estimates of long-time vegetarians who have networked widely; or based on the number of Buddhists and Hindus in Singapore.

The Problem

The dearth of indicative figures as to the number of vegetarians and what type of philosophy they might subscribe to (i.e. religiously motivated, ethically driven or compelled by compassion) is unbecoming for a well-connected and efficient country like Singapore.

The implications include manufacturers who are left in the dark as to the market potential of this segment of their consumer base and authorities who are often left wondering if the *Vegetarian Society (Singapore)* is representing a handful of vegetarian food lovers or acting on behalf of a serious movement comprising concerned citizens (it is the latter, of course).

Thus *VegVibe* has decided to embark on a major project to collect preliminary quantitative data with regard to the number of vegetarians in Singapore. We intend to collect responses from as many people as possible and, more importantly, draw inferences as to the type of vegetarians we

VegVibe Research

have here.

Methodology

We will be limiting the survey to just dietary preferences so that it is easy for the respondents to assess their choices accurately. We will also be keeping the survey very short and specific so that as many responses as possible can be collected. In fact, it will take less than one minute to fill out the survey form - the screen capture on the left comprises the *ENTIRE* survey form.

We will continue to collect the data until July 2010 and report our findings in our August 2010 issue. However, depending on the volume of responses, we may continue the collection phase over a longer period to gather more rigorous data.

We do understand that this attempt may result in only vegetarians responding (since our network is largely within the community) which would consequently skew the results. However, we are confident that we will still be able to at least offer a breakdown of the types of vegetarians in Singapore, which would be equally useful in identifying our independent strengths as a collective movement.

Be Part of the Solution!

In any case, the success of this project will depend largely on the consolidated effort of everyone and the 2 things that are essential include:

- ensuring that YOU fill out the survey;** and,
- ensuring that you pass the message on and encourage others** (vegetarians and meat-eaters alike) to contribute to this project as well.

It is our sincere hope that the results of this preliminary survey can provide the mandate to call for a larger study or investigation into the extent of vegetarianism in Singapore, as such an understanding coupled with the availability of concrete and reliable figures will lead to more support and due recognition for the community - both morally as well as tangibly.



Vegetarian Society (Singapore), VSS, is a non-profit, non-religious organisation formed in 1999 which is also a member of the International Vegetarian Union. We strive to build a more humane and harmonious world for everyone on the planet - for our children, as well as for our fellow creatures.

For the year 2010, as we enter into our second decade of existence, we would like to become a thousand-strong society - which can then move mountains. And for this, we need your support - both from the pocket and the heart.

If you are not yet a member, please consider putting your thoughts into action by committing a **monthly contribution of just S\$5** to enjoy VSS Premium Membership as well as \$100 worth of food vouchers per year, discounts on all VSS organised events, invitation to special 'Members Only' events, and a complimentary copy of the *Singapore Vegetarian Food Guide*.

Meanwhile, if you have already become a member (*thank you!*), please help us to encourage your friends and family who support the work that VSS does to turn their moral approval into physical action by joining us officially as a member.

Just drop us a line at soh@vss.sg for the GIRO form to be mailed to you, or download the GIRO form from the VSS website and mail it to Seeds of Hope, Vegetarian Society (Singapore), 3 Pemimpin Drive, #07-02, Lip Hing Building, Singapore 576147.



<http://www.vegetarian-society.org>

Vegetarians in Singapore Exit this survey

1. Default Section

VegVibe magazine, Singapore's premier magazine that exclusively covers issues that matter to the Vegetarian and Vegan community (including nutrition, environmentalism and animal welfare), has embarked on this nation-wide survey on dietary trends. We hope to use the data collected here to help inform industry and government on the needs of vegetarians and the various subcultures therein.

We thus appreciate your interest and participation in this survey and trust that you will indicate your lifestyle choice truthfully and to the best of your knowledge.

Please use the following definitions when indicating your dietary preference:

- Non-Vegetarian - someone who has no particular dietary preference
- Flexitarian - someone who tries to be a vegetarian but allows him/herself the flexibility to eat meat
- Pescatarian - someone who does not eat meat at all but is comfortable eating seafood
- Religious Vegetarian - someone who observes a vegetarian diet on certain days due to religious beliefs but otherwise eats meat
- Vegetarian - someone who consumes only plant-based food and may also additionally consume dairy (Lacto Vegetarian) and/or eggs (Ovo Vegetarian)
- Fruitarian - someone who eats only fruits, nuts and juices
- Vegan - someone who consumes only plant-based and plant-derived food (e.g. avoids eggs, milk, butter, cheese, yoghurt, sour cream, whey, casein, honey etc.)

Please base your selection on your current lifestyle and limit your assessment to your dietary choices only. If you are unable to select one clear category that defines you, then please consider your dietary preferences over the last 12 months and choose the category that best defines your behaviour over that time period.

1. What is your dietary preference?

I would describe myself as a...	I consume eggs	I consume dairy (i.e. milk, yoghurt, cheese, butter, etc.)	I consume the 'five pungent spices' (i.e. garlic, onion, chives, spring onion or scallion, and leek)	I consume ONLY raw food	I have NOT changed my preference in the last 12 months	I follow this preference strictly without exception
Non-Vegetarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flexitarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pescatarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religious Vegetarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vegetarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fruitarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vegan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

CLICK ON THIS LINK TO ENTER YOUR SURVEY RESPONSE NOW - [HTTP://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/S/85L9QRL](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/85L9QRL)

RAW FOODS

By Halimah

is it for everyone?

What do Demi Moore and Woody Harrelson have in common? Other than being Hollywood celebrities, both are strong advocates of a raw vegan diet - a diet that entails eating only plant-based food such as fruits, nuts and vegetables sans any form of cooking or processing.

While it might seem unpalatable to many, the vegan raw food diet is slowly gaining popularity as a result of more awareness on its benefits. Raw veganism argues that uncooked food contains more nutrients and points out that the high heat involved in the cooking process destroys vitamins and enzymes. For example, blanching broccoli causes it to lose 47% of its Vitamin C content.

Also, raw veganism believes that cooking food with sugar causes harmful chemical reactions which can lead to inflammatory diseases and other health issues. Furthermore, by consuming whole unprocessed foods, raw vegans by default do away with high fats, preservatives, artificial flavourings and fillers that are normally found in most commercially-manufactured products.



Photo courtesy of People. Places. Objects.

The Upside

Instead, the raw vegan diet is high in antioxidants, fibre and heart-friendly fats which paves the way for better health, radiant complexion, greater energy and even weight-loss for those struggling with losing those extra pounds.

Apart from health benefits, raw veganism also arguably benefits the environment. By relying only on unprocessed foods, raw vegans simply do away with lots of plastic packaging that is an integral part of all convenience and processed food.

Typically, the simplified approach of raw veganism

leads to less fossil fuels being utilised in the food preparation process, and most raw vegans are mindful of eating local - purchasing produce that is farmed physically closer to them - and are front-runners in significantly limiting their carbon emissions.

The Downside

However, in spite of all the advantages, the raw vegan diet has its fair share of downsides. For one, some food can be toxic when in its raw state - Buckwheat is known to contain a chemical that can cause photosensitivity and dermatological problems in fair-skinned people, for example. Thus it can be posited that cooking serves to break down such harmful toxins and chemicals that can be dangerous to humans.

There is also the suggestion that raw vegans are susceptible to Calcium and Vitamin B12 deficiencies and might lack essential amino and fatty acids as well.

On the financial front, raw veganism - although one might feel the simple sustenance would be cheaper - sometimes

requires heavy investments into equipment like powerful blenders, juicers and dehydrators. And while it can be questioned if the equipment matters, some raw vegans swear that such equipment does help to improve the variety in their food.

The Verdict

So is raw food for everyone? Whilst increasing consumption of raw fruits and vegetables is definitely beneficial to one's health, the long-term benefits of raw veganism are still inconclusive. It may therefore be a worthwhile endeavour to explore the diet for yourself but those pregnant and young children, especially, should be mindful about going 100% raw - for now.

Photo courtesy of Oh She Glows



How often do you come across an ingredient list that reads ‘almonds, dates and unsweetened bananas’? Completely raw, unprocessed and vegan, *Larabar – Banana Cookie* is a slice of ultimate goodness in a convenient pack - the blend of bananas, dates and almonds is akin to biting into a slice of luscious banana bread. Each bar, in fact, contains one whole banana, enough dates to meet 12% of the daily recommended intake of potassium, and almonds to provide Vitamin E, antioxidants and 2.7 grams of heart-healthy *Omega-6* fatty acids. *Larabar – Banana Cookie* is suitable for both sporting enthusiasts as well as a quick pick-me-up in between meals.

Larabar – Banana Cookie retails online at www.vitamin.sg for S\$4 a bar

www.pacificfoods.com

Made with roasted hazelnuts, *Pacific Natural Foods’ Hazelnut Milk* has an exceptionally robust and rich flavour. Vegan certified and produced using sustainable methods, this beverage is smooth and creamy making it the perfect addition to cereals and coffee - or enjoyed with a squirt of chocolate syrup or just on its own. And what’s more, unlike some other commercial brands, this is sweetened with brown rice and contains no artificial flavours.

Pacific Natural Foods’ Hazelnut Milk retails at S\$5.95 a 1L pack and is available at all major supermarkets

www.juiceorganics.com



Photo courtesy of Blueberry Hill

Made with natural organic fruit juices such as grape, pomegranate, pineapple and papaya, *Juice Organics – PomWash Exfoliating Facial Foamer* exfoliates skin for a smooth and illuminated complexion. Made with 100% vegetarian ingredients with no animal testing, this gentle facial foam contains none of the harmful *parabens, sulfates, synthetic fragrances and dyes* found in most drugstore brands. Its naturally-fruity aroma is refreshing and leaves the skin clean yet soft and moisturised. Packaged in recyclable plastic, this product comes with a handy dispenser that allows for easy control.

Juice Organics – PomWash Exfoliating Facial Foamer retails at S\$23.90 per bottle and is available at Watson’s Department Store



If you would like to 'Talk Shop' about any product or provide further information on those featured in this column, please drop us an email at vision@vegville.com

ADVERTISE WITH US

To ensure that **VegVibe** remains sustainable in the long term, we have devised a hassle-free model for advertising.

For all the online issues of **VegVibe**, you can advertise your product or service in a half-page space for a flat rate of \$50 per issue, so do drop us an email at vision@vegville.com if you want to reach out to over 1,000 discerning readers who read **VegVibe** because they really want to!

We accept placement requests from both individuals and businesses alike, with the only stipulation being that any advertisement should be beneficial to the vegan and vegetarian community.

We currently have over 250 subscribers and each issue is downloaded about 500 times every month, not including the countless email forwards that we estimate would further add between 100 and 200 to this figure. We also maintain a fan page on facebook that has attracted over 300 fans - click on the button to join us there!



“The standard diet of a meat-eater is blood, flesh, veins, muscles, tendons, cow secretions, hen periods and bee vomit. And once a year during a certain holiday in November, meat-eaters use the hollowed-out rectum of a dead bird as a pressure cooker for stuffing. And people think vegans are weird because we eat tofu?”

**Robert Cheeke,
Vegan Bodybuilder
and Activist**

