WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES

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.
Estimated Meals Served Daily: 600

The Inspiration: For this public charter school, Meatless Monday “fits perfectly with our philosophy of healthy kids, a healthy environment, and compassion towards animals,” says director of sustainability and operations Dan Schnitzer.

When a student seems uninterested in the food, staff will eat with the child to inspire him to at least give it a try. The school’s garden, solar panels, and backyard chickens give students hands-on experience with sustainable living. “They really like taking care of [the chickens],” says Schnitzer, remembering their concern for one sick hen. “She stayed in my office during the day. … The kids would pop in every now and then and say, ‘How’s Buttercup doing?’ ” Students collect eggs to give away for home use and will soon harvest vegetables for the school’s kitchen.

Meatless Faves: Vanilla-spiced oatmeal, confetti soup, and tofu posole

Bringing It Home: For families interested in Meatless Monday at home, AGC provides recipes and pamphlets.

Top Tips: Just try it, Schnitzer advises. “The concept won’t resonate with everybody. But it will be successful if the food is good.”

---

**SUMMER ROLLS WITH PEANUT SAUCE**

**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

**SUMMER ROLLS**
- 3 ounces bean thread noodles, cooked and drained
- ½ cup finely shredded green cabbage
- 1 cup finely shredded red cabbage
- ½ cup grated carrot
- 1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup sliced green onion
- ¼ cup sesame seeds, toasted
- 1 pound teriyaki tofu, thinly sliced
- 16 cilantro leaves, whole
- 1 bunch Thai basil
- 16 six-inch-round rice paper sheets

SERVES 8

1. To make the dipping sauce, combine the first seven ingredients in a small bowl and season to taste with red pepper flakes. Set aside.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. Turn over the stack and begin working from the bottom of the stack first. Place a softened rice paper sheet on a clean work surface. On the bottom third of the sheet, pile ¼ cup of the noodle mixture. Just above the noodles, add tofu slices, a cilantro leaf, and a basil leaf.

5. Fold the bottom of the paper up and over the noodle mixture, then fold each side toward the center, rolling gently and as tightly as possible from the bottom until completely rolled. Place the rolls seam-side down on a plate and continue until all the ingredients have been used.

6. Keep the assembled rolls under wet paper towels covered with plastic wrap. Store at room temperature up to 3 hours; do not refrigerate because this will dry out the rolls.

Recipe adapted from Wedding Showers by Michele Adams and Gia Russo.
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.

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)

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

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

Recipe adapted from Vegan Express by Nava Atlas.

NEW YORK, N.Y.

Estimated Meals Served Daily: 4,000

DID YOU KNOW?

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

3,600 MM

schools, hospitals, and restaurants participating in Meatless Monday!

**Estimated Meals Served Daily:** 3,000

**The Inspiration:** When dining services marketing manager Rebecca Sexton read the 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.”

---

**HERB-STUFFED TOMATOES**

4 medium tomatoes (ripe but firm)  
½ teaspoon salt, or to taste  
1 large onion, finely chopped  
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

12 wrinkly (dry-cured) black olives, pitted and roughly chopped  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1¼ cup panko (Japanese bread crumbs)  
2 tablespoons chopped oregano

3 tablespoons chopped parsley  
1 tablespoon chopped mint  
1½ tablespoons chopped capers  
Black pepper and salt, to taste

---

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.
RIDGEWOOD, N.J.

Estimated Meals Served Daily: 2,500

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 small onion, diced
5 ribs of celery, diced
8 ounces ready-to-serve teriyaki tofu, diced medium
¼ cup peanut butter
⅛ cup soy sauce
1 teaspoon garlic, minced or powdered
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
1 ⅛ cups cold water
2 tablespoons cornstarch
4 cups prepared sticky rice
1 cup roasted peanuts, salted or unsalted
½ cup chopped green onions
Optional add-ons: Grated ginger, diced peppers, or chopped broccoli

1. In a 3-quart saucepan, sauté the onion and celery in the sesame oil until tender.
2. Add the tofu, peanut butter, soy sauce, garlic, and cayenne pepper. Stir well.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the cornstarch and water; add to the saucepan.
4. Over medium heat, cook the tofu-and-sauce combination until hot and thickened, stirring frequently.
5. Serve over a bed of rice. Garnish with peanuts, green onions, and your choice of optional add-ons.

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.