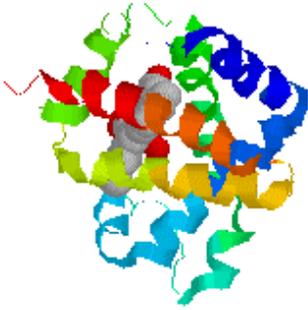


Where Do You Get Your Protein?

by: Kenneth Frawley



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Contrary to the general, uninformed consensus, vegetarians are not circus freaks! Nor are they beings hell bent on depriving themselves of the basic nutrients needed to sustain a healthy functioning body, simply to jump onto some fad of a lifestyle! In fact, all biases aside, unlike those who, with horror-struck faces, unceasingly ask that dark, tellingly ignorant question, *“Where do you get your protein?”* vegetarians are far more learned about diet and nutrition than the run-of-the-mill-mainstream-feeder.

To begin with, vegetarians accept the science, the science that informs us that the human intestinal tract is physically NOT the proper tool for digesting regular quantities of meat. It is like tackling a Phillips head screw with a small flathead screwdriver, it's simply an inefficient tool for the job. Examining the physiological aspects of this condition further, vegetarians have learnt that this limitation is due to the lengthy intestines within the human being. Unlike other meat-eating predators who possess much shorter intestinal tracts, it is that rather considerable length that makes it impossible for humans to digest and pass the meat they consume in a timely manner, a circumstance that leads to a myriad of health problems. (Parham, 1979)

Yes, human beings have been devouring meat since man first learnt to hunt. However, hunting the woolly mammoth was not an easy task for the ancient man. He also did not have the luxury of riding his

Diplodocus,  the SUV of the time, through the drive-thru for a quick bite of Brontosaurus, fries and a coke. Thus, early humans did not consume meat two to three times a day. Basically gatherers, the staples of the early human diet were fruits, grains and vegetation, which together, supplied more than sufficient protein when meat wasn't available.



So to answer that insulting, and rather ignorant question, protein is obtained from a number of other sources. Meat is NOT the only source of protein on the planet! Legumes contain an enormous amount of protein. Ah, but one might be one of the few *mainstream-meat-eaters* who have heard about this *complete protein* concept. Well, firstly, well done! Yet, just what does the term "complete protein" actually mean?

Protein is made up of amino acids. The human body is able to manufacture twelve key amino acids, but an additional nine *essential amino acids* must be obtained from food sources. Meat, simply because it contains the essential acids, has been labeled a "complete protein". However, complete proteins can easily be obtained from a combination of other foods. For example, the combination of beans and rice, form a complete source of protein. (Klaper, M.D.) Also, peanut butter on a slice of grain bread forms a complete protein. There is also the so-called "kooky food" Tofu, and the list goes on and on. Yet protein gets much too much press, most of it being uniformed, and dangerously over inflated.

The average adult requires 50-65 grams of protein a day. More than that, over an extended period of time, *will* lead to serious disease. Why? Well, the human body simply cannot store protein. (Russell/Sceppa, 1999) Thus, any excess protein it receives must be broken down and excreted by the kidneys, placing further burden upon them as they perform their normal function of regulating blood pressure, filtering toxins from the blood, processing vitamin D, and manufacturing certain key hormones. Also, an excess of protein makes the body acidic, which, in turn, rapidly depletes the body of calcium. (Parham, 1979) Low calcium-levels, as a result, sets the body off in search of sodium, where it commences stripping it from the lining of the stomach and the body's joints. The result, stomach troubles, indigestion, stiff joints, weak bones and osteoporosis, not to mention cancer and blood disease! (Parham, 1979)

"Then how can you eat enough vitamin B12? It only comes from meat. Doesn't it?"

Question number two is also infuriating! The answer, food sources, such as *tempeh*, *miso*, and sea vegetables often contain large amounts of vitamin B12. Also, some vitamin B12 appears to be found in organically grown plants, albeit in extremely small amounts. Then there is also supplementation.

"What happened to make you so weird, so worried about what you eat?"

Not that it's the business of that throng of perplexed, brow-bending mainstreamers who demand answers for my concerns, it's time to insert a brief story. Firstly, a desire for an in depth knowledge of protein is not what placed this *veghead* on the yellow-vegetable road. Eating healthily was the furthest thing from my mind. Like everyone else about me, I was a mainstream feeder. I ate whatever I liked. What had initially set things in motion and eventually opened these eyes to the horror of red meat and junk, and fast food consumption, was an incident that occurred in my seventeenth year.

I'd got a job, to which I went to straight after school. Next door to the office was a rather greasy take-away shop. One night, during my dinner break, I raced over to fetch what had become my favorite meal, a double cheeseburger and a fizzy drink of some sort, and proceeded to wolf them down in the office lunchroom. Whilst in my rapture, the office dolt entered, pointed at my fizzy and announced, in the form of a question:

"You know that has embalming fluid in it, don't you?"

Having little patience for the man, I quickly told him to “*clear off!*” and went, unwittingly, about gulping down that heaven of a meal. Moments later, curiosity took hold, and I turned the bottle round and began to read. To my great surprise, I could not understand a single word on the ingredient list, a circumstance that gave me pause. Next day, with that unreadable formula weighing on my mind, I approached a chemistry instructor and shared the incident with him. His response: a chuckle, followed by the brutal truth of the matter. Unfortunately, the truth did not set me free, at least not immediately.

Soft drinks contain preservatives, preservatives, which are derived from formaldehyde, the very same chemical found in embalming fluid. Though it wasn't actual embalming fluid being used to preserve these drinks, this was disturbing information to me nonetheless. In addition, soft drinks are chemically sweetened. Sweeteners, like aspartame, are derived from wood glue. Recent tests have revealed, drinking three to four 12oz. cans of such drinks per day led to seriously high levels of methanol toxicity, a condition which symptoms mimic those of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) (Fields, 2001). Needless to say, from that moment on, I determined to read the labels of every product I would potentially consume. This led to nutrition courses at the local college, which led to the elimination of many so-called "foods" from my diet. At the top of the list, red meat! Then, although I was absorbing all taught to me, I hung on to the notion that I should, on that rare occasion, eat a bit of grilled fish or baked and skinless chicken, fearful of not consuming enough protein. Though a complete "health-nut", as they say, in *every* respect, it took me years, far too long in my mind, to break free of that fear. Yet, eventually, I faced it and rejected even those sources of protein.

In the end, when discovering an individual is a vegetarian, don't gasp, as the church had done upon hearing Galileo's science. Moreover, don't assume vegetarians are "goofballs" simply refusing to go with the flow! View them, perhaps, as enlightened beings who have done their homework and have evolved in their dietary habits as a result. View them as individuals who contemplate their existence on the planet and the toll it takes upon it, and all living species, and not as "hippie"-like holdouts.

In fact, take your cue from vegetarians. Read a label before consuming a product. Even better, pick up a book on the subject before you point that holier-than-thou finger and cry out, "heretic!"

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