

Please Don't Ask Me About This Column

by Chris Ladd
MANAGING EDITOR

For the past five straight meals in our dining hall, I have eaten hummus and pita bread. For lunch.

And dinner. Hummus. And pita. I'm beginning to think the "C" in my name stands for t h e Mediterranean.

I'm not eating this way because I enjoy h u m m u s , which I do, or the hummus here, which I don't. I am eating this way because this semester I decided to stop eating meat. All of it. I made a clean break.

This semester I decided to stop pushing big-farming, inhumane animal treatment, and unhealthy pro-

tein dependency to the back of my consciousness. I decided that I didn't like the way the meat industry worked, and didn't like supporting something I didn't agree with, didn't

Nixon's entire cabinet had in their collected collars. She eats more cheese than Wisconsin. She eats crap. All day long. She's been eating that way for years. She's part of a growing

make mashed potatoes is tastier and safer and better for you, even though it's not recommended by the American Dental Association.


But, eventually, people begin to notice the missing meat. They see the raw broccoli salads and tempeh slices and they put two and tofu together. And they ask the question, the question I used to ask. The question I hate now.

"So, you have a problem with eating animals, huh?" they ask, poised to give a lecture on Darwin and God and the Sioux Nation, and population control. And I don't want to hear it. I just want to enjoy my miserable broccoli salad and wear through another plate of lemon tofu surprise.

Being a vegetarian, you have to be prepared. You have to carry a folder, names and dates and figures. A dossier. Sitting in the dining hall, I am sitting at the Oscars, nominated for "Roger and Me," sitting at a table of GM Auto Executives. Sitting in a theater of GM Auto Executives. And they all want to hear my speech.

And ok, I haven't been a vegetarian long. It's true. I have another secret, though.

Like my sister, I don't really like vegetables either. Really. This is where the hummus comes in. I really like hummus, and even though it's not astoundingly good here, it tastes all right if I put a little salad dressing in it. And that's good enough. Unless I want to settle for pizza, french fries, pasta, or salad, hummus is about the best I can do.

So, it's been a month and a half. Do I miss chicken sandwiches and bacon wrapped steaks and turkey dinners? Sure. But am I willing to go into a place devoid of food that I can eat, devoid of food I will allow myself to eat, and take some unleavened bread and a bowl of smooched garbanzo beans and make do? For now, yeah. Wanna know why? I'll bet you do. Don't ask. 

Boston Market, really, set the standard for my vegetarian tenure, short as it's been so far. As a vegetarian you don't always or often get meals. As a vegetarian, you get sides."

like condemning world politics and global warming and rain forest destruction, my mouth filled with an Argentinean cheeseburger. I decided to stop eating meat. And I decided to start eating crap.

It's nothing new in our family. My sister stopped eating meat in the sixth grade. Now all she eats is crap. She has more starch in her diet than

trend of vegetarians who don't eat vegetables: vegetarians who eat macaroni and cheese, and mashed potatoes and raw cookie dough.

So when I made the decision, the plunge, the leap into this new, meat-free lifestyle, I tried to avoid the crap-trap. I tried to avoid synthetic, processed foods, loaded with preservatives, and pressed into unnatural forms. I tried to eat a variety of new foods, expand my horizons, and find foods that were not only good for me, but that I enjoyed.

I remember the very first meal I ate as a vegetarian. It wasn't that long ago. It was the drive back to campus, on the Mass Pike. It was Boston Market. Boston Market, really, set the standard for my vegetarian tenure, as short as it's been so far. As a vegetarian you don't always or often get meals. As a vegetarian, you get sides.

Sides of mashed potatoes. Sides of peas and turnips and greens. A side of Caesar salad without the Caesar. On the side.

For my very first meal, I started with something simple. Mashed potatoes. Mashed potatoes are impossible to ruin. They're the toothpaste of carbohydrates; even if you do make them wrong, like Tom's of Maine Brand does, some followers will claim the new wrong way to

Then, I moved on to sweet potatoes, which should taste something like yams, but really taste like a rotten Charleston Chew bar. Boston Market's usual clientele prefer marshmallowy goodness.

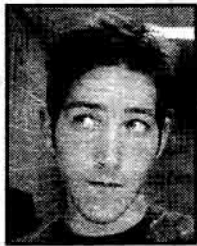
For my third and final side, I got...a roll. I used my third side on bread. At a steakhouse, bread comes with the meal. As I sat down alone at a table at exit 10A, I gave my Crayola-brown tray a look of dissatisfaction and braced myself for the long haul.

I didn't tell anyone about this decision for a little while, about a week or so, just in case I couldn't go through with it. In case the vegetables defeated me. I had a teacher back in high school that had all these brilliant, great, wonderful ideas, and she'd work through them in her head, and tell everyone, I mean everyone, about them. And then, she'd have to dodge the subject for months because these great ideas never panned out, only she'd be dodging five or six great ideas at once, because this teacher had a lot of ideas and...

I didn't want to dodge questions on my diet, didn't want to warily stuff greasy chicken fingers in my pockets and devour them with my eyes cast over my shoulder behind a dumpster in Tower Lot.

opinions

The Skidmore News, 28 February 2003 • 11



WHERE THE HELL IS WAYNE, ME