



PLANT-BASED MEAT: JUST A PASSING FAD?

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As people become more conscious of their impact on the world, interesting eating habits and diets have been popping up. In recent years, we've seen the rise of plant-based diets. It may have started with some documentaries. Then, there was the vegan and vegetarian section at grocery stores. Restaurants started jumping in and offering more options. Finally, fast food chains have climbed on board.

From Frail to Fit

To satisfy the culinary taste-buds of most consumers, the plant-based diet had to change and evolve. In the 80's and 90's vegetarians and vegans were often thought of as skinny, frail people sadly eating salads. Ok, maybe they weren't sad, but they made us sad (and hungry). Fast forward to today, with the mix of clever marketing and endorsements by athletes, that stereotype has been changing.

Better Tasting Vegetables

Boring bowls of lettuce and tasteless vegetables are no longer a vegan or vegetarian's only

option. Thanks to athletes like Tom Brady, you too can enjoy a bowl of avocado ice cream with your blueberry protein shake. Though, the supermodel wife doesn't come with it. The innovations in making plants taste like yummy "junk" food has allowed more people to start buying into the plant-based lifestyle. And with more consumers, there's profit in there somewhere for someone.

Greens are the New Meat

It's no surprise that fast food chains have honed in on this and started offering plant-based meats. Places like Burger King and MacDonald's are most likely aware of the reputation of their products. Historically, their advertising campaigns have been built on the idea of more meat, more bacon, and more cheese.

Meaty Competition

Now companies like Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat are competing with the meat industry by challenging the taste, smell and texture of meat with plant-based alternatives. To test the premise, on his show Dr. Oz compared the nutritional value of an Impossible Burger and a regular burger. In all aspects except cholesterol, the two were essentially the same – taste, cost and nutrition. The only significant advantage the plant-based burger offered was significantly less cholesterol.

But that's not the only advantage. There is the environmental impact of the meat industry on climate change. Cows are expensive to grow and require immense amounts of water, land, and grain. Then there's the methane. Plants on the other hand, are at the bottom of the food chain and can produce more product per gallon of water and acre of land. They also don't scream when you harvest them.

Given all that, if you could have the option of eating a burger that tastes and costs about the same, but with better health and environmental benefits, why not?

Is plant-based meat just a passing fad or does it have potential to become a staple in our diets? The deciding factor lies in one thing: cost. Just like renewable energy sources, the plant-based fads started on environmentally-friendly principles, but are sustained by their price. For now the pendulum is swinging toward vegetables.

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