Famous Vegetarians and their Favorite Recipes
Category : January 1995
Published by Anonymous on Jan. 01, 1995

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Leo Tolstoy, the man who gave the world War and Peace and Anna Karina, was a strict vegetarian. For an aristocrat in Czarist Russia to renounce meat was unheard of, but then Tolstoy was a man with a social conscience.

Leonardo da Vinci, the great artist, engineer and creator of the Mona Lisa, was such a fervent vegetarian that he would buy caged birds from poultry vendors and set them free.

Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, inventor of cornflakes and a brilliant surgeon, was a vegetarian who set up a chain of vegetarian restaurants in Skid Row where the poor could get a meatless meal for a penny.

These are some of the remarkable people you meet in Rynn Berry's Famous Vegetarians and their Favorite Recipes. If you are a vegetarian, you will be pleased to know that you are in some very distinguished company. Pythagoras, the ancient Greek sage who gave us the Pythagorean theorem, was also the father of vegetarianism in the West. In fact, Berry explains that until the late 19th-century people who ate meatless diets were called "Pythagoreans." Plutarch, Buddha, Socrates, Plato, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Henry Salt and George Bernard Shaw were all vegetarians as were social reformer Annie Besant, writer Malcolm Muggeridge and Sylvester Graham, inventor of graham flour and the graham cracker.

Famous Vegetarians and their Favorite Recipes (Pythagorean Publishers) is an intriguing book which takes you into the lives of famous people who left the meat out of eating, and also gives you their recipes. The book contains 70 recipes for soups, pastas, entrees and desserts right from George Bernard Shaw's Savory Rice to Swami Prabhupada's Pleasingly Bitter Vegetable Stew. His prodigious research included historical accounts, cookbooks and family notes. Berry says the work was arduous but very stimulating.

For Buddha's recipes Berry studied Food and Drink in Ancient India and found that spinach was one of the vegetables Buddha urged his followers to eat. Using the spices and curry-recipes which were prevalent in those days, Berry recreates Buddha's probable recipe for Curried Spinach. He has also found and published the vegetarian recipes of Leonardo da Vinci which he translated from medieval Latin into English. Interestingly, these are in De Honesta Voluptate, written in 1475 and considered the first modern cook book.

Berry even contends that Jesus Christ was a vegetarian! He writes: "Although the evidence for Jesus' vegetarianism is largely circumstantial, it is nonetheless compelling. Even Dr. Hugh Schonfield, writing in The Passover Plot-probably the most rigorous and demythologized life of Jesus ever written-asserts that Jesus belonged to a strict vegetarian branch of the Essenes in northern Judea-the Nazoreans."

Famous Vegetarians, which is subtitled Lives and Lore from Buddha to the Beatles, also includes present-day celebrities such as the ex-Beatles-George Harrison, Paul McCartney and his wife Linda-Hollywood stars Dennis Weaver and Cloris Leachman and even the wrestling star Killer Kowalski, who was the first professional athlete in the West to go vegetarian. Kowalski, who is very interested in spiritualism, observes: "No one who eats the flesh of animals can progress spiritually beyond the average."

Rynn Berry, who is himself a diehard vegetarian, has written several books on vegetarianism including The Vegetarians and The New Vegetarians and is a frequent lecturer on the subject. He turned vegetarian when he was a teenager. He recalls, "I was a bookworm and I read widely. I found my intellectual heroes-George Bernard Shaw, Shelley, Gandhi-were all vegetarians. That's what propelled me." Berry found the vegetarian diet made him feel lighter and more energetic although in those days it was considered eccentric, even bizzare, to be a vegetarian.

Today, of course, the prospects for vegetarians are much better with many restaurants catering to them. Berry is an avid cook himself, especially of Indian and Chinese cuisine. He says, "The first thing I studied was Indian cooking. It's the highest, the most sophisticated form of vegetarian cooking."

Vegetarianism has taken Berry as far as China to do research on the vegetarian aspects of Taoism. He points out that Taoism itself was influenced by Hinduism and Jainism in the first century bce, and according to some historians, Tao Te Ching, the sacred book of Taoism, is a thinly disguised manual of yoga. India has, of course, been an important part of Berry's research and he recently spent three months living with a Jain family in Bombay.

Berry believes that earlier on most of the ethical vegetarians in the West were living in London, and that India had a tremendous influence on British culture: "Very often the country that is colonized influences the parent country. More books have been written in English on vegetarianism than any other language."

Although Berry interviewed many distinguished vegetarians, he particularly remembers his conversations with the Nobel prize winning writer Isaac Bashevis Singer: "Vegetarian themes and motifs have sounded through even his earliest work." Asked whether he turned vegetarian for his health, Singer replied, "I didn't do it for my health but for the health of the animals."

Rynn Berry is not a Hindu, though he says he is, spiritually. He indentifies very strongly with Indian culture, and when he is in India he is often mistaken for an Indian and asked for directions on the street.

Currently he is researching a book on the vegetarian representatives of the major religions of the world, including a Catholic monk who was expelled from his order for trying in his capacity as monastry cook to introduce vegetarian food into the Franciscan order.

Berry believes that even the earliest Western vegetarian movement such as Pythagorean can be traced to Indian influences, and that India with the traditions of

Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism has been the cradle of vegetarianism: "Today, in our time, the Indian influence in America is quite prevalent with the arrival of Swami Satchidananda and Swami Prabhupada and other swamis who have had a tremendous influence on the dietary habits of the world. Vegetarianism is burgeoning in the West and a lot of it is proceeding from Hinduism, the American version of Hinduism. We owe a tremendous debt to India and it continues to be a source of inspiration to the world."

Available at select bookstores and by ordering postpaid directly from the publishers:

Pythagorean Books, Post Office Box 8174, JAF Stn., New York, NY 10116. USA. US$16.95, softcover.