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HEALTH & FITNESS

How Hard Is It To Be Vegan In Hong Kong?

Ever wondered how hard it is to be vegan? If you're trying to minimise the amount of animal products you use, here's what you need to know...

Did you know that "each day, **a person who eats a vegan diet** saves 1,100 gallons of water, 45 pounds of grain, 30 sq ft of forested land, 20 lbs CO2 equivalent, and one animal's life?" Considering the sheer amount of food Hong Kong consumes, it's no surprise that **our diet is one of the most impactful parts of our lives**. The difference it makes externally (*to the future of our planet*) and internally (*to our health and how we feel*) is undeniable.

Read more: [Vegan Restaurants You Need to Try in Hong Kong](#)



Why do people choose to become vegan?

The reasons people choose a vegan diet and lifestyle span from **sustainability and animal rights to health reasons, religious reasons, personal taste preferences and beyond.** Here are some thoughts that may make you question what you put in your body...

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Ultimately, our ability to disassociate the animal from the end product works against what feels “naturally” aligned with our core values.

For animal rights:

Most people agree that all living creatures have a right to life and freedom. In principle, this is an easy opinion to get on board with... but the **smell of bacon**, the sight of a steaming **char sui bao**, or the birthday party planned at **La Vache!** can be enough to convince majority otherwise. Ultimately, **our ability to disassociate the animal from the end product works against what feels “naturally” aligned with our core values.**

Whatever small steps you’re taking, refusing to consume or use animal products is **one of the most impactful ways you can take a stand against animal cruelty.** Vegans take the vegetarian diet up a notch, recognising that animal cruelty applies to more than meat products, as the **dairy and egg industries** are in the same realm of animal agriculture. Whilst not everyone is willing to (*or wants to*) make **a connection between animals and food**, it’s worth questioning where your food comes from, **if you believe we have an obligation to minimise the pain and suffering** we inflict on other living beings.



For sustainability:

If we take “living sustainably” to mean working to maintain the collective life across our planet, eating **the amount of meat we eat is irreversibly unsustainable**. Animal agriculture is accountable for “**18% of greenhouse gas emissions**” (*more than the combined exhaust from all transportation*) and up to “**91% of Amazon destruction**”, resulting in **1-2 acres of rainforest cut down every second**.

It's common knowledge that **land, water, and animal feed are jeopardised resources**, but hearing that the water impact of **one burger is equal to two months of showering** can really give you some perspective. If you're considering going vegan for sustainability reasons, **even ethically farmed animals don't fit the bill**, as they often result in more wasted resources.

With the population predicted to hit **over 9 billion by 2050**, and densely inhabited developing countries like India and China **eating more meat**, chances are, **we're only going to see an increase in the haemorrhaging of resources**. This level of consumption is already bringing about catastrophic issues, and matters aren't going to rectify themselves. Change is needed on every level, and thankfully, individuals, **companies** and **industries** are **beginning to develop sustainable habits**. It's nowhere near perfect, but it's a step in the right (*and worryingly necessary*) direction.



For your health:

The health benefits of minimising your animal product intake has been researched – and debated – time and time again. From sustainably overcoming **obesity**, lowering your risk for **heart disease**, preventing or managing **type 2 diabetes**, monitoring **high blood pressure**, aiding **digestion**, and even improving your **mood and mental health**. Though **meat, dairy and eggs all offer nutritious value**, **it's argued that none are really “necessary” for a healthy person**, and **alternatives can be used** in many cases. Regularly, you'll see people moving towards a vegan diet for animal rights or sustainability, and then **noticing the health benefits and limitations along the way**.

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Establishing your personal “why”:

As an avid chocolate and cheese lover, **knowing my reasons for choosing plant-based products was my first step**. I've been actively eating less meat since last year, and now stick to a vegetarian/pescatarian diet. It began when I started trying to appreciate my food a bit more (*it's easy to forget how lucky we are to get three meals a day*), which in turn, **led me to think about the way in which the food got to my plate**. Voluntary consciousness often shakes up social norms so, for the vast majority, it's easier avoided. I'm still learning how to balance it all, but starting with something seems like the best way to begin. I've found so many people afraid of holding strong opinions in this area, but **establishing your “why” gives you a reason to make a change and stick to that change**. Whether you're looking to completely remove beef from your diet, limit eating meat to outside of the house, be a weekend pescatarian, or completely refuse any animal products, is your decision.



How does it make you feel?

Eating less meat has made me better at checking in with myself on how my body is feeling. My energy levels have always fluctuated quickly, and a high metabolism is the saving grace to my insatiable appetite. It's **impossible to truly monitor how you feel after a couple of months of being vegetarian/vegan**. Mainly because it's such a short time frame, but also because you're not in a controlled environment, with no other external factors. Some days, I had more energy, some days I had less. Sleep, exercise and stress are just a few key factors.

What to keep in mind about a vegan diet:

It pays to be cautious when making sudden changes to your diet, but it's incredible to see **how quickly our bodies adapt** (*and, even, thrive when fed the right stuff*). Whilst craving **avocado and salmon** after a workout is my body's way of saying "feed me healthy fats, quick", I've found that there are plenty of **veggie and vegan options** that really do silence those gurgling rumbles. One major thing I noticed was **how rarely I read the label of ingredients for my food** – it's something you have to get used to with a vegan diet.



Where to eat:

We've put together a handy list of [vegan and vegetarian restaurants](#) worth trying in Hong Kong. And I'd suggest anything with the hedgehog mushrooms from [Grassroots Pantry](#), taking visiting vegan (*and non-vegan*) guests to [Lok Cha tea House](#) for dim sum, or to any of the spots on our [vegan and vegetarian burgers roundup](#) for a hearty alternative to a meat burger.

Whilst some restaurants are confused by vegan requests, **I've found more places happy to accommodate**. If nothing else, it sparks a conversation when you ask for no fish sauce in your local [Thai restaurants](#). We even popped into [Little Birdy](#) for a team lunch and I was pleased to see how accommodating a chicken place was – the staff even went to double check with the chef to see which bread had butter in it. With a motto like, “No cages. No hormones.”, it's probably a **place where many would choose to eat meat**.

Read more: [The Best Vegetarian and Vegan Burgers in Hong Kong](#)

Where to shop:

Green Common

This store is Hong Kong's only plant-based retail chain and boasts a wide selection of groceries. Stocking everything from [fake eggs](#), [Beyond Burger meat](#), [oatly milk](#) and (*arguably*) the best vegan cheese, it's a Hong Kong favourite.

Green Common, various [locations](#) throughout Hong Kong, www.greencommon.com

Just Green

This is a go-to for vegans and vegetarians in Hong Kong. Some of our favourite treats include [Happy Cow's](#) non-dairy ice-cream, [Coconut Grove's](#) coconut milk yogurt and the wide selection of healthy, raw snacks.

Just Green, various *locations* throughout Hong Kong, www.justgreen.com.hk

SpiceBox Organics

SpiceBox Organics, a USDA certified organic store, is an easy place to find health food, **environmentally friendly household products** and **natural body care products**. The socially conscious company ensures that products available are sourced from sustainable organisations, and you can even find **traditional medicine and Ayuverda products** here.

SpiceBox Organics, various *locations* throughout Hong Kong, www.spiceboxorganics.com

Corner Block

Corner Block stocks a whole range of certified organic produce, including organic baking brand **Arrowhead Mills** and gluten-free snacks from **Dr. Schaer**. There are plenty of new brands to choose from too.

Corner Block, G/F, Shop A, World Trust Tower, 50 Stanley Street, Central, www.cornerblock.com.hk

Supermarkets like **ParknShop** and **citysuper** also offer corn, soy, tofu and tempeh; and places like **Yata** have started supplying **beyond meat** and **Gardein** alternatives.



Cooking vegan food at home:

If you're looking to start cooking more vegan food at home, there are countless recipes out there. From **easy breakfast recipes**, to quick **packed lunch ideas**, to fancy **dinner party dishes**, you won't be left hungry. **Avocado and pesto pasta**, **puff pastry dishes**, and **pumpkin, pomegranate salads** are personal favourites of mine.

Nutritional yeast, nuts, seeds, quinoa, beans and greens are all things you want to stock up on. You want to make sure your body is getting enough **protein, iron, calcium, vitamin D, vitamin B12, and omega-3 fatty acids**.

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The choices you make, the conversations you have and, ultimately, where you invest your money are all ways in which you vote for what you want and what you stand for.

The verdict:

Don't undermine the impact consumers have on the bigger picture. The choices you make, the conversations you have and, ultimately, where you invest your money are all ways in which you **vote for what you want and what you stand for**. There's remarkable power for change. Even saying no to single-use plastic is positively encouraging more **eco-friendly restaurants in Hong Kong**.

Whilst I'm not saying that it's feasible for everyone to move towards a plant-based diet, it's a conversation worth having with yourself. I'm the first to put my hand up and say it's harder than it should be **to align your moral and social compass with your actions** (*I still can't say no to chocolate or cheese*), but I will hold myself accountable for **consciously continuing to cut out animal products where I can**. Whilst it's an incredibly personal choice, I feel we all have some part to play in looking after the place we call home.

Read more: [These Hong Kong Restaurants Are Saying No to Single-Use Plastic](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tania

Tania joined Team Sassy to rediscover the city she calls home (one G&T at a time). She is the Style,...

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