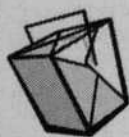


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Choice of eating meat or not guided by taste, values, diet

The Atkins low-carb diet has changed eating habits, but some people choose to stick to a meat-free lifestyle

By Jennifer Sudick
Freelance Editor

From widespread protein-rich diets to the ongoing mad cow scare to McDonald's new all-white-meat chicken nuggets, meat — and the controversy surrounding it — has helped shape American nutritional values.

The Atkins "very-low" carbohydrate diet plan has made its mark in fast food restaurants such as Subway with its "Atkins Friendly" chicken bacon wrap, in bookstores with a multitude of guidebooks and cookbooks, and in supermarkets with Atkins brand sugar-free pancake syrup and barbecue sauce.

The diet, which touts proteins and fats as weight-loss substitutes to processed and refined carbohydrates, has often been portrayed as synonymous with a butter-laden red-meat-eating lifestyle, according to <http://www.atkins.com>. However, the Web site attempts to debunk this perception with its article, "Doing Atkins Is Not Synonymous with Eating Red Meat," which states: "It is not advisable to eat steak every day. Variety is what makes food interesting. There are plenty of other delicious ways to get the protein and dietary fat you need. In fact, plenty of people do Atkins without eating red meat or pork."

The Atkins Web site enthusiastically advocates eating cold-water fish, such as tuna, salmon and sardines, twice a week. Other red meat alternatives, including turkey and chicken, also work as long as they aren't in "nugget" form.

"Abstaining for ethical or religious reasons is an understandable choice ... if you're not eating meat because you're worried about saturated fat and cholesterol, your concern may well be misplaced," the Atkins article states.

However, response to the diet has been varied. In Rome last week, pasta manufacturers and chefs gathered to protest the diet in the wake of decreased sales of traditionally high-carbohydrate foods.

Susan Toussaint, director of marketing for the American Italian Pasta Company of Kansas City, Mo., told The New York Times on Feb. 11 that her company saw a 5 percent decline in grocery-store pasta sales during the past year.



Lauren Wimer Photographer

Despite the mad cow scare, beef is still popular thanks to diets like Atkins.

"Pasta's getting lumped in the same category as Krispy Kreme," she said. "It's not fair. All carbohydrates are not created equal."

For some, the decision to eat select meats or refrain from eating meat altogether has religious or cultural influences.

"(The) Chinese have a traditional notion that foods that are 'warming' in nature, like meat, are important for building up physical strength; so in the minds of some of the older generation, one could not possibly get all the nutrition one needed from the 'cool' bean greens, white radishes, and so forth that vegetarians favor," author Lin Ching Shywan wrote in "Vegetarian Cooking — Chinese Style."

Shywan wrote that she became a

vegetarian because of her belief in Buddhism, not because of a healthy lifestyle. She added that many Buddhists advocate vegetarianism because of their belief in having mercy for other living creatures.

According to "Diet for Transcendence," by author Stephen RosenIn, traditional Hindu scripture dictates that products of the cow, including milk, curd, urine and dung, are purifying because the cow is considered a sacred animal. The Hindi word for cow is "aghnaya," which means "not to be killed," but cow dung is still used as an inexpensive fertilizer and for heating and cooking.

In the Jewish religion, several meats

Turn to **MEAT**, page 10B



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