

Speaker Notes
“The Benefits of a Plant Based Diet”
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I. Definition of Vegan & Vegetarian

- a. Vegan: does not eat animals or animal products
 - i. No meat, fish, eggs, dairy, or honey
 - ii. Ethical vegans also avoid leather, beeswax, or any product derived from an animal
- b. Vegetarian: does not eat meat or fish
- c. Plant-Based diet: primarily plant-based, but can include small amounts of meat, fish, dairy, and eggs. Vegans are considered plant-based. The name doesn't have the stigma of *vegan*.

II. Reasons for Choosing a Vegan Diet

- a. Ethical: compassion for animals. They believe that animals have a right to life. Do not approve of the cruelty found in the egg and dairy industries.
- b. Health: numerous scientific studies indicate that a vegan diet has health benefits.
 - i. Lower cholesterol levels & blood pressure. Lower body mass index, & reduced risk of death from heart disease and cancer.
- c. Cost: plants are cheaper than meat. Meat prices are increasing globally as demand rises and availability goes down.

III. Common Argument:

- a. Vegans don't get enough protein/B-Vitamins/Calcium. Average adult needs 50 grams per day.
 - i. Example Menu for 1 day:
 1. Breakfast: Whole grain toast with almond butter, 2 pieces of tempeh bacon, 8 oz of oat milk, & ½ Grapefruit
 2. Workout Beverage: 8 oz coconut water mixed with water
 3. Lunch: Mediterranean Pasta Salad that includes whole wheat pasta, chickpeas, pine nuts, tomatoes, cucumbers, Kalamata olives, & vegan parmesan
 4. Snack: 1 serving of AlmondMilk Silk Vanilla yogurt
 5. Dinner: Green salad with tofu feta, tomatoes, & cucumber, vegan's shepherd's pie made with seitan, celery, carrots, peas, onions, potatoes, and coconut milk, and tofu chocolate mousse for dessert.
 - ii. Total Protein: 90 grams! You've also met and/or exceeded RDA for all B vitamins (including B12), calcium, potassium, and vitamins A, C, & D. Fiber intake has exceeded the recommended amount, and you have consumed no cholesterol.

- IV. Common Argument:
a. Vegan Food is Boring

- V. 9 - Course Tasting Menu
a. Picture: *Menu Photo*
b. Course #1 Appetizers

Tomato Tartare, Fried Okra, on a Biscuit

The biscuit is made with Bisquick, which is a vegan product. I make the biscuits with water, rather than milk, which actually makes for a lighter, higher-rising biscuit. (My aunt taught me this way before I became a vegan.) For an appetizer, I make the biscuits bite-sized.

The tomatoes came from my garden. You could substitute a very firm grocery store tomato, which is easy to find. I picked up the okra from the frozen aisle at the grocery store. Later in the summer, I'll have them fresh from the garden, but not yet. They don't have to be thawed before frying, just roll them in seasoned flour, and drop them into hot oil.

Blackened Jackfruit, Preserved Green Strawberries, & Zucchini on Crostini

What is Jackfruit you very well might ask. Jackfruit is a giant tropical fruit in the fig, mulberry, and breadfruit family. (What is breadfruit you might also ask – ah, but we digress from the original question. Save breadfruit for another time and place.)

Green jackfruit is used as a meat substitute. Its taste is pretty neutral, so it takes on the taste of whatever sauce or seasoning is used to cook it in. The texture is shreddy, like pulled pork or chicken. Locally, fresh jackfruit can be found at Koreana Plaza or Ranch 99, however – fresh ones are HUGE, and rather difficult to break down. You can buy jackfruit canned or packaged at local grocery stores (Raleys, Safeway, Whole Foods, and Trader Joe's). A super easy meal is open a can of jackfruit, shred it up, either with your fingers or with a few pulses in the food processor, pour on your favorite barbecue sauce, slap it all on a bun – and you're got pulled pork sans the mess, cholesterol, or fat.

The preserved strawberries were made with unripe berries from my garden. I quartered them, put them in a jar and added a ridiculous amount of Kosher salt. Screwed the lid on, shook it all up, and put it in the refrigerator for a week. The idea is based on preserved, or salted, lemons, a Middle Eastern condiment. They are used sparingly. The zucchini was shredded, mixed with a little olive oil, lightly sprinkled with salt and pepper, arranged in teaspoon size on a lightly sprayed baking sheet, and baked until beginning to brown. All of that was layered onto a crostini.

Fingerling Potato, Roasted Red Pepper, and Eggplant Soubise

The fingerling potatoes are bite-sized, and as such, perfect for appetizers. I cut a sliver off one end, so that it will stand up, cut a bit more off the top, and then use a demitasse spoon to scoop out about a half-marble of potato. You can fill it with anything savory and delicious. For this dish, I spooned in eggplant soubise and topped that with a strip of roasted, peeled sweet red pepper, and laid a radish sprout on top for drama. Soubise is bechamel, or classic white sauce, with caramelized onions stirred in. I took that a step further by adding pureed eggplant that I hickory-smoked on my Weber barbecue. Too much work? To make it easier, you could bake the eggplant in your oven until it's soft, peel it, and then puree it in the food processor with a few drops of liquid smoke. For the bechamel, which is traditionally made with milk, I used coconut milk (not cream). You substitute any nut or grain milk. For the red pepper, you could do it yourself, or just buy it canned at just about any grocery store.

VI. Course #2

a. Picture: #2 *Smoked King Oyster Mushroom*

Brodo is a fancy Italian word for broth. All I did here was toss dried shiitake mushrooms and fresh fennel fronds into my Instant Pot along with a couple of garlic cloves, and a few grinds of fresh pepper. I set the timer for 20 minutes, and then let it cool until the pressure had completely dropped.

King Oyster mushrooms are like no other mushroom. They are thick, dense, and very meaty in texture. I buy them at Koreana Plaza or Ranch 99, where they are always available and very affordable. You can also find them at Whole Foods, where availability is hit or miss, and they cost a fortune. They make a great substitute for scallops in seafood recipes. They can also be minced in the food processor and used as a hamburger substitute in spaghetti sauce. If you would prefer to merely cut down on ground beef, but not eliminate it altogether, replace $\frac{1}{4}$ of the hamburger meat in a patty meatloaf with ground King Oyster mushroom.

For this recipe, I barbecued the mushrooms over indirect heat on my Weber barbecue grill, along with a handful of soaked hickory chips. I then sliced them about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick and sautéed them in vegan butter. They went into the bowl, the brodo was poured over, and then a fried nasturtium leaf was placed on top.

The Nasturtium Leaf: For an awesome garnish, any number of herbal leaves can be fried. I am particularly fond of sage, basil, and nasturtium. Drop a few dry leaves into very hot oil (325°F) for a few seconds. Flip over and fry for a few more seconds. Remove with a spider or spatula, and drain on paper towels. The end result is very delicate, so be careful not to crack them. They can be kept aside for hours.

VII. Course #3

a. Picture: #3 *Yuba Crepe*

Yuba is the skin that forms on the top of tofu. Sort of like the skin that forms on top of chocolate pudding, only savory. It's sold fresh (Ranch 99) or dried (Koreana Plaza and online). Like tofu, it is neutral in flavor and takes on the spices and herbs it's

soaked in. I marinate it in pastrami spices and serve it in sandwiches just like pastrami. Because it's thin, yet durable, it works like thinly sliced lunchmeat. For this dinner, I soaked it like pastrami, but without the beet juice. I took one slice and rolled it around braised collard greens.

The Caper-Brown Butter Jus was made using vegan margarine instead of actual butter. It works the same way, and has the same taste as butter. To make the sauce, simply brown the vegan butter over a medium heat, then add drained capers and a splash of lemon juice.

VIII. Course #4

a. Picture: #4 Italian Sausage

There are numerous vegan sausages available at most grocery stores, in both fresh and frozen sections. You can find breakfast sausage, as well as Italian, Mexican-style chorizo, pepperoni, and more. Here, I just sliced a Field Roast brand Italian sausage, and then sautéed it lightly to get a crisp surface. I used large tapioca pearls (although smaller ones would also work). The pearls just happened to be bright green because the plain ones were sold out, hence the *peas* moniker. I followed the package directions, using vegetable stock in lieu of water or milk, and left out the sugar.

Sous vide is a method of cooking a sealed package of whatever for a long time in simmering water. You can buy a very fancy, expensive sous vide contraption, or do what I do, and use the pasta pan, a rack, and a candy thermometer. I have a peach tree that seems to produce about a thousand peaches per branch, which is ridiculous. I cull the excess peaches, and use those. I peeled them and removed the pits, then vacuum sealed them in my food sealer, along with salt pepper, fresh thyme, and a splash of olive oil. I put them in a pot of 150°F for about 4 hours, tweaking the heat every now and then to keep the temperature as close as possible to 150°F. If you don't have a food sealer, you could use freezer baggies. It works. This method works for tofu, seitan, apples, or whatever strikes your fancy.

Is chocolate vegan? Yes, if there's no milk in it. That leaves out milk chocolate, but the others are fair game. (Read the label.) Cocoa is totally vegan.

b. Picture #4b Sausages

- i. Here is a picture of 3 different styles and brands of sausages. All available in a store near you.

IX. Course #5

a. Picture: #5 Panna Cotta & Hearts of Palm

This is a savory panna cotta, so it's made without the sugar. I used coconut milk (15% fat). I also used agar agar flakes in lieu of gelatin. Gelatin is made from animal joints, which is not vegan, and agar is made from seaweed. Agar is sold as flakes (Whole Foods) or in blocks (Koreana Plaza). Agar must be boiled for 5 minutes to activate it and make it gel. You can boil it with any liquid. When you add the other

ingredients, they must be warm as well, or the agar seizes up and doesn't distribute into whatever it is you're trying to gel. Just follow the directions on the package.

Hearts of Palm are awesome! They are the inner core of certain palm trees, the vast majority of which are grown on small farms in Costa Rica and Hawaii. They are available, canned, just about everywhere – Walmart, Whole Foods, Bel Air, Safeway, Trader Joe's, Koreana Plaza, etc. Their flavor is delicate and slightly nutty, with a nuance of artichoke. They are creamy but with a bite, which makes them ideal for salads. They can also be lightly breaded and fried like vegan calamari, or used in vegan *seafood* cocktail.

X. Course #6:

a. Picture: #6 *Southern Fried Banana Blossoms*

Banana blossoms taste nothing like bananas. They don't look like anything like bananas. You can buy them fresh at Koreana Plaza and Ranch 99, or buy them canned. Fresh takes an amazing amount of work, so I usually buy them canned. (A note, if you do buy them canned, get 3 or 4 cans, because most of what you buy is usable, but not as a fried chicken or fish substitute for a group.) Banana blossoms are also fairly neutral in flavor, so the right spices in the breading can make them chicken or fishy, depending on whether you want Southern Fried Chicken or Fish and Chips. For this dish, I used poultry seasoning in the flour. When I make fish and chips, I switch that to Old Bay and seaweed powder. Seaweed powder is simply the seaweed flakes sold as snacks just about everywhere nowadays whirled up in a spice grinder. You need to select the big pieces in the can for fried chicken. The other, smaller pieces of banana blossom can be used in tacos, enchiladas, curry, or as part of a seafood cocktail. Follow any recipe for fried chicken. The result is surprising. The banana blossoms have the same stringy texture that chicken has.

If you want creamy grits, use any nut milk for dairy milk. If you want the grits to taste cheesy, add a tablespoon or so of Nutritional Yeast. It also boosts your daily intake of B-Vitamins. I chill the grits to harden them, dip them in the same seasoned flour as the banana blossoms, and fry them in the same oil as the banana blossom chicken.

Remoulade is basically, fancy mayonnaise. There are several brands of vegan mayonnaise on the market. I think I have tried them all. My go-to is Best Foods Vegan Mayonnaise, for flavor and price. Here, mayonnaise is the base, and the addition of chopped cornichons, capers, parsley, tarragon, and smidge of ketchup, and a pinch of seaweed powder make a quick sauce.

XI. Course #7

a. Picture: #7 *Rosti & Pate*

This is mostly fancy talk. Rosti is actually hash browns. Pate is meatloaf. Haricot Verts are small green beans. Caramelized Onions are onions sautéed until they turn light brown. Devil's Sauce is your favorite barbecue sauce with seedless raspberry jam stirred in.

b. Picture: *#7b Beyond Meat*

That said, the pate is certainly worth looking at. Here, I used a standard meatloaf recipe and substituted Beyond Beef for the hamburger. Beyond Beef is magic food. It tastes and looks like ground beef, but it's completely made from plants. If you crave a real hamburger, try it. I have served it to non-vegan friends and family, and no one can tell it's not real meat. Although there is no cholesterol in it, there is fat (fat = flavor), so we only eat it occasionally at my house. At the markets today, meat prices are going up, and Beyond Meat prices are dropping. You can find it in the meat section of many grocery stores – Walmart, Whole Foods, Raleys, Smart and Final, etc. It is interesting to note that non-vegan consumers make up a large market of Beyond Meat sales.

XII. Course #8

a. Picture: *#8 Watermelon Salad*

Watermelon can take on the texture of salmon when it's frozen, and then thawed. Pretty amazing! My granddaughter who is less than fond of watermelon loves the frozen-thawed version because she loves salmon. I seal it in my vacuum sealer, but you can also put it in baggies and put it in the freezer with something on top. Here, I rubbed in a spoon of neutral oil and bit of seaweed powder and Old Bay to give it a slightly fishy taste. Coconut bacon is made from large flake coconut that's been doused with liquid smoke, maple syrup, and soy sauce. Roast in the oven until just beginning toast. It keeps for weeks (if you don't eat it first) in a covered container. It's great sprinkled anywhere you would use bacon bits.

Miso is a fermented soybean paste popular in Japan. It is salty and umami, and also high in probiotics (if it isn't heated). I often incorporate it into dishes as a seasoning, although hot miso broth is pretty good, too.

The feta is Violife brand from Whole Foods. I've given it to vegan friends who miss cheese, and to non-vegans who like cheese, and everyone loves it. It reminds me of a goat's milk feta. There are a lot of nondairy cheeses available at grocery stores. Most of them don't impress me, but if hidden in a sandwich, or grated in a casserole, they're okay. Ones I do like are Miyoko's cream cheese, and Violife parmesan.

b. Picture: *#8b Cheeses*

For enchiladas, tacos, loaded baked potatoes, and nachos, I make my own cheese sauce. There are some hack ingredients I use that make them much better than most recipes. I use lactic acid (made from beets) that I order online for the tartness of real cheese. You could substitute citric acid (available with canning supplies), which is fairly close. I also use butyric acid, a natural product found in some pharmacies. It gives a sour, umami flavor found in sharp cheeses. Butyric acid is sold in tablet form as a digestive aid.

XIII. Course #9

a. Picture: #9 *The Cake*

The cake itself is vegan, with no dairy or eggs. Many box cakes are vegan. The chocolate ganache is made from dark chocolate, so no dairy. Most of the cookies on the cake, as well as the popcorn, are vegan. The white chocolate is not vegan. Because I had to deconstruct the cake in order to cut it, I parceled out the extras according to dietary whims. Everyone was happy.

So how do vegans get around the no-eggs rule when it comes to baking? For cakes, I use Bob's Red Mill Egg Replacer. It works really well for both mixes and made-from-scratch cakes, muffins, and breads. For products that can be heavier, like pancakes or breading batters, I use flax seed meal blended with water.

b. Picture: #9b *Egg Replacer*

To replicate the *taste* of eggs, I use black salt, called kala namak, a kiln fired form of Himalayan pink salt. It has a sulfurous taste that, when used for cooking or finishing, tastes like eggs. I use it for mock egg salad sandwiches, vegan Hollandaise sauce, and vegan scrambled eggs. Black salt is available at a lot of grocery stores, and online.