BEING VEGAN – Q and A

This month we have decided to focus on what being vegan means to people, why people go vegan, what is healthy and what isn’t and just give you more information so you can make your own decisions.

This January, there may be some people who are considering becoming vegan or who have thought about it in the past. In recognition of Veganary; I spoke to my long-term friend to better understand her choice to become vegan and how it has impacted on her life.

Q. How long have you been a vegan for and why did you choose to become?

A. I became a vegan over 24 years ago when I was 17 years old. I decided to become vegan for ethical reasons after discovering how cattle were treated to produce dairy products.

Q. You obviously became vegan before having your daughter. How did that impact later on when you decided to have a family?

A. As it was a life choice, I found it fitted in with my family life fairly easily. It’s easy to replace alternatives for children and my partner was happy to incorporate veganism into his diet alongside meat. In fact, he prefers to eat vegan more so than meat. All meat and dairy meals have been easy for me to make vegan. I use lots of herbs, spices and garlic to make my meals extra tasty.

Q. How does being vegan impact on you going out to eat?

A.I do have to be prepared for excursions or work to make sure, but generally vegan food is much more accessible these days than it used to be 15 years ago. I often go to Lebanese, Indian or Italian restaurants and Turkish dishes are often naturally vegan once the meat is removed.

Q. How has being vegan impacted on your daughter’s life?

A. When Ava was younger, I found that other people’s understanding or awareness of ethical veganism was sometimes confusing for her. But now she’s 10 years old she can express her feelings and also make her own choices.

Q. How do you ensure you are getting enough carbohydrates, protein and fats in your diet or do you need to take supplements to top up?

A. I don’t take supplements I eat pulses and tofu for protein. Carbohydrates and minerals, I get from eating fruits and vegetables such as; rocket, spinach, sweet potatoes etc. I use soya products to replace meat found in dishes such as Bolognese and lasagne. There are alternatives nowadays to cheese and milk such as soya or almond milk and plant-based cheeses. Avocados are a good source of fat as well as seeds which contain healthy monosaturated and polyunsaturated fats as well as being a good source of fibre, minerals and vitamins. It is important not to overeat processed replacements or too much soya so I mix things up.

Q. What’s your favourite vegan meal?

A. My own vegan lasagne that I make as close to the dairy version. Or the Turkish aubergine dish Imman Byaldi. Yum

Q. Do you have any advice for people considering to try a veganism.

A. It depends whether it is an ethical choice as that would require more research and education on other products not just food. The main thing is to know what you need nutritionally and enjoy food. Many people believe we eat bland food but it’s the opposite in my opinion. I learnt along the way not to feel I am missing out. Veganism can open your mind to alternative lifestyle choices that often fells more holistic and natural. Veganism has been linked to reducing skin conditions such as eczema and being great for the digestive and respiratory system.