

from Earth-manufactured food supplies, which included fats, flavor concentrates and various non-vegetarian or dairy-based foods used mostly as condiments, as well as a few luxuries such as chocolate. The goal of this study was to make the space cuisine not only nutritious, but also appealing and as similar to Earthly foods as possible.

The recipes were taste-tested by 16 volunteers, who ate the primarily vegan diet exclusively for 30 days. The result was positive. Besides appetizing menus that included such dishes as seitan tacos with lettuce and tomato sprinkled with earthmade cheese, carrot 'drumsticks,' tempeh sloppy Joes, basil pesto with soy nuts, pasta primavera and tofu cheesecake, questions of health and nutrition were also addressed. One participant who felt better after 30 days of a vegetarian diet vowed to continue the practice in her everyday life.

Moreover, some scientists are realizing the value of studying vegetarian nutrition since similar health issues must be addressed in space that are faced by people on Earth. As one scientist pointed out, "It is already apparent that as the diet of astronauts becomes more vegetarian, plant sources rich in calcium and high in antioxidants with a high energy content will be most desirable." Thus it is clear that along with addressing health issues for space travelers, the findings from vegetarian nutrition studies will also benefit those who live on Earth.

In fact, there have been several vegetarian astronauts. Lieutenant Colonel Timothy J. (TJ) Creamer, NASA Astronaut and Mission Specialist

candidate, is a vegetarian. Astronaut Kalpana Chawla was a strict vegetarian. Dr. Janice Voss, another active astronaut with over 900 hours in space, is also a vegetarian. These professionally trained individuals have demonstrated their ability to adapt to the rigors of an astronaut's training. To them, the meatless fare of a long space voyage would be as natural as their daily diet.

But switching to a vegetarian diet may not be as difficult as some people think. For the study participants, it seemed to be a matter of becoming accustomed to a different taste. "We've noticed for example, that nobody liked our dairy substitutes, such as soy and rice milk, during our taste panels. But our subjects got used to them and accepted them just fine once they started eating them regularly," said Jean Hunter, associate professor of agricultural and biological engineering at Cornell who was heading up the vegetarian diet project.

The Earth itself can be likened to a spacecraft on a long space voyage, with similarly limited resources. So, adoption of the vegetarian diet on 'spaceship Earth' is important for practical reasons as well as compassionate ones, especially since issues such as hunger and environmental pollution could effectively disappear if everyone became vegetarian. But with the grace of Master, along with the ongoing efforts of fellow practitioners and other vegetarian organizations, more and more people will surely understand the importance of the vegetarian diet. ✨

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