

FEATURES

Turning to vegetarianism more than just a religious experience



DTM/Garth Fort

Hari Krishnas host a vegetarian dinner every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Hare Krishnas offer vegetarian food, spiritual enlightenment to student crowd

By Radha Vatsal
Staff Writer

It's a completely vegetarian, sort of Indian meal that is served free to the residents of Chapel Hill every Wednesday by the Hare Krishna group.

But according to one of the servers, Frank Cohen, more than food is being served. "It's spiritual enlightenment in edible form."

"God is omnipresent," Cohen said. "If someone makes him an offering, he will, if he so desires, accept it. This food is offered to God and then the remnants are distributed as God's mercy."

Cohen is originally from Baltimore. He read the Bhagavad Gita and the book "Encounters" by Bir Krishna Swami, head of the Hillsborough Hare Krishnas. "I was so impressed by (Swami's) clear and concise message that I got on the next plane and came to Hillsborough," Cohen said.

When asked why the Krishnas come to Chapel Hill, Cohen replied: "It's nearby, and the atmosphere is favorable. The students like us and our food. They take our books and make small

donations."

Most students seem to attend the dinners for the food. Kathy Staley, a junior English education major from Concord, said: "I liked the food and went back. The desserts and rice were great. The atmosphere is friendly, the servers know your name and ask how you're feeling."

Mike Grieneisen, a graduate biology student from Mechanicsburg, Pa., agreed. "I've been going for two years," Grieneisen said. "Some friends told me that the Krishnas aren't pushy. I met some of my other friends there and it turned into a social thing."

"I don't buy in to what they have to say," he said. "I would call myself an atheist. This group is into saying, 'This is what we're about. This is what we believe. Come join us if you want.' They seem very laid back."

Kat Wilson, a University secretary, went to visit the Hillsborough commune. "It was foreign but interesting."

The Krishnas are willing to answer all questions. The Sunday open house in Hillsborough is an opportunity for outsiders to attend a prayer session and

Pass the greens; healthier lifestyles, environment reasons for rejecting meat

By Priti Chitnis
Staff Writer

"Heifer whines could be human cries/Closer comes the screaming knife/This beautiful creature must die/A death for no reason..."

The lyrics of "Meat is Murder" by the Smiths promote a rather vehement brand of vegetarianism, but people are turning to this diet alternative for a variety of reasons.

Susan Holliman, a dietitian and coordinator of the Wellness Resource Center, said there were five basic categories of vegetarians.

Vegan, or pure, vegetarians eat an all-vegetable diet without animal products, milk or eggs; lacto vegetarians eat all-vegetable diets and milk products; lacto-ovo vegetarians eat all-vegetable diets along with milk products and eggs; semi-vegetarians eat vegetable diets and some animal products; and new vegetarians eat vegetable diets and some animal products with an emphasis on organic, unprocessed, natural foods.

Holliman said vegetarianism was definitely healthier. "Studies have actually shown that groups like the Seventh-day Adventists have less heart disease, hypertension and obesity," she said.

Meat products are considered complete because they contain the eight essential amino acids, she said. To receive the same eight amino acids, it is necessary to eat combinations of different vegetables.

Holliman recommends eating actual food instead of taking vitamins to prevent B-12, calcium and iron deficiencies.

Poorvi Shah, a University sopho-

more, has been a vegetarian all her life. "Along with the religion, I do agree that I should have a reverence for life, and I do not have the right to kill anything," she said. "The option was always open to me — but the thought (of eating meat) never appealed to me."

Lisa Smith, a sophomore, became a semi-vegetarian at age 15. "Around that age, I realized that what I ate affected how I felt," she said. "I didn't feel right when I ate red meat."

Freshman Elizabeth Nelson, prompted by "a general repulsion for eating flesh," stopped eating meat at age 7. "I'm not an aggressive vegetarian," she said. "It's a choice for health and my personal well-being. It's a natural inclination. I didn't wake up one morning and decide to go on a veg crusade."

Clay Jackson, a freshman at N.C. State University, said he considered vegetarianism while working at a pet store. "I thought it was hypocritical of me to see these animals and cuddle them and then go home and eat other animals."

As an animal rights advocate, Jackson said he tried not to purchase any leather products. His whole concept is trying to be more environmentally oriented, and vegetarianism is just part of that, he said.

Donald Francisco, UNC-CH lecturer of environmental studies, said: "There's no doubt that agriculture in general — and that certainly includes the meat industry — is a large source of environmental damage. If you're going to grow a lot of cows, you're going to grow a lot of plants."

Francisco provided the following

example: 1 pound of cow requires about 10 pounds of corn; 1 pound of human being requires 10 pounds of cow. If humans bypassed the cow, and ate the 10 pounds of corn, the decreased acres of cultivation would mean less environmental contamination.

Some vegetarians, however, do not avoid meat for environmental concerns. Sophomore Arti Patel said, "I think a lot of people are becoming vegetarian for mainly health reasons."

Holliman said, "People can make healthy choices, but they may not look as good as that hamburger and french fries."

Entrees in the dining halls will be labeled with information about calories, protein, fat and carbohydrate content within the next few weeks, said Chris Derby, senior director of Carolina Dining Services. "At every lunch and dinner there has to be one non-meat entree available," he said.

The University has very vocal customers who want to see more vegetarian items, but if two vegetarian items are out and not selling, the cafeteria

can't keep them out there, Derby said. Nelson said although many options were not always available for vegetarians, she found ways to compensate.

"If you go to a cookout, put everything on the bun except meat," she said. Junior Megan Maiorana said she made vegetable sandwiches at Lenoir with bagels and salad bar items.

Derby said he expected the demand for vegetarian items in the dining halls to increase as students became more health conscious in the next few years.

Anyone opting for vegetarianism should become educated on the subject or consult a dietitian to make sure they are eating a variety of foods and are receiving sufficient amounts of the essential nutrients, Holliman said.

Patel said, "Nowadays it's become a lot easier because (restaurants) usually have at least a couple of (vegetarian) things on the menu."

Shah said, "Even at big restaurants, sometimes you fall into the trouble where all you can get is a salad."

Nelson admitted, "I've spent a lot of time not eating."

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