

Making Ripples

Intentional Eating

by Amanda Bancroft

Many different kinds of diets can be done intentionally. There are a variety of awesome reasons for people to choose a sustainable omnivorous, vegetarian, vegan or any number of other diets. A few arguments, however, promote ignorance rather than intentional eating.

First, some people believe that simply going vegetarian without intentional planning will make them healthier and thinner. Yet eating vegetarian food doesn't necessarily mean you'll lose weight and eat well; french fries are vegetarian, after all. And a plant-based diet done improperly tends to make plant-based diets look as unhealthy as you will after a few months of vegan fast food. It's definitely not promoting an intentional vegetarian diet.

Some argue that a plant-based diet (whether it's a version of vegetarianism or veganism) is not a more humane option because plants may be able to suffer like animals. According to research by the Smithsonian Institute and other scientists, plants do respond to chemical clues and other detectable sensory input, but lack a central nervous system and brain, making them unable to feel pain yet capable of responding to their environment. But even assuming plants did feel pain, it shouldn't be a logical next step for someone to desire causing pain in animals simply because plants feel pain. If that were true, killing one person would make it ok to kill another person just because it was discovered that the first person suffered. Instead of an intentional omnivorous diet, this logic promotes ignorance of biology and tries to excuse inflicting harm.

Intentional eating is often twisted into something "unnatural" on the basis that nature is wild and full of vicious acts. Because lions kill wildebeest, it can be argued that humans can sustainably kill and eat as many animals as they desire. Arguing that predators eating herbivores makes factory farming ok is like saying the caribou migration makes interstate highways ok. These are totally different scales of production and consumption with phenomenally higher emissions and consequences we haven't even foreseen yet. And while a lion has only tooth and claw, a hunter with a heart for conservation understands the balance of our ecosystem and has the ability to quickly end a deer's suffering.

Whether you eat Bambi or tofu, it can be done sustainably with intentional decisions arrived at through rational reasoning. Eating meat doesn't need to be justified with a reference to savage cavemen, and going "veg" doesn't need to be justified with a reference to the latest tabloid article on weight loss. If you're not yet ready to be intentional about food choices, that's ok! Some of us aren't ready to buy solar panels or switch to fair trade coffee. Just own up to your decision and be honest. Say, "I eat meat because it's tasty," not "plants have feelings, too!"

Ripples is an emerging online educational center inspired by a holistic approach to making a difference. Follow our journey to live sustainably and make ripples with our lifestyle at: www.RipplesBlog.org.