



# THE NO-MEAT MILLENNIALS

Braais and Banting have become part of the normal culinary landscape in SA, but it seems there's a new vegetarian trend afoot, especially among millennials with an appetite for tackling global warming. **Frances Housdon** and **Glynis O'Hara** look at the shift and at some of the options available if you give up meat.

**W**hile Banting has gone mainstream, with some supermarkets selling low carb/high fat products, a quiet revolution has been happening among the millennials, who have adopted a different regime altogether.

They've noted what's happening with global warming and opted to simply ban meat from their menus. For them, it's about saving the planet.

They've seen that research into the impact of eating meat has come up with worrying figures (see "Carbon feet" overleaf). The methane gas produced by cattle is no joke and it's also clear, for example, that it takes much more water to produce 1kg of beef than 1kg of plant protein. And the large amount of grain feed needed to produce 1kg of beef seems to be a real waste of food resources.

Given this sort of information, it's

not that surprising that millennials are concerned about their world and turning to a vegetarian option. The figures in studies vary somewhat, but it takes 10 to 50 times more water to produce meat than to produce plant food. (See the table on the opposite page.)

It takes up to 8kg of feed to produce 1kg of beef in South Africa, says Klaas Jan Leeuw, an expert in ruminant nutrition at the Agricultural Research Council.

# LITRES OF WATER NEEDED TO PRODUCE 1KG OF:

**BEEF**  
15,415

**SHEEP MEAT**  
10,412

**PORK**  
5,988

**CHICKEN**  
4,325



**POTATOES**  
287

**OLIVES**  
3,025

**CABBAGE**  
237

**RICE**  
2,497

Source: Institution for Mechanical Engineers, UK, food waste report



Young people are changing their diets because they see the results of the way humanity has been living, says Tumelo Mojapelo, head of content for Fluxtrends.

So there are major ecological issues around the amount of meat we consume. And although ethical considerations about the lives of animals come into it, the effect on the environment seems to be driving most change, both in countries and in individuals. South Africans are beginning to think much more seriously about it, despite the love of Banting, braais and biltong.

“A plant-based diet is a fast-growing trend among young people as they are exposed to more information through

Google and social media,” says Tumelo Mojapelo, head of content for Fluxtrends, Dion Chang’s trend-watching company.

“They are also more aware of the impact that their diet or lifestyle choices have on the environment because they are inheriting the results from the way we have been living in the past.”

Interviews with millennials (loosely, people born between 1980 and 1996) seem to bear this out (see overleaf) and one 19-year-old Rhodes University student said she thought 40% of her friends were vegetarian. It’s not a scientific poll, by any means, but it does seem to indicate a shift in thinking.

One country taking a national look at the problem is China, one of the worst polluters in the world. It’s hoping to tackle its greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the nation’s meat consumption by 50%. It has issued dietary guidelines, recommending no more than 40g to 75g of meat per person per day. If the new habits take hold, carbon dioxide equivalent emissions from China’s livestock industry would be reduced by 1bn tonnes by 2030.

And the Chinese have found an unlikely ally in actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, no less, who has put out a series of public service ads for them about “less meat, less heat, more life”, along with

director James Cameron. It’s personal for Arnie too – his doctors began telling him, “Arnold you have to get off meat,” he said in an interview, so he’d been “slowly getting off meat, and I tell you that I feel fantastic.” He also said that the notion that meat is needed for muscle strength is incorrect. In the video, Cameron asks: “How can I call myself an environmentalist when I’m contributing to environmental degradation by what I eat?”

“Through this kind of lifestyle change, it is expected that the livestock industry will transform and carbon emissions will be reduced,” commented Li Junfeng, director general of China’s National Centre on Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation.

One has to wonder why Arnie’s TV campaign isn’t also a feature of American life, but that may still come. The US’s Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee last year advised Americans to consider eating less meat for environmental reasons, but went no further.

However, the world’s first vegan supermarket chain store (Veganz) opened a branch in Portland, Oregon, in February. It’s owned by former Mercedes-Benz manager Jan Bredack, who kicked off the store in his home town, Berlin, in 2011, and now has nine such stores in European





## CARBON FEET

- A global switch to diets that rely less on meat and more on fruit and vegetables could save up to 8 million lives by 2050, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by two thirds, and lead to healthcare-related savings and bypass climate damages of R20 trillion, an Oxford University study\* has found.
- The carbon footprint of a vegetarian is roughly half that of a carnivore, says the study, published this year, which examined the diets of 60 000 people.
- Vegetarian diets would cut food-related emissions by 63%, and vegan diets by 70%, it said.
- Livestock currently accounts for about 18% of global warming, an even larger contribution than the transport sector worldwide (13%), says a study called "Livestock's long shadow", by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.
- The edible cereal harvest used to feed livestock could, in theory, feed up to three billion people.

\* www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/news/201603\_Plant\_based\_diets

cities. There are also Whole Foods Markets across the US, organic if not vegetarian. The closest thing in South Africa would be the chain of Food Lover's Market stores.

In 2013, vegan dishes were offered at the sausage-laden Oktoberfest in Germany for the first time. In 2015, Israel began provision for vegan soldiers, including things like non-leather boots and faux wool berets. Change is in the air.

Back in South Africa, Mojapelo explained that she chose to cut out meat because she was "convinced that a plant-based diet was what was best for me and my future children. It was not only a health decision, but religious conviction [she's a Seventh Day Adventist]. I wanted to give my body the best to attain spiritual, mental and physical health."

She's a vegetarian who does not eat cheese, and adds: "It is not something that should be approached lightly – individuals need to talk to their physician and a nutritionist beforehand to ensure that they are not cutting out any essential nutrients – especially in the case of veganism."

She recommends Plant Café in Cape Town's city, but has yet to find a suitable

place to go to in Johannesburg.

"The restaurants I eat at are really accommodating – they do not mind replacing ingredients. I also sometimes grab something at Kauai. Chinese, Thai, Indian and Ethiopian restaurants have better vegetarian/vegan options."

Even though it's often easier to find Banting options on a menu than vegetarian or vegan ones, there are signs of change in the air.

Veggie restaurants such as Nooka, Raw and Roxy, and Scheckter's Raw are now a feature in Cape Town.

Scheckter's Raw, a raw food vegan outlet, offers gluten-free options with every meal and the only non-vegan product is the occasional spoon of honey. Owner Toby Scheckter says he started the restaurant after returning from travel abroad and finding the health food options here too limited. "I wanted to make good quality health food that I would eat myself," he says. **T&E**

- *Food24.com has a link to find some of the best vegetarian and vegan-friendly restaurants in Cape Town.*

## Noakes and the vegetarians

One can be a vegetarian on Professor Tim Noakes's low-carb high-fat (LCHF) diet, commonly known as the Banting diet. In an interview for Biznews by Marika Sboros, Prof Noakes added the rider that it would only work if dairy products were consumed. He advised adding eggs and fish. "Vegetarians who cheat can be incredibly healthy," he said.

He also spoke of a vegan athlete he knew, "a former professional cyclist who eats

80% fat in his diet – lots of coconut oil and avos. It's an extreme diet, but it works for him. Clearly his gut flora can handle it."

Noakes commented that "No diet is right for everyone. LCHF is best for people who are insulin resistant." His focus, he said, was more on adding fat than too much protein – "a healthy high-protein diet for humans doesn't exist. If your diet was 100% protein you'd quickly get sick and die. You can't



really overdose on fat; it reduces appetite, and it's the best way to get over sugar addiction." Eggs and full-cream dairy were great, as were coconut oil, avocados and tree nuts, which "are like drops of fat".

# Chatting to the veggies

Asked if he'd noticed that more and more young people were turning to vegetarianism, writer **Jan van der Ahee** said "definitely". And easily found the following interviews to back up his statement.



## Esthie Hugo

26, researcher,  
City Bowl

### Why are you vegan?

I realised it would allow me to live a sustainable, affordable, healthy and, most importantly, cruelty-free form of existence.

### Where do you get your protein?

It is a massive misconception that a plant-based diet is devoid of or low in protein. Plant-proteins that are delicious, cheap and healthy include lentils, brown rice, beans, quinoa, nut-butters, seeds (especially chia seeds), oats, broccoli, spinach, beetroot, peas, kale – the list goes on!

### Where do you eat out?

I live in the City Bowl, so I'm really spoilt for choice: Raw and Roxy, Addis in Cape, Honest Chocolate, Elixir, Plant Café, Scheckter's Raw, and The Hungry Herbivore.

### Are there enough options in supermarkets?

If you are a keen chef, then all you

really need is access to a good supply of fresh veggies and fruit.

### Do you plan on being vegan for the rest of your life?

Yes, it was one of the best decisions I have made.

### Why is this a trend?

People are becoming increasingly aware of the impact that we as humans have on the environment. Foregoing meat is the most impactful choice if you want to make a difference in building a future for this world.

### What surprised you?

I was definitely surprised by how easy and affordable it was. I was also rather saddened by the amount of aggression and bafflement that I received.



## Christelle Botes

30, digital marketing specialist,  
Rondebosch

### Why are you vegan?

Health reasons, I have a rare

disorder that is aggravated by the consumption of animal products.

### Where do you get protein?

Combining grains like rice, legumes, beans and lentils forms complete protein.

### Where do you eat out?

Plant Café in Buiten Street is one of my favourite vegan restaurants.

### Are there enough options in supermarkets?

Finding vegan-friendly alternatives to certain food types is near impossible unless you shop at expensive speciality stores and health-food stores.

### Why is this a trend?

People are educating themselves on healthy and environmentally conscious lifestyles.



## Rolette Samuels

39, personal assistant,  
Lansdowne

### Why vegetarianism?

We decided as a family not to

partake in the eating of animals.

### Where do you get your protein?

Legumes, soya protein, tofu, beans, chickpeas.

### Where do you eat out?

Mostly Indian, Chinese and Thai restaurants.

### Are there enough options in supermarkets?

The options are still quite limited, but there's more than ever.

### Do you plan on being vegetarian for the rest of your life?

For now, yes. I'm thinking of adding fish to our diet, but have not done so as yet.

### Was there anything that surprised you?

Oh for sure! I was fast-tracked into taking care when I cook. Vegetarian does not mean "a bunch of veggies and couscous" (as I feared it did). I make really tasty food, especially when trying to get kids to eat!







## Storm Hawman

25, psychology student,  
Durbanville

### Why have you chosen to be vegetarian?

It is the only logical thing to do if you are concerned about the treatment, well-being and survival of our planet. Since I stopped eating meat, I have never been healthier and I get to enjoy environmentally friendly and sustainable food that is 100% guilt free!

### Where do you get your protein?

I occasionally eat cheese and eggs, or bulgar wheat, chickpeas, lentils and beans. I always eat plenty of fresh vegetables like broccoli, sweet potato, spinach, avocado, etc.

### Where do you eat out?

Pretty much anywhere I want.

### Do you feel there are enough options in supermarkets?

No. But I have seen an improvement lately.

### Will you be vegetarian for the rest of your life?

Yes. Vegetarian for now; vegan in the near future.

### Why do you think this is a trend now?

Growing consciousness about the

state of our planet and the life that is living/dying on it.

### What surprised you?

How easy it is! And how much I still love food! I was always a foodie and said I would never be able to give up meat. But honestly, after doing it for about four months... the idea of actually eating meat becomes really strange, barbaric and gross.



## Gina Kuschke

24, student,  
Stellenbosch

### Where do you get your protein?

There is protein in almost everything. There is even protein in bread! I eat a varied diet; lots of fresh fruit, vegetables, legumes and whole grains.

### Where do you eat out?

In Cape Town the options are endless! Raw and Roxy in Woodstock, Masala Dosa on Long Street has a great vegan menu, any of the Ethiopian places (there are plenty), Plant Café and Hungry

Herbivore. There are constantly new vegan places popping up!

### Are there enough options in supermarkets?

No – but it's changing really fast!

### Vegetarian for the rest of your life?

Without a doubt.

### Why do you think this is a trend?

Because people are waking up to the realities of climate change and they can't continue to ignore the fact that animal agriculture is unsustainable and (more importantly) unnecessary!

### What surprised you?

Probably how great I felt. I lost weight, my skin improved, I started sleeping better and I had so much more energy.



## Raees Hassan

26, web designer/DJ,  
Bo-Kaap

### Why have you chosen to be vegetarian?

I've become more conscious of

how I live and what I put in my body. There are many chemicals/hormones in meat that I would rather not consume. I now feel and look better overall.

### Where do you get your protein?

Broccoli, chickpeas, pumpkin seeds, falafels, lentils and I also regularly take a supplement called Moringa.

### Where do you eat out?

Ethnic food restaurants offer the most veggie options.

### Are there enough options in supermarkets/eateries?

Yes, but you have to look.

Markets are the best. At franchise restaurants you will often be faced with one veggie item on the whole menu.

### Is it for life?

I don't think so, but even if I do go back to eating meat it will only be free-range organic meat; animals that haven't been fed ridiculous things.

### Why do you think this is a trend?

More people are becoming health conscious.

### Was there anything that surprised you?

The amount of protein, vitamin and nutritional sources available to vegetarians.