

nutrition, millions of people around the world choose to practice vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is defined as 'a dietary pattern that is characterized by the consumption of plant food and the avoidance of some or all animal products' (Perry, McGuire, Neumark-Sztainer and Story, 2001, p. 406). The staples in a vegetarian diet are vegetables, fruits, leafy greens, grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Vegetarians are, however, a heterogeneous group that consists of a range of vegetarian types. They can be categorized based on the foods they include or exclude from their diet. Types of vegetarians include:

- Occasional Vegetarians (also known as Flexitarians) – on the whole, eat animal-based products, yet aim to balance their diets with vegetarian products or adopt vegetarian diets for limited periods of time.
- Semi-Vegetarians – avoid red meat only, while consuming other animal-based foods.
- Pesco-Vegetarians – avoid meat and poultry, but consume fish and other animal-based foods.
- Lacto-Ovo Vegetarians – often perceived as the 'classic' vegetarians, eat dairy and egg products, but exclude from their diet meat, poultry, and fish.
- Lacto-Vegetarians – similar to the lacto-ovo, except do not consume eggs or egg products.
- Vegans – avoid any kind of food of animal origin.
- Raw Vegans – eat only uncooked and unprocessed plant-based foods.
- Fruitarianism – consume only fruits and, often, plants that are categorized as both vegetable and fruit (e.g., cucumbers and tomatoes).

The most recent national poll of American adults by the Vegetarian Resource Group revealed that 2.3% are lacto-ovo vegetarians or stricter, while 6.7% stated that they never eat meat (pesco-vegetarians or stricter) (Stahler, 2006), indicating that the number of vegetarians has remained relatively steady in comparison to the 2003 poll. Approximately 1.4% of the population was found to be vegan, and they are considered to be enthusiastic and heavy consumers of vegan-friendly products, often generating significant word-of-mouth recommendations to other vegetarians. The number of vegetarians in some

European countries, such as the United Kingdom and Germany, has been found to be higher than in the United States.

The complexity of the vegetarian population is manifested in the wide range of reasons people become vegetarians. Shani and DiPietro (2007) suggested an alternative vegetarian typology based on motivations, which ranges from ecocentric vegetarians (those who practice vegetarianism for altruistic motives) to anthropocentric vegetarians (those who practice vegetarianism for self-interested motives). The ecocentric category cites ethical, environmental, and humanitarian reasons, and the anthropocentric category claims health, weight, sensory, religious, economical, and social motives. Although many vegetarians are likely to cite more than one reason, most vegetarians have a dominant motivation in their pursuit of this alternative lifestyle. While ecocentric and religious vegetarians might be expected to be stricter in observing a vegetarian diet, since they are driven by ideology or religious obligations, anthropocentric vegetarians might adopt a slightly more flexible lifestyle, allowing themselves to occasionally deviate from the vegetarian diet, especially when dining out.

In the past few years, there has been a growing recognition among food companies of the rising popularity of vegetarian products, which has resulted in a variety of alternatives to animal-based foodstuffs (e.g., soy products, veggie burgers, veggie steaks, vegan pizzas, and other dishes with meat substitutes like seitan, tempeh, textured vegetable protein, and tofu) becoming available to vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike. The foodservice industry, on the other hand, has been slower to recognize the vegetarian purchase power and its potential, which has slightly limited vegetarians partaking in the dining out experience. In many restaurants, vegetarian food is perceived as dull and uninspired, which deters them from developing adequate vegetarian menu choices. British celebrity chef Simon Rimmer stated that vegetarians are 'so much harder to cook for. Unlike meat, you can't age vegetables to change their flavor. It's tough to get the right balance of flavor and texture in a vegetarian dish' (Kühn, 2006, p. 9).

Despite the increase in the number of vegetarian restaurants and the growing awareness of vegetarians' needs, many vegetarians are still