Campus Activism: Vegan Season

After many lectures and an increasing number of vegans popping up in my life, I've been dabbling in veganism. By dabbling, I mean I went vegan for one week at the beginning of the year, and now I try for vegan Wednesdays (but often forget and eat a muffin for breakfast). I don’t know if I'll go full vegan (because I’m not even a vegetarian now), but I am going to try to eat vegan more days a week while I’m at UMass.

This is partially because my roommate and two other friends here are vegan, and it’s hard to listen to them tell me everything that’s wrong with the meat and dairy industries, and then go back to my diet of buffalo chicken pizza and smoothies.

UMass Dining makes it really easy to flirt with a vegan lifestyle, as I pretty much drown myself in stir-fry, veggie sushi, and fruit anyway. Outside of this dining, I always believed eating vegan out is harder to afford, as alternative milks are more expensive and vegan restaurants or cafes (in my admittedly limited experience) are pricey. I’m up for being proven wrong, though, and after lectures from my roommate, I do recognize eating vegan by cooking for yourself is no more expensive — as bread, pasta, rice, beans, etc. are all vegan and just as affordable as meat or anything else you want to buy at Market Basket. Even Oreos and the purple Doritos (which are the best Doritos) are vegan.

Every time I mention trying to eat vegan occasionally (even with all those qualifiers), I get the typical macho American male response that is always along the lines of “how can you survive without bacon?” or “ew ... why?” or “how could you?,” like I’m doing something sacrilegious. To be fair, before I got all the environmental speeches about vegan diets, I probably would have said something about bacon, pizza, or chicken nuggets too. Realistically, this stems from a lack of knowledge about veganism. Before my Middle Eastern History class, where we studied a poem from 1057 by a philosopher named Al-Maari that advocated veganism, I thought vegans popped out of hippy suburban white America.
Regardless, at UMass the vegan desserts have gotten as exotic this week as cranberry walnut bread (which I stocked up on) and crazy good chocolate cakes, and I am living it up even on the Wednesdays I remember to be vegan. It’s also cool paying attention to what I eat and where it came from, and what environmental impact I have by purchasing it.

Fun Vegan Facts:

- Veganism is a powerful political statement
- Jay-Z and Beyonce are partners in a vegan food company

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