US Restaurant Association Urges Members to Develop Full Vegetarian Menus
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Singapore, Malaysia. Sri Lanka and India - you can track down vegetarian restaurants by following your nose.

In Europe and North America vegetarian restaurants are still rare. And vegetarian eateries are not viewed as chic, upscale dining, what are known as white tablecloth establishments.

Bur according to a new Gallop Foil a startling one-third of American diners are patronizing fine restaurants that offer vegetarian dishes. "The National Restaurant Association (NRA) is advising its members to feature a few vegetarian main-dish items on their menus," said NRA president John Farquharson.

The NRA - spurred on by a rapidly growing vegetarian and healthy-eating market - commissioned a Gallup Poll study of the public's taste for non-meat fare. Their findings indicated a tidal wave of a trend: thirty percent of Americans who dine out will order vegetarian entrees if they appear on the menu. On the menu is an important distinction. As most vegetarians know, walking into a restaurant and explaining to the waiter that you don't eat meat, fish or eggs will get you a plate full of anemic broccoli, potatoes and carrots...with maybe a peanut sauce. Diners who aren't total vegetarians, but who want to eat inspired grainand-vegetable dishes at atmospheric restaurants, are not about to accept that.

The Gallup Poll also discovered that twenty percent of the public chooses where it dines on the basis of whether the restaurant offers vegetarian dishes. A party of vegetarians who spontaneously went out last week humorously explained to HINDUISM TODAY how their favorite restaurant-which served vegetarian main dishes-was booked solid on Friday night when they got there. Suddenly, they were

forced to search for a restaurant. They stopped by a Chinese buffet (all meat), a Round Table Pizza place (very dirty and low class clientele), considered Sizzlers (fabulous salad bar and pasta station, but too crowded), and ended up at the Hilton Hotel for some late night vegetarian appetizers.

With the results of the poll NRA president Farquharson recommended. "Some restaurants may even wish to put a vegetarian section on the menu and list items as they do under headings like meat, poultry or seafood." The main reason diners are delighting their taste buds with vegetarian cuisine is health. The poll indicated that 88% of those surveyed who eat out sans meat do so as part of an overall fitness diet. Among the largest group of vegetarian diners are women - 35 and older - and those 65 and older.

According to a survey done at Disney World in Florida, about 3% of Americans are complete vegetarians. But a high percentage more are semi-vegetarians. And the numbers continue to rise with no sign of abatement as medical, health care, independent research and consumer groups are lining up to endorse vegetable-based diets.

Charles Stahler of the Vegetarian Resources Group says, "Vegetable courses are popping up in every type of restaurant. Even truck stops have salad bars." White tablecloth restaurants like the Trellis in Williamsburg, Virginia, tantalize diners with entrees like Yukon gold potatoes with asparagus, plum tomatoes and local greens in vinaigrette or braised green lentils with smoked tomatoes, grilled eggplant and saffron pasta.

The NRA recommendation is heartily welcome news to Hindus, and clearly points out a direction in America that should persuade meat-eating Hindus to get on the vegetarian wagon.

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