

Could you go meat-free for Lent?

Reducing the impact of what we eat isn't simple. There are lots of factors in the environmental impact of our food: how far it has travelled, how and where it was produced, and the impact of the packaging.

It is clear that, in general, animal products – beef and dairy especially – have a significantly larger environmental impact than those of plant-based substitutes. United Nations planners indicate that to achieve our greenhouse gas commitments we must reduce the amount of meat in our diets. Health Canada and the World Health Organization have also recommended that for health reasons, Canadians should eat less red meat. So this can be a healthy choice, which is a another plus.



This Lent, making one big change to the way you eat could be an opportunity to think carefully about the environmental impact of your food. That's why we're inviting you to consider going without meat, or free of animal products altogether, during the Lent. There are lots of quick and easy soup, stew, and chili recipes (often served at our church lunches) that are meat free. We are also fortunate in the Yukon to have access to local fish like Artic char, and salmon and other seafood from our rivers and from our neighbours in Alaska – food which is available year-round in local stores. Local fish is a sustainable and very quick-to-cook protein meal and chowders are a good winter lunch or supper. So are locally raised eggs. Local eggs are also available in most grocery stores and can make a delicious breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack (hard-boiled, in omelettes, or my old favourite --devilled!).

So, what changes can you make?

There are lots of vegetarian and vegan alternatives to eating meat, so get creative! You could start by swapping meat for beans (legumes), like lentils, kidney beans and chickpeas. These are great sources of protein, and they also add fibre to your meals. They are also cheaper sources of protein, so you can also save money on your grocery bill, especially if you cook beans from scratch. If you aren't able to cut out meat products all together every day, why not consider eating meat for only 2-3 days a week?



It's important to think carefully about the kind of substitutes you're going for when you change your diet. Are you choosing foods which have travelled a long distance? How have the vegetables you're buying been produced? We are lucky that here in Whitehorse we can buy locally grown and harvested root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, beets and parsnips throughout the year in our local grocery stores. . Also, local eggs are available here. Buying local also helps our local economy.



Reducing the consumption of meat or animal products might not be a long-term change for you but it is a worthwhile experiment. Making a change over Lent and asking these questions is a great start to considering how you can live lightly.

Adapted by Heather MacFadgen from Living Lent – creating a climate of change

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