

THE HAPPY VEGETARIAN

with Melanie Murugun

RUC's Green Monday Champion

Happy 2017 everyone! I hope you are staying the course with the Green Monday-ing. The holidays all blurred into one long day for me, punctuated by night and day. And I have to confess, that some Monday mornings I would be lifting a spoonful of scrambled eggs into my mouth and I would remember... oh, shoot! After speaking to many of you and into my first month of Green Mondays, I realize that a difficulty with the Green Monday diet is staying dairy-free. So I thought I will discuss some dairy-free breakfast options that I have been exploring and using.

The first morning we went green, David and I were staring at our butterless, gluten-free toast, with its single slice of coconut cheese, and I thought, this does not look good. So I added some baby tomatoes. It tasted better. But David, who was missing his beloved eggs, was clearly looking miserable. So a few googles later, I found an adaptation of a recipe that my mum used to make. The lady, Manjula, had cleverly adapted a well known recipe to make an eggless omelette. So I got the ingredients together. You can use veggies that you have in your fridge. We had made up a potato and peas curry on Sunday to add to our meal on Monday, and in tribute to one of my favourite breakfasts, Masala Dosa, I added some of this potato mix, atop the "omelette". It was delicious and

all was good again. The beauty of this veggie rich meal is that you can have it at any time of day. Furthermore the potatoes are virtually spice-free so no worries if you can't tolerate the heat. Manjula's recipe for the omelette is below as is a photo of what we cooked up:

Ingredients:

3/4 cup chickpea (gram flour)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds (jeera)
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
1 green chili finely chopped, optional
1/2 cup tomato seeded and finely chopped
1/2 cup finely chopped spinach
1/2 cup finely chopped bell pepper
1/2 cup water to make batter
2 tablespoons oil

Use vegetable quantities as a guide line, it can be a little more or less, and also change the vegetables to your choice.



RESTORING THE WORLD ONE BITE AT A TIME

Method

Mix all the dry ingredients together: chickpea, cumin seeds, black pepper and salt. Add the water slowly to make a smooth batter, the consistency of pancake batter or Dosa batter. Add the green chilies, tomato, spinach, and bell pepper. Mix well.

Heat the skillet on medium heat (Use a non-stick skillet) skillet should be moderately hot. Test by sprinkling a few drops of water on it. Water should sizzle right away.

Pour approx. 1/2cup of the batter mixture into the skillet and spread evenly with the back of a spoon. Starting

from the center, spiral the batter outward evenly to form a circle about 7" in diameter.

When the batter starts to dry, gently spread about two teaspoons of oil over it. Wait about 30 seconds; flip the omelet using a flat spatula.

Press the omelet lightly all around with the spatula to make the omelet cook evenly. Turn the omelet three or four times, until cook well and golden brown on both sides.

Repeat for the remaining omelet.

Serve this with a topping of your choice. I did mine with potatoe and peas as above.

Some other breakfast options are a home-made muesli with fruit and cashew nut yoghurt (yes, such a thing exists). Oats and almond milk with a sprinkle of cardamom and cinnamon is delicious. I use almond or coconut milk if I need to add milk to anything. After much experimentation with dairy-free cheeses, I have concluded that the dairy free coconut "cheese" slices at Woolies are the best.

Wellness Warehouse is another place to go to for dairy-free options, like the cashew nut yoghurt. Earth fairs and food markets are also bursting with "every-free" food, as my family calls it. Much of these things can also be made at home. Nutritional yeast flakes must become your friend! I have been experimenting with dairy-free ice-cream at the moment. I have it down pat without milk or cream but my son likes the consistency afforded by eggs! I will keep you posted about how that is coming along!

Most days I just skip the dairy and I realize I can do without it, and without the substitutes.

Increasing fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds into your diet and breakfast in the form of a smoothie or smoothie bowl (I like the old style smoothies myself, but smoothie bowls are very fashionable these days) is an easy way to stay healthy and up your energy in the mornings. I also think Green Monday's are a great opportunity to cut down on sugar and to eat nourishing, wholesome food that is good for your body. For instance, watercress is like a natural Botox. I bought so much watercress after I read that. We often had a braised watercress dish when I was growing up. So I just made up some of that. In fact, it was incorporated into my Buddha Bowl. In that vein, I hope you have taken pictures of the Buddha Bowls you have created. Please send your photos to me with your name and a brief description of what you made. It will be wonderful if we can share our ideas. Let us learn from each other.

I will do a demonstration of a vegan meal on 19 March after church. If you have any ideas about what you would like demonstrated, let me know. I will choose one or two dishes but will use your ideas for further recipes or demonstrations.

My email address for the Buddha Bowl photos and meal ideas is: melaniemurugen@gmail.com. My cell number if you would like to WhatsApp your photos is: 083 560 2386.

And if, for some reason, you are having such a blue Monday that you don't feel like going green, don't beat yourself up about. Do this with compassion for yourself, as well as for all of God's creatures and the earth. Just try again for the next meal. Providing food and eating it must be an act of love. And it must make you happy. So plan to eat delicious, flavourful meals. I believe that when you eat happy it changes the energy of what you eat and how it nourishes your body. So the spirit of how we eat is just as important as the substance of what we eat. That is why I think we should be happy vegetarians. I heard somewhere that if we can't find heaven on earth then we won't recognise it when we get there. So this Green Monday, I wish you all a little bit of heaven. Happy Monday.