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Abstract

There is currently a lack of research about the needs of vegetarians, from a practitioner or academic perspective. This paper contributes to filling this research gap, by discussing the needs of vegetarians who dine out and their current difficulties in participating in the dining experience, in the present context. Specifically, it is argued that the typology of vegetarians presented in this paper, based on their motivations to adopt the chosen diet, might prove useful for restaurants in order to understand the vegetarian guest and develop menu items and services that will better cater to their needs. Recommendations for practitioners and future research areas are presented.

Keywords

Amir Shani, Food and Beverage

Vegetarians: A Typology for Foodservice Menu Development

By Amir Shani and Robin B. DiPietro

There is currently a lack of research about the needs of vegetarians, from a practitioner or academic perspective. This paper contributes to filling this research gap, by discussing the needs of vegetarians who dine out and their current difficulties in participating in the dining experience, in the present context. Specifically, it is argued that the typology of vegetarians presented in this paper, based on their motivations to adopt the chosen diet, might prove useful for restaurants in order to understand the vegetarian guest and develop menu items and services that will better cater to their needs. Recommendations for practitioners and future research areas are presented.

Introduction:

Dining out is one of the prominent forms of leisure activity in Western society, in general, and in the U.S., in particular. The restaurant industry is a fast growing segment of the United States' economy. The National Restaurant Association predicts that 2007 will see \$534 billion in sales in the U.S. foodservice industry, over \$1.45 billion a day. The direct sales of the foodservice industry equal four percent of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (National Restaurant Association, 2007). Besides its conventional role of providing prepared food, the restaurant industry provides consumers and businesses with convenience, value, entertainment, and a social environment away from the stresses of daily life.

Today, more than ever, customers can choose from a tremendous variety of restaurants, from quick service chains to fine upscale luxury restaurants (Muller & Woods, 1994). In addition, the average customer has the option to select from a great diversity of flavors and tastes, such as ethnic food or different styles of cooking. The importance of the restaurant industry is also apparent from the emerging range of academic research and journals dealing with the theme of restaurant management and foodservice management. Consumers with more disposable income have been eating out on more than just "occasions" and this has been seen in the fourteen consecutive years of rising foodservice sales (National Restaurant Association, 2007).

Despite the size and importance of the foodservice industry, it seems that the response of the restaurant industry to the important segment of the vegetarian customers was only partial. This lack of focus on the vegetarian customer base limited their participation in the dining experience. Vegetarians were usually able to put together a satisfying meal in some restaurants, but the variety and quality of the selections are, in most cases, rather limited (Cobe, 2003). The main reason for this is that meat (in the sense of the edible parts of mammals and birds) is still the most universally valued and sought after source of human nutrition (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2004). Another reason for the relative absence of vegetarian courses in restaurants is the common perception of vegetarian food as boring and unsatisfying, and the recoiling of many chefs to cater to vegetarians because of the hard work involved in the preparation and delivery of a good quality meal (Kühn, 2006).

However, in the past few years, there has been a slight change in the attitude of the restaurant industry toward vegetarianism. The recognition of the purchasing power of vegetarians, the rising appeal of healthy food, and the changing attitudes of mainstream restaurant customers have led many restaurants to offer a greater diversity and quality of non-meat options in their menus (Yee, 2004). Nevertheless, the knowledge about the vegetarians in relation to dining out and restaurant menu options is still very limited in the industry, and there are no serious references in the academic literature to the issue of the needs of vegetarians in restaurants. There is a gap in the literature regarding this segment of the population in relationship to the foodservice industry.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce a current vegetarian typology and to propose a more complete typology along with the implications that this segment of the population has on the foodservice industry in general and to menu development in restaurants specifically. This paper will discuss the needs of vegetarian customers – with an emphasis on dining out - and refute the common belief that the vegetarian market is simplistic and homogenous.

Review of the Literature:

Foodservice Industry and Menu Development

The U.S. foodservice industry is a key component in the gross domestic product of the country, as well as being the largest private sector employer in the country (National Restaurant Association, 2007). With the increase in disposable income and dual income households, more people are dining out for more

than just special occasions. Since the increase in the number and types of casual and casual themed restaurants that occurred in the 1970's, consumers have been dining out at a wide variety of types and styles of restaurants (Muller & Woods, 1994). Consumers are dining out on a more regular basis and are constantly looking for good restaurants to visit.

The menu development of a restaurant is a key component to the success of a restaurant organization (Jones & Miffl, 2001). It is important in terms of the concept development of the unit and the marketing of the unit to the public (Atkinson & Jones, 1994). There has been some research done that looks at restaurant menu development and how the menu choices contribute to the profitability of the unit. These methods of analysis can be called average spend analysis and looks at the average amount of money spent by a guest and menu engineering which looks at a two by two matrix that looks at the popularity of an item and the profitability of the item (Miller, 1980). Restaurants tend to view menu development in terms of analyzing the sales and profitability of menu items, rather than by determining the potential customer lost due to the lack of a specific type of menu item.

Vegetarianism and Current Typology of Vegetarians

Vegetarianism is a dietary pattern characterized by the consumption of plant foods and the avoidance of some or all animal products (Perry, McGuire, Neumark-Sztainer & Story, 2001). It involves the belief and practice of eating foods obtained exclusively or partially from the vegetable kingdom (Janda & Trocchia, 2001). The vegetarian diet mainly includes grains, legumes (dried beans and peas), fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds. Various types of vegetarians make up the vegetarian population. The most common way to categorize vegetarians is according to what is included or eliminated from their diet (see Table 1).

Table 1: Traditional Typology of Vegetarians

Types of Vegetarians	Diet Characteristics
Occasional-Vegetarians	Basically eat all kind of animal products, while striving to keep a balanced diet; sometimes keep a vegetarian diet.
Semi-Vegetarians	Eat milk and dairy products, eggs, fish, and poultry. However, they will avoid eating red meat.
Pesco-Vegetarians	Eat milk and dairy products, eggs, and fish, but avoiding all other animal products.
Lacto-Ovo vegetarians	Consume dairy products and eggs, but avoid all other animal products
Lacto-Vegetarians	Consume dairy products, but avoid all other animal products
Vegans	Neither eat nor consume animal products of any kind (including honey)
Raw Foodists	Vegans who do not cook or heat food, but eat it only in its natural, raw state
Fruitarianism	Consume only fresh fruit and food that is technically considered as fruit, such as cucumbers and tomatoes

While the last types of vegetarians listed in Table 1 (fruitarians and raw foodists) represent a small number of people, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of other vegetarians (including vegans) in many Western countries. In fact, vegetarians are no longer viewed as radical and odd, but they are viewed as having a legitimate alternative lifestyle (Povey, Wellens & Conner, 2001). The exact percentage of vegetarians in the U.S. is in dispute, since many define themselves as vegetarians, although they would not be considered "classic" vegetarians. In a more precise survey conducted in the U.S. by the Vegetarian Resource Group in 2003, 2.8% of those surveyed said they did not eat meat, poultry, or fish/seafood (i.e. Lacto-Ovo vegetarians or more strict), while 6% did not eat meat (i.e. Pesco-Vegetarians or stricter). In the U.K. and Germany the numbers are more impressive, with 5% of the population defining themselves as vegetarians. These numbers represent a large amount of revenues that restaurants and foodservice operations could be ignoring or not taking care of in a proactive way. Vegetarianism is more common among young people (ages 18-29) (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2004), and approximately twice as many women as men are vegetarian (Beardsworth, Bryman, Keil, Goode, Haslam & Lancashire, 2002).

However, in recent years, even among people who do not consider themselves as vegetarians, a growing number of people are trying to restrict meat consumption and choose plant-based options. Whereas the number of vegetarians has become relatively static, the number of meat-reducers and red-meat-avoiders (Occasional-Vegetarians) is increasing (Held, 2003). The Vegetarian Resource Group estimates that 30%-40% of the country's consumers are a good market for meatless items, and the National Restaurant Association reports that 20% of Americans are looking for restaurants that serve some vegetarian items (National Restaurant Association, 2006). The Vegetarian Resource Group also reports that 57% of consumers 'sometimes' order a meatless meal while dining out.

There is growing evidence that food companies are responding to the increasing popularity of vegetarian food. Vegetarians can find a large variety of nutritious vegetarian products in different retail stores (Reid & Hackett, 2002), such as soy milk, seitan tempeh (white gluten), tofu, and convenience products that “imitate” meat products, such as veggie burgers, tofu steaks, and veggie breakfast sausages. According to a Mintel Group report, the vegetarian food market in the U.S. has grown rapidly, from \$646.7 million in 1998 to \$1.6 billion in 2003. The largest segment of the vegetarian food market is frozen meat substitutes, with nearly one in five respondents purchasing prepared vegetarian meals (Anonymous, 2004a). Restaurants have not been as quick to adopt the variety of good quality and varied menu items as the food processors and companies.

Menu Options/Menu Development

Vegetarians, like their meat-eating counterparts, are likely to go out to eat. However, many vegetarians are still concerned regarding the difficulties in finding appropriate places that serve fruit, vegetables and whole grain products (Tabacchi, 2006), and about the lack of understanding in relation to their special needs (Blaazer, 2006). Although there is a growing number of strict vegetarian restaurants, vegetarians often find themselves dining in non-vegetarian places. The reasons for that could be the difficulty to find a suitable restaurant in certain areas, or that they accompany people who prefer a meat-based meal. As groups of people are deciding on a place to go out to eat, the vegetarians in the group could be the “veto vote” that keeps a group of people from stopping and eating at a certain restaurant. In other words, if some of the people in the car do not feel that there is enough variety on the menu or if there is not a sufficient number of vegetarian entrees, the vegetarians in the car may decide to go someplace else to eat. This will impact negatively the revenues of the restaurant due to the fact that the entire group of people will go someplace else to eat.

Some of the common difficulties that vegetarians are faced with are:

- 1) Lack of knowledge and awareness on the part of servers and hosts with regards to the suitability of items on the menu for the vegetarian consumer (Anonymous, 2001). Many times, the best thing vegetarians get from the servers is a reply such as “Let me go check in the kitchen...”
- 2) No indication in the menu about what items are vegetarian, or what dishes can be “converted” into vegetarian dishes (e.g. using tofu instead of meat).
- 3) Limited variety of vegetarian and/or vegan dishes on the menu (in the vegetarian community’s jargon, they usually stick to “the bread and water option”).
- 4) Presence of meat hidden in “vegetarian” dishes. Both Denny’s (Winston, 2001) and McDonalds (Goodstein, 2001) became entangled with vegetarian organizations and consumers, once it turned out that their French fries were being seasoned with beef flavoring. Following this type of incident, vegetarians usually feel angry and insulted.
- 5) Lack of awareness as to the different types of vegetarianism and the various food items that can be consumed by each of the different types of vegetarians (Lydecker, 1998). A customer who orders a vegetarian version of a Greek salad, for example, might get the salad without the feta cheese, although he himself is a Lacto-Ovo vegetarian and would desire the cheese on the salad.

Despite these issues, it seems that in recent years, change is taking place in the attitude of the restaurant industry towards vegetarianism. Today, more restaurants are offering a larger variety of vegetarian entrées, sandwiches and salads (Anonymous, 2004b). In addition, creative vegetable-based specialties and meat-alternatives are also more available to the vegetarians and the meat-reducing diners (Disbrowe, 2001). Yet, most restaurants are still characterized by ignorance regarding the vegetarian customers and criticized for having a lack of suitable menu options for this customer base. In order to understand this important segment of the market, it is necessary to get a deeper understanding of their motives and of the various reasons that may have led to vegetarianism.

Typology for Understanding Vegetarians

Today, our knowledge regarding the motives for becoming a vegetarian has grown substantially. In order to offer the vegetarian market excellent service, restaurants must make the effort to better understand what stands behind this chosen diet. This understanding will help to allow for the addition of menu items that will attract this segment of the population and will help to grow revenues in foodservice operations.

In fact, a typology based on the motivations for becoming a vegetarian (see Table 2) might prove to be more beneficial than the traditional categorization of vegetarians (see Table 1) based on what is

included or eliminated from the diet. These motives range from eco-centric ones (people opt for vegetarianism for external reasons, i.e. benefits to the environment, animals, and humanitarianism), to anthropocentric ones (people opt for vegetarianism for one's own good, i.e. health, fitness, better taste and appeal, and because of religious beliefs). Both categories of motives for turning to vegetarianism are discussed below.

Anthropocentric Vegetarians

Health-concerned vegetarians - The most common motivation for becoming a vegetarian is health concerns. It can derive from medical constraints (such as diabetes) (Berkoff, 2004), but it mostly stems from the belief that the vegetarian diet is simply healthier (Maurer, 2002). It results from the fact that a plant-based diet is usually moderate in fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar and sodium. Indeed, studies show that a plant-based diet can prevent chronic diseases and decrease the risk of heart failure (Berkow & Bernard, 2006), although it is still a controversial issue (Hood, 2006). The "health revolution" and the increasing popularity of organic foods contribute greatly to the appeal of vegetarian options (Harper & Makatouni, 2002), and towards bringing vegetarianism to the mainstream.

Weight-concerned vegetarians – Many people reduce their meat consumption, or turn fully to vegetarianism, with the intention of better managing their weight. With the U.S. population getting heavier - approximately 64% of the population are overweight and/or obese - customers are seeking solutions to their weight problems (Thorn, 2004). Since the vegetarian diet has lower levels of saturated fat, cholesterol and animal protein, it is associated with reduced body weight. Studies show that, on average, the weight of both male and female vegetarians is approximately 3% to 20% lower than that of non-vegetarians (Berkow & Bernard, 2006). Indeed, research shows that weight management is one of the most popular reasons for becoming a vegetarian, especially among young women (Gilbody, Kirk & Hill, 1999).

Sensory vegetarians – Some people simply find the taste, texture, smell and/or sight of meat-based food unappealing. These vegetarians are likely not only to recoil from red meat, fish and poultry, but also from food that resembles meat (e.g. veggie burgers) (Janda & Trocchia, 2001).

Comfort vegetarians – This group consists of occasional or part-time vegetarians. Many customers prefer to "relax" after a heavy meat-based meal and prefer to order a light vegetarian meal the next day. In addition, it is common for customers to start with a rich meat course and then to balance the meal components they accompany that course with vegetarian side-dishes (Lydecker, 1998).

Religious vegetarians – All the major world's religions widely refer to their believers' eating habits, and most of them have dietary norms or instructions. In addition, each religion addresses to some extent the issue of animal use to provide for human needs, including culinary ones (Sabaté, 2004). The main Eastern religions - Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism - perceive animals to be human souls in different bodily form, thus eating an animal is strictly forbidden. As a result, millions of devout Hindus, Buddhists, and Jainists do not eat meat, fish or eggs, while many Hindus only avoid red meat (Coward, 2007). Judaism and Islam have a similar approach regarding the consumption of animals. Both allow the slaughtering of animals (and exclude pork) when needed for food, but only following rituals designed to minimize suffering (Coşgel & Minkler, 2004). However, a small minority of orthodox Jews do encourage vegetarianism, out of compassion for animals (Barilan, 2004). In addition, observant Jews when on a trip, and in case there is no kosher restaurant, are required to eat in strictly vegetarian restaurants only (Weisen, 2007). Finally, although the mainstream attitude in Christianity is to allow meat consumption, the Greek Orthodox Church specifies the avoidance of meat, dairy products and eggs during three fasting seasons, which amounts to over 180 days per year. In addition, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church recommends the consumption of fruit, vegetables, wholegrain cereals, legumes and nuts, and the avoidance of meats (Sabaté, 2004). To conclude, millions of people are practicing vegetarianism, partially or completely, temporarily or permanently, out of religious beliefs.

Economically vegetarians – In developing countries, vegetarian diets – often inadequate – are often consumed because of poverty (Dwyer, 1988). In Western countries, this reason is much less common, although it was found that in some countries, such as Switzerland and Germany, the price of meat is an important factor determining consumption habits as meat is often an expensive product (Eastwood, 1995). Throughout the world, the rate of vegetarian college students is significantly higher than in the overall population, often for economic reasons (Fiddes, 1994). Food operators at university campuses are responding to this growing interest in vegetarian cuisine and offering more vegetarian options (Crosby, 1999).

Social vegetarians - Some people opt for the vegetarian lifestyle mainly because of group influence. It can stem from having been raised in a family with vegetarian significant-others (Lea & Worsley, 2002), or from the desire to emulate an admired vegetarian person (Janda & Trocchia, 2001). Vegetarian and animal rights organizations are fully aware of the latter point and often quote and display in their magazines and websites, famous vegetarians, both historical icons (e.g. Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, and Vincent Van Gogh), and current celebrities (e.g. Paul McCartney, Richard Gere, Pamela Anderson, and Dustin Hoffman).

Ethical vegetarians – Ethical considerations have a strong influence on the motivations behind people’s food choices (Linderman & Väänänen, 2000). Indeed, the second most common reason to go vegetarian is a care and concern for animal welfare and animal rights issues. Ethical vegetarians are concerned about how animals are raised, transported and slaughtered in modern industrialized farms (Singer, 1975). In addition, many are motivated to become vegetarians because of feelings of guilt associated with killing animals (Janda & Trocchia, 2001). Strict (Lacto-Ovo) vegetarians and especially vegans are more likely to be motivated by ethical considerations, and they tend also to avoid consuming other nonhuman animal products, such as cosmetics, clothing, as well as carrying out vivisection (McDonald, 2000). Although vegans only represent a fraction of the population, they are considered heavy consumers of ethical products and enthusiastic customers who generate word-of-mouth recommendations (through online sites and forums, as well) not only to other vegans, but also to other vegetarians (Ginsberg & Ostrowski, 2003).

Environmental vegetarians – At the heart of the ecological call for vegetarianism stands the argument that factory farms produce a disproportionate amount of animal waste (in comparison to human waste), and that much of this waste ends up in rivers and streams. In addition, environmentalists claim that raising animals for food is also destroying the world’s forests, for example many of the forests in South and Central America were torn down to make room for cattle pastures and ranching (World Animal Foundation, 2007). Thus, environmental vegetarians believe that saving the planet requires the elimination of livestock (Gussow, 1994).

Humanitarian vegetarians – According to different humanitarian organization reports, more than one billion humans experience chronic hunger, many of them children. However, much of the world’s grains are used to feed farm animals: it takes 12.9 pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef (Engel Jr., 2004). Therefore, humanitarian vegetarians believe that a plant-based diet could allocate these grains (bread in potential) to the world’s starving poor, instead of to livestock.

The proposed typology shown in Table 2 shows the two broad categorizations of anthropocentric vegetarians and eco-centric vegetarians. These categories show the motivations that drive people to decide to eat a vegetarian diet and can help to give direction for the foodservice managers that are creating menus and marketing plans for their organization.

Table 2: Motivations for Vegetarianism

Anthropocentric Vegetarians	Eco-centric Vegetarians
Health concerns: Medical restrictions or a belief that the vegetarian diet is healthier	Ethical reasons: Concern for animal rights issues
Weight concerns: Having the intention to manage weight by adopting vegetarian diet	Environmental reasons: Opposition to the environmental damages caused by the meat industry
Sensory reasons: Repulsion from the taste, texture, smell and/or sight of meat	Humanitarian reasons: The belief that adopting a vegetarian diet will help solve the problem of world famine
Comfort reasons: Balancing meat consumption with an occasional vegetarian diet	Religious beliefs: Religious restrictions that prohibit meat consumption
Economic reasons: To save money	Social reasons: Group influence or imitating significant others who are vegetarians

Discussion and Future Research

Restaurants that want to attract vegetarian customers must realize that vegetarians are a heterogeneous market segment with different motives and diverse needs in their diet and life. The growing number of part-time and full-time vegetarians makes it even more vital to take this issue seriously. Understanding the traditional typology of vegetarians, based on what is included or excluded from their diet, only provides a partial portrayal of vegetarians. It is necessary for restaurants, which decide to target the vegetarian public, to take one step forward and attempt to understand what underlies the decision to

be a vegetarian. As illustrated in Table 2, these motivations are divided between anthropocentric and eco-centric motivations. However, even among anthropocentric vegetarians, we find a wide range of sub-categories, such as health, sensory and religious vegetarians. The eco-centric vegetarians consist of fewer sub-categories, but even in this group, we can find different reasons to justify vegetarianism, whether it is a concern for animals or for world hunger.

It must be emphasized that vegetarians might - and are actually expected to - belong to more than one vegetarian-motive group. For example, ethical vegetarians (concerned with animal welfare) are also likely to become health vegetarians, both since they recognize the need for appropriate nutrition while practicing vegetarianism, and as a defensive measure for avoiding social disapproval from family and close friends (McDonald, 2000). It can also be expected that environmental vegetarians will add care and concern for animal rights to their motivations. Many vegetarians of all types seek out social support in vegetarian organizations' activities and on-line forums. There are even dating web-sites geared exclusively towards vegetarians. These social networks and interactions might lead to increased knowledge and concerns for other aspects of vegetarianism, which will add vegetarians to other motive groups (MacNair, 2001).

Following the investigation of the various types of vegetarians, two different attitudes clearly emerge, regarding the level of strictness in keeping a vegetarian diet. This is especially important when considering dining out and menu options in restaurants. The eco-centric vegetarians and the religious vegetarians (from the anthropocentric group) are expected to be less flexible in their food choices than the other anthropocentric vegetarians, since they are strongly ideological. Neither are the sensory vegetarians likely to compromise on the vegetarian diet, because of their aversion to meat products. The other anthropocentric vegetarians are expected to allow themselves more "freedom of choice" while dining out. For example, a weight-concerned vegetarian might deviate from his vegetarian diet when dining out, because it is a special occasion, on the premise that he/she will "return to the straight and narrow path" at home.

Future research could be done on this topic in order to quantify the number of vegetarian menu choices in restaurants today in the various segments of fast food, fast casual, family, casual, and fine dining. Research could be done in order to determine what food items vegetarians actually order from the menus of restaurants. This research would allow a true financial measure of impact of the vegetarian market on restaurants.

Implications and Recommendations for Practitioners

The inquiry into vegetarians and the sources of vegetarianism raise important implications for restaurants that wish to earn a piece of this consumer segment and bring in "vegetarian money" to their business. The following recommendations are not directed only to strict vegetarian restaurants. In fact, the vast majority of vegetarians (including vegans) visit non-vegetarian restaurants, as long as the latter are attentive to their wants and needs. Indeed, most vegetarian magazines and websites tend to recommend not only strictly vegetarian restaurants, but also vegetarian-friendly restaurants. The following are implications for practitioners in order to help target menu development for vegetarians.

1. Market segmentation- Targeting the vegetarian market simply by offering one or two vegetarian dishes will probably have a limited impact. Both vegetarian and non-vegetarian restaurants that wish to draw vegetarian customers must understand the motive map of vegetarianism and decide which sub-segments they want to attract. The current inquiry of different types of vegetarians leads to a few conclusions with regards to market segmentations.

Anthropocentric vegetarians – Health-concerned and weight-concerned vegetarians are likely to respond better to low-fat healthy food, while organic food will appeal especially to the former. Certification of organic food will help attract these customers. In addition, in order to cater to the needs of sensory vegetarians, the restaurant should offer vegetarian courses that do not imitate or resemble meat. Finally, attracting social vegetarians might be done by placing pictures of or quotes on vegetarianism by famous vegetarians, on the wall. These techniques are very common in vegetarian websites and magazines.

Eco-centric vegetarians - These vegetarians are more sensitive, due to the ideological aspects of their type of vegetarianism. Cases of "hidden meat" are likely to draw bad publicity, through word-to-mouth communication and the internet. Such incidents might even lead to a boycott and demonstrations

against the restaurant/chain. Although ethical vegetarians are not likely to automatically reject non-vegetarian restaurants, their chances of visiting them will drop dramatically if these restaurants serve dishes such as Foie-Gras (goose liver) or veal calves. These dishes are “red flags” for many ethical vegetarians because of the cruelty involved, according to animal rights movements, in raising and feeding these animals before slaughtering them. Thus, restaurants that wish to cater to ethical vegetarians should avoid serving such controversial dishes. Announcements in vegetarian networks, on the part of these restaurants regarding their policy, might result in appreciation and lead to positive word-of-mouth communication among vegetarians.

2. **Appropriate staff training-** The personnel should not assume that vegetarians are a homogeneous group, and should be aware of the different kinds of vegetarians. A waiter should not make any assumptions regarding “who is a vegetarian”, but instead, leave it in the hands of the customer himself. A solution to the invasion to privacy of customers might be to offer “Do it yourself” courses, where the customer puts together by him/herself the ingredients that he/she wishes to eat. Appropriate staff training should also prevent unclear or ambiguous answers from the staff, to questions regarding ingredients.
3. **Menu design-** The menu should have clear indications and marking of vegetarian or vegan dishes. In addition, it should be clear which meat dishes can be converted into vegetarian dishes. Probably the best technique in order to avoid vegetarian customers feeling uncomfortable, is to provide the “Do it yourself” option, as mentioned above.
4. **The small details-** Thinking about the small details might make the difference between a satisfied and a non-satisfied vegetarian customer. For example, providing soy milk instead of cow milk, and verifying that the veggie burgers are grilled on a meat-free surface might contribute significantly to the enjoyment of the customers.

Conclusion

The vegetarian market offers enormous potential, which is emphasized nowadays because of the health trend and the growing number of meat-reducers and meat-avoiders, which many restaurants have failed to understand. Although complex and multifaceted, the vegetarian market is worth a serious study and being catered to. The vast majority of vegetarians are likely to visit non-vegetarian restaurants, so that paying attention to their needs does not mean harming the regular mainstream market of omnivores, or even making fundamental changes in the restaurant.

Changing the way of thinking about vegetarianism and vegetarians might turn vegetarian customers from being those who “eat only side dishes” and are satisfied with little, to customers who fully share the experience of dining out.

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