

Why Vegan? – Saturday, 31 March 2007

Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Shaftesbury Avenue

Following the success of six free vegan food fayres in central London, Vegan Campaigns organised an event with a slightly different focus. With less of an emphasis on food, *Why Vegan?* aimed to promote a vegan diet to non-vegans through speakers, videos, and food tasting. Many people discovered that a vegan diet is easy, healthy, tasty and better for the environment.



Why Vegan? was held as part of Animal Aid's veggie month, which promotes positive aspects of a veggie diet. It was sponsored by [Vegan Society](#) and [Animal Aid](#). Companies donating food for the event include [Alpro Soya](#), [Beanies](#), [Booja-Booja](#), [Bute Island Foods](#), [Cauldron Foods](#), [Clearsping](#), [Clives Pies](#), Linda McCartney, [Lyme Regis Fine Foods](#), [Mr. Man Chinese Restaurant](#), [Nairns](#), [Natural Balance Foods](#), [Plamil](#), [Pogo Cafe](#), [Redwoods](#), [Rosies Products](#), [Shambhus Kitchen](#), [Soy Foods](#), [Swedish Glace](#), [Triano Brands](#), [Viva](#), [Wholebake](#), [Yaoh](#), and [Zedz Foods](#).

Active Distribution, Animal Aid, Bnevertobusytobebeautiful cosmetics, London Vegans, Mr. Mans Chinese Food, Stephen Walsh PhD (author of Plant Based Nutrition books), Pogo Café, Shambhus Kitchen, Vegan Campaigns, Vegan Fitness/London Savate and Vegan Runners had stalls.

There was a programme of talks and videos, which we encouraged all participants to listen to and watch. The full timetable is in Appendix 1.

There was also a side room where people could talk to a longer term vegan and watch videos.

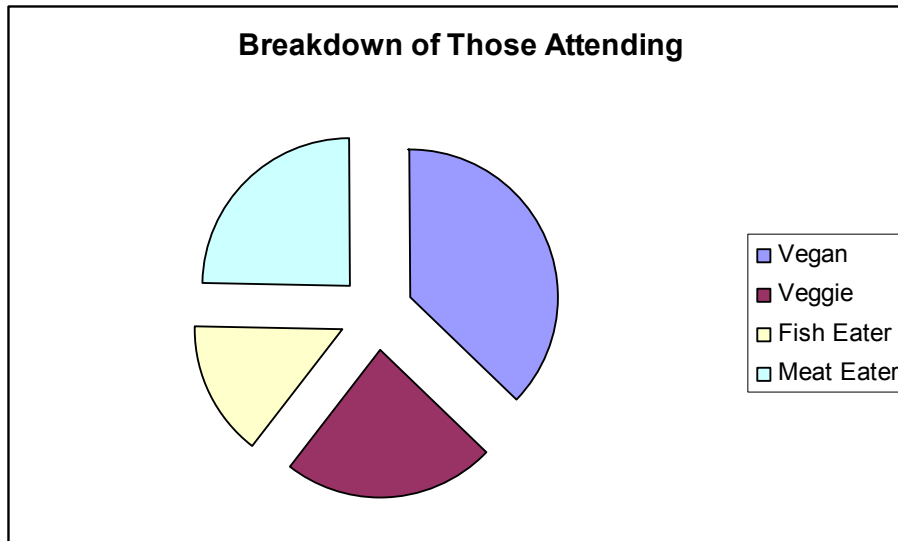
This report summarises the results of the questionnaires that were filled out by participants on the day.

Who Attended?

113 people filled out the questionnaire, although we expect a number of people attended that did not fill out their questionnaires. We estimate approximately 200 people attended. Those who filled out their questionnaires were given a free vegan gift.

40% of those who filled out their questionnaires were meat eaters (15% "fish eater" and 25% eat other animals too), 23% were vegetarians and 37% were vegan.

We were interested to see how many “fish eaters” attended, so that we know how to target information at these events in the future. By fish eater, we mean those who eat fish, but no other types of meat. We are not suggesting that eating fish is less cruel or destructive than eating other animals.



How Did People Found Out About *Why Vegan?*

A lively and clear flier was designed to promote *Why Vegan?* We promoted the event mainly through door to door leafletting, putting leaflets in businesses, shops and pubs and leafletting on the street on the day. We also sent out a press release to local and national newspapers and local radio, sent leaflets out to schools, colleges, universities, libraries and community centres. Camden New Journal published a small piece about *Why Vegan?*.

We also put adverts on various websites and myspace pages.

As usual, we put up some large signs outside the venue, signposting passers by into *Why Vegan?*

The following chart shows the way that people who attended found out about the fayre, split into meat eaters, fish eaters, vegetarians and vegans.

	Vegan	Veggie	Fish eater	Meat Eater	Total
word of mouth/email	16	10	4	5	35
leaflet on day	1	4	2	9	16
leaflet at home	2	4	2	3	11
leaflet at business	2	2	2	2	8
Poster in library	1	0	2	4	7
press/Camden New Journal	2	2	1	1	6
No answer/other	0	0	2	2	4
Vegan Campaigns website	4	0	0	0	4
Poster in shop window	2	0	2	0	4
Website (NSF)	3	0	0	0	3
Myspace	1	1	0	0	2
Green events	0	0	0	2	2

London Vegans	2	0	0	0	2
Red Veg	2	0	0	0	2
Catholic Church	0	1	0	0	1
Veggie Socials	1	0	0	0	1
Calthorpe Community Centre	0	1	0	0	1
Pogo Café	1	0	0	0	1
Screen on Green Cinema	1	0	0	0	1
Leaflet on Street in February in Notting Hill	0	1	0	0	1
Vegan Forum (discussion forum)	1	0	0	0	1

27% of non vegans found out about *Why Vegan?* through word of mouth

21% of non vegans found out through receiving a leaflet on the day

13% of non vegans found out through door to door leafletting

8% of non vegans found a leaflet in a business – this could have been at work or another business.

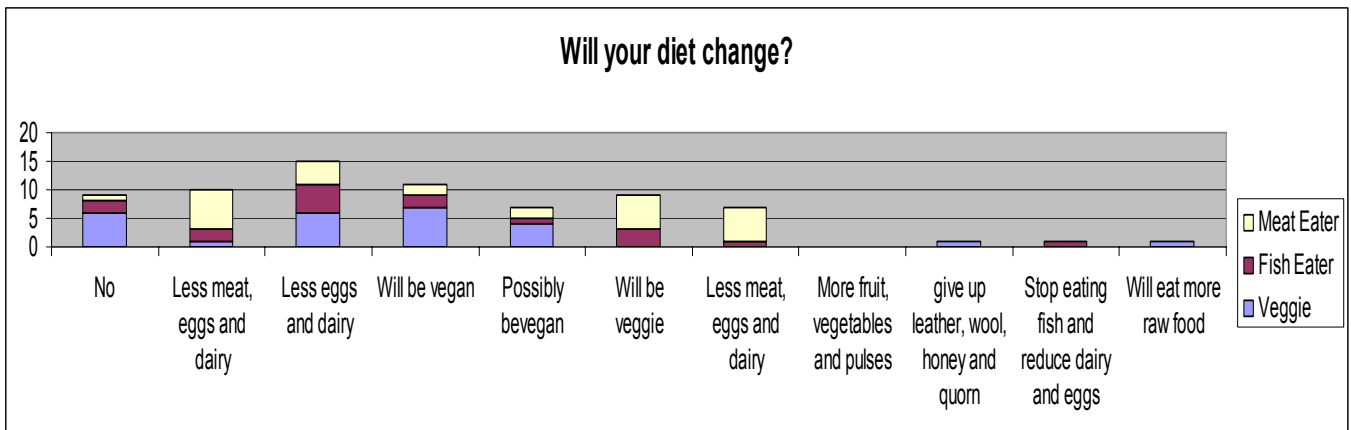
8% of non vegans saw a leaflet in their local library

5% of non vegans saw the information in the Camden New Journal.

The majority of vegans who attended found out about the event through word of mouth, followed by websites, including the Vegan Campaigns website.

Will Peoples Diets Change?

People were asked if their diets would change as a result of *Why Vegan?* The chart below shows the responses of Meat Eaters, Fish eaters and Vegetarians.



87% of non vegans who attended said that they would change their diet positively as a result of the event.

15% of non vegans said that they would become vegan as a result of the event.

10% of non vegans said that they would probably become vegan as a result of the event.

20% of meat and fish eaters said that they would become vegetarian as a result of the event.

People were asked why, responses included:

Possibly the final straw?

“Because I’ve been thinking about it for ages” (vegetarian intending to become vegan)
 “I have been trying to go vegan for a while, and today made it seem easier for me” (vegetarian intending to become vegan)
 “I will be connecting with it (veganism) again as it seems more possible” (vegetarian changing back to vegan)
 “Its been on my mind for a long time... step by step. Today made me help to make a bigger step” (vegetarian planning to possibly become vegan)
 “I have wanted to stop eating fish” (fish eater planning to eat less dairy and eggs and stop eating fish)
 “Long term project to become vegan” (meat eater cutting down on dairy and eggs)
 “have been thinking of giving up for a while” (meat eater planning to eat less meat)

Being vegan makes you look better!

“Everyone here has really good skin!” (vegetarian planning to become vegan)

Cruelty to animals

“Because of the suffering it causes” (fish eater planning to become vegetarian and cut down on dairy and eggs)
 “because of industrial farming” (meat eater planning to eat less dairy and eggs)

Its healthier to be vegan

“I want to have a long and healthy life” (fish eater planning to cut down on dairy and eggs)
 “More fruit and veg is better for your health” (fish eater planning to cut down on fish)
 “being good and healthy” (meat eater planning to become vegetarian)

Want to be less environmentally destructive

“Better for planet earth” (meat eater planning to become vegetarian and cut down on dairy and eggs)

Its better to be vegan and there are alternatives

“realise its best” (meat eater planning to eat less meat, dairy and eggs)
 “because there are alternatives” (meat eater planning to eat less meat)

Not wanting to change...

“...oh come on!” (vegetarian not planning to change their diet)
 “I have been veggie for 32 years. I am practically vegan although I do occasionally eat cheese – this may change in the future” (vegetarian not planning to change their diet)
 “For health reasons – I do feel better when I eat a bit of fish” (fish-eater not planning to change their diet)
 “I eat little meat already and would miss if it was cut out altogether” (meat eater not planning to change their diet)
 “Feel I gain more cultural sensitivity when open to all types of food” (meat eater not planning to change their diet)

Not needing to change...

“Feel more confident about my vegan diet” (vegan planning to stay vegan)

Respondents said what they liked best about the day. Some people listed more than one thing. Here are the results:

	Vegan	Veggie	Fish-eater	Meat Eater	Total
Food/range of food/nice food (type of food not specified)	9	11	8	10	38
Truth or Dairy video speakers/talks (speaker not specified)	8	6	2	2	18
Cookery demos (cheesecake and quiche)	4	4	2	1	11
	3	3	0	5	11

meeting friendly people/vegans	6	1	1	2	10
Everything	4	2	0	4	10
Stalls	2	2	0	2	6
Information	0	1	2	3	6
Free food	4	0	0	0	4
Atmosphere	0	0	2	1	3
Cakes	2	1	0	0	3
Finding out about how easy its to be vegan/inspiration				2	2
Recipe booklet	2				2
Animal Aid talk	1	1	0	0	2
Make up stall	1	1	0	0	2
alternatives to meat/dairy		1			1
Back room video	1				1
Ice Cream	0	1	0	0	1
Service				1	1
Vegan Nutrition	0	0	1	0	1
Pogo Café stall	1	0	0	0	1
Chocolate	0	0	0	1	1
Chinese food	0	0	0	1	1
Vegan Runners stall	1	0	0	0	1

What Else Did People Say?

In addition to being asked what they liked most, people were asked if they had any other comments. Positive comments included:

“keep active” (vegan)

“Fantastic and informative day” (vegetarian)

“Thank you, it was lovely” (meat eater)

“Excellent products and information” (meat eater)

“There should be more events like this to meet vegans” (vegan)

“Found I could replace honey with maple syrup, so will buy that instead now” (vegetarian)

“Brilliant spread of food” (vegan)

“Vegan Guide is amazing. Great recipes and resources. Thank you!” (vegetarian)

“Great event. You should be really proud” (vegetarian)

People Wanted to Find Out More

44 people (39% of respondents) asked for more information, ranging from nutrition advice, recipes, social groups, shopping and getting involved in vegan campaigning.

Learning from Experience

Comments from participants/organisers/volunteers to help us improve the next *Why Vegan?* style event include:

Questionnaire respondents:

“Did not like being told to sit down to listen to the talk” (vegan)

We had made the decision to encourage all attendees to listen to the talks. The talks were not aimed at vegans, which might be why we received the above comments. We did have a side room and alcoves that people could sit in if they did not want to listen to talks. Perhaps we need to make this more obvious next time.

“The DVD was a bad sound quality” (vegan)

Six people commented that the venue was too cramped or hot (6 people said this)

“Juice bar would compliment the event” (fish-eater)
“Could invite Benjamin Zephaniah or Seventh Day Adventists to speak” (vegan. We did try asking Benjamin Zephaniah, but he was out of the country. Lets try again next time!)
“Felt a bit lonely” (meat eater)
“Hoped to get spoken advice but came late and everyone was busy” (vegan. Lets make the Talk to a Vegan space more noticeable next time)
“Needed more fruit and vegetables, the food was too starchy” (a vegan and vegetarian both said this)

Volunteers/organisers:

- Do not put the address on the Vegan Campaigns website or have a separate page on the Vegan Campaigns website with information about the event, not linked to other pages. This webpage could be promoted on the leaflets, but would not be accessible to anyone just browsing on the website.
- Make it as clear as possible that the event is aimed at non vegans.
- Don't use the word vegan in the next event title. Call the next one “food fair” or something else that will not attract vegans!
- Hot plates to keep the food warm
- Get into the venue earlier or the night before to start setting up (if possible)
- Unpack all boxes before starting to set things up
- Phone all volunteers in advance to make sure they are aware of the rota
- Make the rota a bit simpler – perhaps just one shift change rather than four
- Ask volunteers not to fill out the questionnaire, or have a question to ask if they were a volunteer on the day. Its possible that some questionnaires might have been filled out by those helping on the day.
- Schools could be good venues next time, as they normally have good kitchens and large halls.

Organisers and volunteers commented that too many vegans attended and that the event was aimed at non-vegans. Next time, we will aim to reduce these numbers and increase the numbers of non-vegans. The flip side of this was that many of the vegans who attended asked for more information about Vegan Campaigns. Two of those who attended went out with plates of tofu cheesecake and leaflets to entice people in. It also gave the non-vegans a chance to speak to vegans who were not busy organising, leafleting or serving food.



Would you like to be involved?

Would you like to get involved in organising or volunteering at the next event? If so, please contact us at info@vegancampaigns.org.uk or see our events page at www.vegancampaigns.org.uk

Appendix 1: Timetable

12 – 12.30 Sample some vegan food and take a look at the information, and merchandise stalls

12.30 – 12.55pm Vegan Nutrition - Stephen Walsh PHD, Researcher.

1pm – 1.20pm Cookery demonstration – vegan quiches-Kaye Wotherspoon

1.20pm – 1.35pm Sample some vegan food and take a look at the information and merchandise stalls

1.35pm – 2pm Kate Fowler-Reeves, Senior Campaigning Officer, Animal Aid – eating fish, dairy, eggs and meat – why is this so cruel?

2.05pm – 2.25pm Cookery demonstration – vegan lemon and coconut cheesecake – Chrissy Leyland

2.25pm – 2.40pm Sample some vegan food and take a look at the information, video and merchandise stalls

2.40pm – 3.05pm Truth or Dairy: Do you dare find out the truth? A humorous, but informative video with Benjamin Zephaniah

3.05pm – 3.20pm Sample some vegan food and take a look at the information and merchandise stalls

3.20pm – 3.45pm Why veganism helps the environment and third world - Jagdeesh Singh, London 21 Sustainability Network (www.london21.org)*

3.45pm – 4pm Information and merchandise stalls and sample food if there is any left!

*Jagdeesh had some problems on the trains, so Kaye Wotherspoon jumped in at the last minute and saved the day! Thanks, Kaye!

Appendix 2 Questionnaire

“Why Vegan” March 2007: Tell ☺ us what you think! ☺
We would really appreciate it if you could spend a few moments to fill in this questionnaire.
Thank you!

1. How did you find out about this event?

leaflet at home leaflet at
business
poster in shop
window
poster in
library
press (*where?*)
leaflet on day website
(*which?*)
word of mouth other (*what?*)
More information:

2. What do you eat?

(Please tick all which apply)
fruit & veg
milk
eggs
fish poultry
mammals
More information:

3. What was your favourite part of the event?

4. Do you intend to change your diet after today?

No ... it will stay
the same

Yes, I intend to change to ...

less
meat
veggie less dairy &
eggs
vegan

Other ... (*what?*)

5. Why?

6. Would you like us to keep in touch with practical support?

Advice on:

nutrition cooking local social groups
veggie vegan
shopping joining
campaigns

Please write down your contact details, grab contacts from one of our volunteers,
or get in touch through info@vegancampaigns.org.uk.

7. Any other comments?

Please hand your completed survey in on your way out in return for a free gift.