

COOKING GREEN

A Delicious Call To Action

by Kay Bushnell

Most of us experience a greater thrill watching the fog settle over the coastal range than contemplating the environmental impact of our next meal. Yet food that is chosen with thought about its effect on the environment can do much more than simply satisfy our hunger. If we ignore the radical changes that have occurred this century in animal husbandry we are giving our tacit approval to the ecological mayhem they produce. As the Sierra Club states, “When a single hog operation may produce more sewage than Los Angeles, it’s time to take action.”

Gigantic corporate animal factories produce most of the animals whose meat ends up in America’s homes and restaurants. Traditional family livestock farmers find themselves squeezed out by nightmarish corporate operations. However, the mega-factories that produce meat do not spring into being and flourish on their own. They exist with the support of consumers who cling to old habits and follow without questioning the messages in advertising paid for by meat purveyors.

For centuries large populations of people in Africa, Asia, and India have thrived on a plant-based diet. Now scientific research has proven a strong connection between a plant based diet of grains, legumes, vegetables, fruits, and nuts and a reduced risk for heart disease, stroke, breast cancer, prostate cancer, colon cancer, and type II diabetes. These diseases are common in populations who eat large quantities of meat and animal products and are much less common in populations who rely on plant-based foods. In recent years public health organizations have publicized the importance of a diet rich in plant foods, and plant-based diets are growing rapidly in popularity.

The guidelines to eating a healthful plant-based diet are simple. Start with a good plant based cookbook; identify four or five favorite plant-based recipes and make them regularly; request plant based dishes in restaurants; anticipate the challenge of coming home too tired to cook by stocking your pantry and freezer with plant based convenience foods. Plant based eating is the opposite of depriving oneself. It is a delicious way to improve the health of our land and ourselves.