

Plant-Based Dining On The Road — Part One

by Kay Bushnell

Finding acceptable plant-based meals when traveling presents exciting opportunities to explore new foods, new restaurants and new earth-friendly ways to eat. For the environmentally aware motorist and cyclist, the availability of plant based meals food can definitely enhance the enjoyment of one's trip. Many travelers report that they prepare their own breakfasts and sometimes their own lunches, but they often look forward to sitting down to a relaxing meal in a restaurant for dinner.

Even in small towns local grocery stores often have plant-based selections at delis and salad bars. Travelers who camp and prepare their own food can pack lightweight, plant-based "convenience foods" and supplement them with fresh produce along the way. Motorists have the edge in being able to bring their favorite plant-based convenience foods from home. For example, a container of almond butter or other nut butter keeps well in a car's cooler if your motel room doesn't have a refrigerator. Other snacks that travel well include popcorn, pretzels, bags of fruit and raw vegetables. fig bars, and vanilla wafers.

At both campgrounds and motels, travelers can begin their day with hot or cold cereal. Most motels have a small self-service dining room and offer a complimentary continental breakfast. Handy 8-oz. aseptic containers of soymilk or rice milk that are sold in packs of three can be brought from home or perhaps found in markets along the way. These small containers are the perfect size for topping hot or cold cereal for one or two people. They have a shelf life of up to a year and do not need refrigeration until they are opened. Instant soup from dried ingredients reconstituted with hot water plus the breads available in motel breakfast rooms make delicious, filling breakfasts. If your motel doesn't have a breakfast room, plug in a hot pot to heat water for instant soups, cereals, and mixes such as hummus.

Many bed and breakfast establishments today provide freshly prepared plant-based breakfasts. Search the internet under "bed and breakfasts vegetarian." When calling about reservations ask if the baked goods are free of eggs and dairy products and if plant-based milks such as soy milk or rice milk are provided.

Make double use of the motel's self-service dining room. It's a good place to prepare bagel sandwiches of nut butters and sliced fruit such as banana, apple, or carrots for lunch or mid-morning snack. If you haven't made sandwiches, and there's no market nearby where you can purchase fresh produce, the only option may be a fast food chain restaurant. In this unfortunate case, ask for plant-based versions of the restaurant's regular menu items. Such requests might include veggie burgers, if they are offered, chef salads with veggies and beans, and burger buns without meat but with extra trimmings. Unless you're in the middle of nowhere take a good look around the area. If you're lucky you might find a salad bar with a variety of salad fixings and baked potatoes where you can put together a very satisfying plant-based meal.

It helps to plan ahead and scout out vegetarian-friendly restaurants in towns where you'll be spending the night ahead of time by visiting www.VegDining.com or www.happycow.net. Consult *The Vegetarian Journal's Guide to Natural Foods Restaurants in the U.S. and Canada* available at www.vrg.org/catalog/guide/htm. When you arrive in an unfamiliar town stop by the restaurants on your list and take a look at the menus. At the very least make a telephone call to the restaurant you are considering and inquire about its plant-based menu options. These easy steps can lead to enjoyable and memorable plant based meals wherever you go.