

Dish Omaha – July 23rd, 2025

Jeff: Well, Diane Watson's here, KVNO's resident foodie for Dish Omaha. Good morning, Diane.

Diane: Good morning, Jeff. Hey, it's Wednesday, but do you know about Meatless Monday?

Jeff: I don't think I do.

Diane: Well, it's kind of a revived movement that started in 2003, but really it dates back to 1917, when the Food and Drug Administration under Hoover launched it as a food conservation for the war effort.

Jeff: I did not know that.

Diane: And it was revived again after World War II. But in 2003, an ad exec in the John Hopkins for Public Health and Environmental Health started to revive it because they wanted the planet and people to be healthier. There are so many emissions and water usage that happens, and deforestation also tied to meat production. So now it's a movement in 40 countries. I regularly take part in Meatless Mondays. So, 6% of the U.S. population identifies themselves as vegetarian, and half of that are vegan. So just to differentiate, vegan means no animal products whatsoever, no eggs, no cheese, no milk. I had a niece that was vegan for a long time. Wow, that's challenging.

Jeff: It is challenging, yes.

Diane: It's challenging to cook for people, but not as challenging to go out and eat as you might think. More common to be vegetarian among Gen Z and millennials and statistically more women. I had a friend's daughter who became a vegetarian in college, and she didn't like vegetables. So...

Jeff: Well, that's...

Diane: She mostly ate cereal and mac and cheese.

Jeff: When I was in high school, I briefly attempted...

Diane: Did you?

Jeff: Yeah, and it was...

Diane: Disastrous.

Jeff: Well, back then you had, yeah, few choices.

Diane: That is so true. Plant-based eating is on the rise, and there's lots of different kind of variations of that, like flexitarian, where you mostly don't eat meat, but you do sometimes.

Jeff: Oh.

Diane: Pescatarian, where you don't eat land animals, but you eat fish.

Jeff: I dabbled in the flexitarianism, I would say.

Diane: I looked up the varieties of isms for food, and there's like 40.

Jeff: Really?

Diane: Yeah, it's pretty nuts.

Jeff: I'm a pizzaterian.

Diane: That's my favorite. Definitely, I used to go to Modern Love with my niece when she was a vegan. We missed that place. It closed last year, but there's a lot of places where you can get vegetarian and even vegan food. Have you been to Veg Edible?

Jeff: I got to know Veg Edible when they were based out of PACE, Potawatomi Arts and Culture.

Diane: Oh, sure. That's right. I forgot that.

Jeff: Kitchen Council. You bet.

Diane: Well, they're now in Benson. They rotate hearty plant-based, and they're vegan, nut-free, gluten-free, and they give you soy-free options. So, for people who can't really have an option, this is a great spot. They use the Beyond Burgers, so they make dishes that are kind of like meat-based, but they use other substitutes. One of my favorites is a buffalo chicken salad, and, of course, you can't see me, but I'm doing air quotes. They use shredded tofu, chicken on leafy greens with carrots, cucumbers, celery, chickpeas, which I love, buffalo sauce, and then a house ranch and scallions. And then they make a breakfast garbage plate that's like tachos, you know nachos with tots, and they use the Beyond sausage with fake bacon. So, there's a lot of products out there that you can enjoy that make it seem like you're eating meat if you're not. But then some of the places just lean way into the vegetables, like Block 16 does very heavy herb salted fries with griddled cheese curds and truffle aioli and fried mushrooms and house gravy. You know, I think a vegetarian, I think, like, super healthy.

Jeff: Right, right, right.

Diane: You don't have to be. You can go heavy. Kitchen Table does meatless specials every day. They do a seared olive tofu. I've never had olive tofu. It sounds really delicious.

Jeff: Sounds good.

Diane: Lola's always has lots of vegetarian forward. They do a roasted organic carrot that's to die for.

Jeff: That hummus. Is delicious.

Diane: Oh, my gosh.

Jeff: You can take it into the theater, too.

Diane: I know. Isn't that fun? It feels like you're kind of breaking a rule, but you're not.

Jeff: They still get popcorn, too.

Diane: Of course, you have to. You're required. And hummus is kind of the staple at Clio. They do the lebneh and the baba ghanoush.

Jeff: The baba ghanoush? Mmm.

Diane: You can get those dips. And even if you go to sushi, you can always get a vegetable roll. One without fish if you're truly vegetarian. And I was thinking about it. I was going through a list of restaurants. You can practically get vegetarian anywhere you go. Throw a restaurant at me. Throw a culture. Like Italian.

Jeff: Italian, sure.

Diane: Sure, you can get fettuccine Alfredo.

Jeff: At a barbecue joint.

Diane: At a barbecue joint, you can get potato salad.

Jeff: Okay, okay, all right.

Diane: Yeah.

Jeff: All right.

Diane: There's always a choice. If you want to go meatless money, give it a try.

Jeff: Sounds good, Diane. Diane Watson, KVNO's resident foodie for Dish Omaha. Thanks so much.

Diane: Thanks, Jeff.