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Podcast Script:

It seems that just about every day, that there's a new diet out there on the market – low fat, low carb, juice only, gluten free.... You name it, we've seen just about all of them! One of the newer diet changes being promoted today by health professionals is the Meatless Monday campaign. It's just basically picking a day of the week (possibly a Monday) to sub out your regular dinner with a vegetarian choice. Trading out the roasted chicken for some lentils, or ditching the pork chops for a serving of beans. It's one full day during the week where you side with the animal-loving, cholesterol fearing people who avoid meat and meat products!

Some of you are rolling your eyes - wondering why any logical person could give up meat and what the point of giving it up for a day really is? And some of you may have been considering doing a meat-less day once a week already or completely going vegetarian for good. Either way, here is some information and quick tips on how you can jump on the vegetarian band wagon (or just watch it go by).

Most people think being a vegetarian means eating lots of boring vegetables and fruit with copious amounts of beans and that weird spongy white mass known as tofu. Well...I can attest as a 98% of the time vegetarian (meaning 98% of the time I'm vegetarian, however, if presented with my grandmother's meatballs, by God I'm gonna eat them) that this is NOT the case. Tofu is not served in my house - ever. But here are some great recipes and tips that will help you create at least one meat-less meal.

Tips:

- **Were talking vegetarian NOT vegan.** Keep the dairy products and eggs in your recipes. Unless you are really motivated to eliminate all animal products (vegan-ism), don't think you can never enjoy a grilled cheese again.
- **Go slow** - start with one meal.
- **Start simple** - either pick a recipe that doesn't call for any meat at all (like pasta and marinara sauce) or pick a recipe with meat that can be easily swapped for beans, lentils, or if you must tofu/tofu products (Beef Chili - swap the ground beef for extra beans and veggies).
- **Keep it cheap** - there are plenty of costly all natural, organic, pre-prepared vegetarian foods in the grocery stores - take a stroll

through Whole Foods. Unless you have unlimited grocery store funds, stick to traditional vegetarian foods - beans, lentils, nuts and nut butters, seeds and whole grains.

- **Re-think your dinner plate.** I grew up with 3 things on my plate: 1 star of the show piece of meat, a green vegetable and some type of starch. Who says the vegetable or starch can't be the star?

Education and Resources:

There's a lot to learn when considering becoming a vegetarian. If you're just swapping a meal or two per week, some of this information is not as important. However, if you're truly considering a vegetarian diet, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Pairing Your Proteins.** No, I don't mean chicken with beef. Protein pairing is important when eating an all vegetarian diet. Why? Protein is an essential nutrient needed to support life. Protein is comprised of smaller compounds called amino acids - of which there are 21. Meat products (chicken, beef, pork, fish, etc) have all the amino acids you need in one package. Lentils, beans, nuts, etc only have a few of the amino acids you need. Where can you get the rest? By *pairing* these foods up with whole grains like wheat, barely, oats, rice, corn, etc. These whole grains offer the other missing amino acids. Eat a combination of these foods throughout the day and you should meet all your protein needs with ease.
 - For more information check out the following resources:
 - [USDA Choose MyPlate](#)
 - [Vegetarian Resource Group](#)
- [Vegetarian Starter Kit](#) - VegetarianTimes