

The green man

Veggie guy
Andrew Knight, 40,
bioethicist, activist and
veterinarian



'I've been a vegetarian since I was eight, when I decided I didn't want to eat baby animals any more. My parents thought it would last a week. But I was headstrong and determined and stuck at it.

'At 23, to impress a girlfriend, I became a vegan. Concern for animal welfare was a major factor, as I'd become aware of the conditions in which almost all animal products are made, which are the cause of huge animal suffering. There was also the effect on human hunger: there's an uneven distribution of food around the world and it's inefficient to produce so much animal protein when people are hungry. Over the years the connection between the livestock industry and climate change has become clearer to me too. Animals are becoming extinct, and I think this is the bigger challenge. Veganism is a relatively easy way of helping tackle this.

'My own diet is carb-rich because I'm so physically active. Breakfast is porridge and toast, lunch is sandwiches, and evening is rice, pasta or couscous with stir-fried veggies and tofu. Some vegans hate fake meat products, but I love them, and they're a great, healthy way to reach out to meat-eaters. I love dessert, and make a point of eating vegan cake, because veganism is not about self-denial.

'I'm the founder of the Extreme Vegan Sporting Association. We have ironmen and bodybuilders as members and we certainly dispel the notion that if you're a vegan male you must be weak and anaemic! As a movement, we vegans can sometimes let ourselves down by not actively promoting our lifestyle as fun, and we like to challenge that.

'Next up for me is the publication of my book, on animal experimentation, and the next extreme sport I want to try is shark diving. I'm keen on doing that quickly as, sadly, sharks are increasingly under threat of extinction.'

www.extremevegansports.org

A sterling holder

Wallets aren't the most original of Christmas gifts, perhaps, but nobody could accuse this particular one of being ordinary. Ticking all the vegetarian and eco-boxes, these wallets are made by a Zimbabwean chap called Leonard, based in Cape Town, South Africa. He uses discarded number plates (removed when vehicles are re-registered) and used tyre rubber to fashion these snazzy little note and card carriers, which are surprisingly light and fit smoothly into your pocket. A great talking point at the pub, and an

affordable pressie for your dad or brother or mate (or – why not – self). The Numberplate Wallet is £14.99, available from www.clairabella.co.uk.



Sleep well, live long

Not getting your shut-eye? Counting sheep not getting you anywhere – least of all to the land of nod? It could be shortening your life span. A study published in the journal *Sleep* in September revealed that men with insomnia sleeping for fewer than six hours a night were four times more likely to die over the 14-year follow-up period than men without insomnia who regularly slept for longer periods.

'Until now, no study has demonstrated that insomnia is associated with mortality,' says principal investigator Alexandros N. Vgontzas, professor of psychiatry at Penn State College of Medicine and Hershey Medical Center, USA. 'The primary finding of our study is that insomnia, the most common sleep disorder, is associated with significant mortality in men.'

Obviously, there are abundant possible causes of sleep problems, most notably stress, but that doesn't mean some vegetarian foods in your day-to-day diet can't help. Those which calm a restless system may be worth trying, according to Alison Cullen, a nutritionist and herbalist. 'Green vegetables and salads tend to be rich in B vitamins and these are good for the nervous system,' she says. 'Oats are soothing too, so oatcakes are a good light snack if you're peckish late in the evening – they give a slow release of energy which isn't too stimulating, and have lots of B vitamins, calcium and magnesium, again which calm the nervous system.'

Another possible problem could be restless legs at night keeping you awake. 'Low iron levels are associated with the development of restless or creepy-crawly sensations around the legs,' says sleep expert Professor Chris Idzikowski. 'Vegetarians, in particular, seem to suffer.'

Make sure you're getting enough, then: dried fruit, pulses and green vegetables, taken with some vitamin C to aid absorption, can help; if you're not vegan, eggs are good too.

Wise words

'Plant life instead of animal food is the keystone of regeneration' – *Richard Wagner, German composer (1813-83)*



Welcome to the guys' corner of Vegetarian Living. I'm Alex Gazzola, and each month I'll be bringing you news, views, products, wisdom and expert advice on everything and anything male and veggie, from health, fitness and grooming, to food, fashion and lifestyle. Queries, suggestions, tips, complaints? Send them to me, at alex@vegmag.co.uk.

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