



EAT YOUR VEGETABLES – ORIGINALLY AIRED APRIL 2007

If we've heard it once, we've heard a thousand times: Eat Your Vegetables! From the day we moved onto solid foods until we moved out of the house, we heard this culinary command at least three times a day. Yet at some point, we tuned it out.

A new study confirms this: Americans are eating fewer vegetables than ever. Researchers evaluated data from two large national health surveys and reviewed how many people ate three or more servings of vegetables a day. (French fries counted!).

In the first survey, 35% met the goal; in the second survey, 10 years later: 32%. So, why are we ignoring the most consistent message of our childhood? I have a few ideas.

I teach vegetarian cooking classes, and many of my students have no idea what to do with a head of broccoli or a bunch of kale. Most of us were raised on a meat-centered diet, where vegetables played a minor role and either came from a can, were boiled to death, or were drowned in cream sauces and butter. It's no wonder we didn't get hooked on veggies.

We're also ridiculous creatures of habit. Many of us rotate the same dishes over and over, and as the researchers discovered, most people demonstrate very little diversity when choosing vegetables. Here's a secret: when I switched to a plant-based diet, I actually found *more* options. With meat, dairy, and eggs out of the way, a world of plant foods opened up.

Here are some recommendations I give to my students: *shop by color*. (Ketchup doesn't count.) Try a new vegetable each week. Buy a steamer basket. Make vegetable-rich stews. Take 15 minutes a day to chop up vegetables. Re-train your palate to appreciate the flavor of vegetables themselves. A little garlic, some fresh herbs, a little spice, a little salt, and you're good to go. Shoot for a pound of raw and a pound of cooked vegetables every day; even if you fall short, you'll be way ahead of the curve. Finally, call your mother and give her the opportunity to say "I told you so."

With a perspective, I'm Colleen Patrick-Goudreau.