

Veg-at-my-table

It happened gradually, over several years, I started eating less meat. Not because I didn't like meat but the idea of balance and diversity in what I ate seemed sensible from a health perspective. Eating more widely and including the recommended five serves* of vegetables a day inevitably means smaller serves of meat or no meat at all. I've always loved vegetables so it was no hardship, just a readjustment of portions. Squeezing in my great love of seafood to one or two meals a week pushed meat further out of contention in menu plans. A visit to Japan also had a profound affect on me, the respect for food and the less is more philosophy espoused by the Japanese made me think about how much we eat and how much we waste. Meat is an easy and quick cooking option. Fling 300 grams of steak in a pan or on a grill and serve with a handful of carbs and a very few green beans we think we have colour and balance but the meal is actually skewed and meat heavy, more than anyone really needs to be satiated. A good way to start to shift the balance in favour of vegetables is to cook one modest steak and share it between two so the extra space on the plate can be filled with more vegetables. I started to do this a few years ago, routinely buying one steak for two and very small portions of fish, much to the dismay of my butcher and fishmonger. In parallel, I created regular weekly menus using just vegetables, like silverbeet and potato torte, later dubbed, "green pie" because all manner of leafy greens found their way into this classic Stephanie Alexander recipe. The weekly vegetable menu might now include a mushroom or asparagus risotto and a pasta dish with double peeled broad beans or cauliflower, crumbs and saffron or broccoli, anchovy, chili and garlic. In winter a hefty minestrone and in summer stuffed peppers or zucchini fritters take centre stage. Eventually meat has become something I'd more often cook for guests, a chance for a slow cooked leg or shoulder of lamb or

a rare rib eye. Like any long lasting change in lifestyle it takes time and is best done in easy, gradual steps, without being evangelical about it. Whether it is for health, environmental or ethical reasons or a combination of all, eating less meat is worth trying. Something to chew on.



- one serve is equivalent to 1/2 cup cooked vegetables or one cup raw vegetables or salad leaves