

Script: Egyptian Plant Eaters

Farida Ismail

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<https://soundcloud.com/user-665104588/audio-documentary-life-as-a-plant-eater-in-egypt>

8 minutes 38 seconds.

MUSIC: "Coming Down" -Dum Dum Girls (0:25)

The vegan and vegetarian culture isn't very prominent in Egypt. Even with a traditionally vegetarian friendly platter, Egyptians love their meat. Being a vegetarian or vegan can come from very different and diverse reasons and society has its own input in that diet or lifestyle. (0:17)

Veganism is a diet that eliminates any animal produce. That includes meat, dairy, eggs, or other animal derived products. Vegetarianism only excludes meat. (0:9)

MUSIC: "Coming Down" -Dum Dum Girls (Fade out)

Here are three examples of plant eaters in Egypt;

First, there's the animal rights enthusiast and all vegan, Fatma Moafy (0:08)

MUSIC: "The Age of Worry"- John Mayer (0:57)

FM: "I always felt uncomfortable eating meat and eating like chicken meat, or anything. I've never known why because I grew up seeing that that's normal." (0:13)

Fatma is an early bird when it comes to being a vegan, at only 16, she made the decision a year ago to stop consuming anything produced from animals for animal rights reasons. (0:10)

There are different incentives when it comes to choosing not to eat meat. The health factor is important to Fatma, but she's still an animal rights advocate at heart. (0:10)

FM: "It's everything but because I believe that I should never hurt or use anything either animal or from this earth I should never use them cruelly I should never benefit from them and not benefit them back." (0:20)

MUSIC: "Sad and Dramatic Music"- SFX and GFX (0:16)

Then there's Wafaa Wali, a professor at The American University in Cairo, she follows vegetarianism religiously with the exception of fish. (0:08)

WW: "I decided first to stop eating meat in 2009 when the prices of meat went very high and I felt there was something unethical about having meat at home while my mate can't afford it." (0:10)

MUSIC: "Sad and Dramatic Music"- SFX and GFX (Fade out)

MUSIC: "Eye of The Tiger"- Survivor (0:14)

ABDALLAH EL SHAMY: *“I wanted to control my desires, food is one the main desires in life and I said if I can control what I eat, I can control anything else.”* (0:07)

And this is the three-month raw vegan man, Abdallah El Shamy. (0:04)

MUSIC: “Eye of The Tiger”- Survivor (Fade out)

So one loves animals, the other believes Egyptian’s consummation of meat has become unethical and another wanted to challenge himself. (0:07)

MUSIC: “Ramadan Gana” (Fade in) (0:22)

Most of Egypt’s religious celebrations have food in the picture. I can imagine it's difficult being a vegan during Ramadan. Our annual religious fasting stops the consumption of food until the sun sets at dusk. There’s also the Eid, every vegetarian’s nightmare, where eating meat is in itself celebratory. (0:18)

Abdallah says being a vegan is difficult -Period. (0:04)

NAT SOUND: Campus students talking. (0:28)

AE: *“It was a bit hard but I was really focusing on like what the people were saying what they're thinking about it and the feedback. Ah like once I was eating an Avocado on campus and there's like a student she came to me and she said "oh like they way you eat*

avocados that so wildish" and I was like wildish, I'm just eating. It just became something cool for some people, crazy for some people." (0:30)

People might think it's unique to be eating an avocado on campus but they won't like you so much when they want to go out for lunch. (0:7)

MUSIC: "Non Je Ne Regrette Rien" - Edith Piaf (Fade in) (01:10)

FM: "Sometimes they're like "oh let's go to like a burger place" and then they all shut up for a moment and be like, "oh, we forgot about you." So yeah, it gets kinda hard sometimes but you know you manage." (0:15)

At Fatma's age being a vegan, an animal rights supporter and having teenage friends takes... patience. (0:07)

FM: "Not judged but actually pitted, which saddens me sometimes because some people just can't accept the fact that maybe I'm happy the way I am, they don't just me they're just like, "aaahh you're missing out on a lot of things, why don't you try this, why don't you try that?" they don't get that maybe I came to this decision because I do not wanna try this and I do not wanna try that! Like I already do not crave that thing, so you trying to like make that thing sound really nice is just not gonna work for me." (0:41)

MUSIC: "Non Je Ne Regrette Rien" - Edith Piaf (Fade out)

WW: *“Because I am not against eating meat.”* (0:02)

AE: *“I didn't care about killing animals.”* (0:02)

SFX: Car screech (0:02)

MUSIC: *“Coming Down” -Dum Dum Girls(Fade In)* (01:17)

... Sorry Fatma. it looks like some people don't eat meat but still don't see a problem with killing animals,

Although Wafaa thinks things are getting out of hand. (0:10)

WW: *“At the end of the day Islam came from a culture where people only had animals, this was the festivity and this came to us. I don't know if this is indigenous to us, I don't know if the Pharaohs consumed that much meat, I have a question mark, and even in the time of the prophet I don't think he ate more than once every 40 days meat because again how much meat can you eat and how many animals can you slaughter?”* (0:34)

Wafaa points out how in her culture and community this is how people operate, so the existence of an education when it comes to veganism might not be as rare as people think. (0:10)

FM: *“I actually thought that I was the only one and that kinda scared me, because I only knew another vegan, who was a friend of mine, but then when I like came across a lot of people, I figured that no we're actually not alone.*

Mostly vegetarians, not vegans but some people are also like thinking about the vegan thing, they just find it hard because society does not support it.” (0:27)

MUSIC: “Never Run Away” - Kurt Vile (Fade In) (01:44)

Fatma started coming across vegan pages on Instagram, raising to her attention the concepts of veganism and the mentality behind it.

and so did Wafaa, she came across a very interesting page that also addresses a lot of notions about food that people might not know of. (0:16)

WW: “Plant Based Diet, oh my god, it's one of the groups that took over the internet, Facebook, this 2016. The interesting thing about this group, okay, a lot of people there speak about diet but it raises a lot of questions about food and it's doesn't address English speakers, it addresses your average Egyptian person walking down the street.” (0:24)

So the education is growing but can they say the same about the food outlet options? (0:05)

FM: “Yeah, well to be honest as long as you're home, you're safe. The moment you get outside, it's not that easy but when you start searching and putting some effort you do find some places.” (0:14)

WW: *“Any place where the owner of the restaurant is not in it, for me served bad food. Usually, if I go to a restaurant, it's a small restaurant and it's a nice a restaurant and the owner is there, usually there is something for vegans and vegetarians.”* (0:15)

AE: *“I used to take fruits with me, and people sell fruits everywhere, you don't have to cook, you just have to wash. Just a bit weird, I go to some place with fruits, I wash them and eat or I go to an outing with a friend and they're eating something and I'm just asking for an apple or something.”* (0:24)

MUSIC: “Never Run Away” - Kurt Vile (Fade out)

NAT SOUND: Restaurant. (0:16)

According to *The Telegraph*, attitudes are changing towards veganism, many supermarkets now stock own-brand vegan products and an increasing number of restaurants now offer vegan options. Veganism is now one of Britain's “fastest growing lifestyle movements” mostly due to the positive portrayal by the media. (0:17)

MUSIC: “Dream On” - Aerosmith (Fade in) (0:42)

Egyptians are managing to fit into that, I could say, “trend” but still the experience has its limits, unlike the states and Britain which now offer a lot of food outlets for that diet. (0:11)

FM: "I'm not sure like in Egypt, when will it happen, but I'm pretty sure worldwide, the concept and the awareness is spreading." (0:09)

WW: "You know that is possible know because our cuisine is vegetarian, you can survive without the meat, so there are options." (0:08)

Wafaa says the varieties are much more than people think, it's not just boiled vegetables and zero taste, this is something that Fatma and Abdallah also reassured.

The diet is enjoyable. They do actually like what they eat and do not consider it as lack of fulfillment. (0:15)

MUSIC: "Dream On" - Aerosmith (Fade out)

MUSIC: "Coming Down" -Dum Dum Girls (Fade in) (0:17)

This audio documentary was produced by Farida Ismail for the audio production course at The American University in Cairo taught by Professor Kim Fox in fall 2016.

Special thanks to Fatma Moafy, Wafaa Wali and Abdallah El Shamy for their interviews. (0:14)

Sources:

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