



Beyonce & Jay Z Go Vegan (Healthy Hollywood)

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LOS ANGELES, Calif. -- Stop the presses! Beyonce and Jay Z announced they're going vegan. That's right! The trend-setting couple made the public pledge to temporarily try a plant-based diet. "On December 3rd, one day before my 44th birthday, I will embark on a 22 Days challenge to go completely vegan, or as I prefer to call it, plant-based," the hip hop mogul exclaimed on his website, Life + Times!

Now, with the superstar couple blogging and talking about their vegan journey, the debate over whether it's healthier to eat meat or not is sure to heat up.

So, it couldn't have been more timely for Healthy Hollywood to attend Intelligence Squared U.S. debates here in New York City last night. The water-cooler topic of the night was [of course] "should we eat anything with a face?"

On the no-meat side sat vegan guru and author Dr. Neal Barnard (a personal favorite) and Gene Bauer, who promotes animal compassion. Their opponents were Joel Salatin, a grass-fed meat farmer and Chris Masterjohn, who is a pro-meat advocate. The two sides lively debated their opinions in front of a live audience. The program is also broadcast on NPR.

It was certainly an intellectual crowd, not the typical the star attractions I am used to. But, it was interesting to hear the pro-plant folks highlight all the health benefits of a no-meat diet, while the meat-eaters argued a plant-based diet leaves you nutritionally deficient and at more risk for mental health issues (say what? to that point!).

In the end, the plant-based folks won the debate. I have to say I was rooting for Dr. Barnard, so I was bit biased on the subject matter. "I am delighted this is an issue that has arrived in mainstream conscious. The fact is our diets are based on animal products and that's making us really unhealthy," Dr. Barnard told me before the debate.

According to Dr. Barnard and all the pro-veggies folks out there, a plant-based diet is better for you on some many levels. "With regard to health, when people don't eat meat, they're healthier than when we do. People lose weight, it helps with diabetes and cholesterol problems and it helps with all those things in a very dramatic way." And, that's just beginning of why going plant-based might be where it's at!

Yet, for some, it's intimidating to think about quitting meat cold turkey. "I encourage people to take a week or two and get to know the foods that don't have animal products and see which ones they like. If they're used to starting their day with sausage, go buy some vegan sausage and see what you think. Try a bowl of oatmeal with raspberry, cinnamon or raisin or whatever you want. For lunch, try the veggie burger instead of the meat. Or, instead of the greasy taco, have the bean burrito," explained Dr. Barnard.

Hey, if it's good enough for Beyonce and Jay Z, it's good enough for me, and should be good enough for anyone.

If you're curious to try a vegan recipe, Dr. Barnard shares one with Healthy Hollywood.

Lettuce Wraps (serves 4)

- 12 oz. dried, tofu
- 3 tbsp. chopped garlic
- 2 tbsp. chopped ginger
- 2.5 cups shitake mushrooms
- 1 cup bean sprout
- 1 carrot, cut into fine strips
- 1 head lettuce
- 1 tbsp. soy sauce
- .5 lemon squeezed
- .25 tsp. red pepper flakes

Stir fry chopped garlic, ginger and carrot with some water in a wok for a few minutes until soft. Add the shitakes and soy sauce, salt, pepper and red pepper flakes. Cook for 5 to 10 minutes. Then add the dried tofu and cook for another 2 to 5 minutes. Spoon the mixture into lettuce leaves, add a few drop of lemon juice, and roll them up! May add brown rice to the filling.

For more of Dr. Barnard's nutrition tips, check out www.pcrm.org. And find out about upcoming Intelligence Squared U.S. debates at www.iq2us.org. The topics are fascinating and you don't have to live in New York to partake.