

To Eat or Not to Eat Meat in Urban Catalan Society: Imaginary and Cultural Aspects

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Red meat and meats in general have traditionally occupied an important part in modern Catalan diet. There is now a decline in meat consumption. This article analyses tendencies towards vegetarianism in all its forms and reasons adopted for these food preferences. Through the words of respondents, the author examines a multiplicity of viewpoints concerning animals, meat, health, and so on.

INTRODUCTION

Foodways in Catalan society have undergone great changes from the second half of the century onwards (Mataix, 1996: 237). The availability of food, compared to former periods, has been much greater for all members of society, not only in quantity but also in range and type. As in other Western societies, animal food plays an important part in the Catalan diet¹ and red meat is seen symbolically and nutritionally as the most excellent and expressive form of nourishment.

In the early 1990's, 34% of Spanish households' expenses went on animal products (*Dieta alimentaria española*, 1991: 57), showing the importance of meat in Catalonia and Spain. For the nutritionists, the consumption of animal protein is excessive, as is that of sugars and

fats, while the intake of high-fibre food has decreased with the lower consumption of bread, potatoes and legumes (Salas-Salvadó, 1996: 269).

The fact that some individuals in contemporary Catalan society reject totally or partially any animal food is an interesting phenomenon which can be anthropologically analysed by taking into consideration the context in which it developed, in this case, that of the meat eaters. According to Augé (1993: 120):

Anthropology always deals with at least two contexts: the one it focuses on (village, company) and another, broader one, in which the first is inscribed and where influences and pressures affecting the internal game of local social relationships express themselves (kingdom, state). The anthropologist has to deal with both perspectives: observing the “inside” context and the corresponding frontiers of the outside.

Thus, in our analysis, we have to include not only those who utterly reject any kind of animal food (meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk...), but also those who, while still eating animal protein, have decreased its consumption. This raises two fundamental questions. First: what drives individuals belonging to industrialized and developed “First World” societies to banish animal products, especially meat, partially or totally, when it is the most valued and desired of foods for the majority of individuals in that given culture and time? And second: Why have individuals who formerly thought meat and other animal products were essential to their nutrition decreased their intake? These two questions will lead us to an analysis of two groups living in urban Catalan society, which have either rejected or lowered their consumption of animal foods.

THE AMBIGUITIES OF LIVING WITHOUT MEAT

There are signs that meat consumption is starting to decline and that there is a constant increase in the number of people who refuse to eat any meat at all. This has been partially hidden by a small increase in the intake of some meat eaters, particularly through eating out, mainly at fast food restaurants (Fiddes, 1991: 225).

As in former periods, there are today persons who decide to convert to a meatless diet. These individuals are commonly known as vegetarians. It is however necessary to define the term “vegetarian” because, as happens with meat eaters, not every vegetarian eats the same kind of foods. The *International Vegetarian Union* (IVU) defines a vegetarian as the person whose diet consists of cereals, legumes, vegetables, nuts and dried fruit, fruit and other vegetable products with or without dairy products or eggs, and which excludes animal flesh. Other definitions add the characteristic of “natural” to the food taken by vegetarians.

A meatless diet (with or without milk and eggs) based on the great variety of natural non-processed foods is the basic pattern commonly accepted as vegetarian (Sussman 1993: 17). If one includes dairy produce and/or eggs in the diet, we can distinguish lacto-vegetarians, ovo-vegetarians and lacto-ovo-vegetarians. In some cases, some vegetarians even include fish every now and then and still consider themselves as vegetarians.² If we look at the way vegetarians eat their food, we find those who only absorb raw products, fruitarians who only eat fruit, vegetarians who do not eat eggs or dairy products (Sussman, 1993: 12) and vegans, who do not absorb any animal product whatsoever.³

For many vegetarians, the term “meat” not only includes beef, veal, pork or lamb but, based on the definitions just mentioned, it also applies to fish, seafood or poultry. Often the way vegetarian associations speak of themselves and the way nutritional science considers them, differ from the beliefs and every day practices of the adepts. If we take the two previous definitions, an individual who considers himself a vegetarian and does not eat any kind of meat, but who eats fish would not fall, strictly speaking, in the category of vegetarianism. It appears necessary to detail and broaden these definitions. For some, a key word should be included when dealing with vegetarianism, that of “diversity” (Krizmanic 1992: 79), because of the impossibility of limiting individuals to a given stereotype.⁴

The reasons⁵ for excluding meat from one’s diet can vary, but most vegetarians would think of health and respect for animal life as most important. Although ecological and environmental issues, as well as a fairer distribution of the planet’s food resources are part of their discourse, these have less influence than health and respect to animals. They are seen rather

as complementary reasons or as consequences of the main reasons for choosing this kind of diet. And finally there are simple reasons of personal likes and dislikes or physiological tolerance.

The health motive appears strong. Both the “carnivorous” who abandoned meat and those born in families where one or both parents were vegetarians (second generation vegetarians) think that vegetarianism is healthier than a diet that includes meat.

I started it thinking it was a health issue and did it to feel better. I focused on health. At first I saw it as a way to cure my husband. I was at his side when he had his asthma attacks. It looked like he was dying and it is very hard for a person to be choking. So, for me, vegetarianism was my salvation, a way to regain health. Since then, I have learned that vegetarianism is something more profound [...] I would not stand eating something toxic like meat anymore. (Woman aged 54)

Arguments in favour of vegetarianism for health are mainly based on the rejection of additives in animal feed and those added to meat when processed. Additives range from hormones, antibiotics used by veterinarians, vaccines, the components of fodder, to preservative, colorant, and substances added to meat. These are supposed to make the product more appealing to the taste of today’s meat eaters, while vegetarians claim that it makes these foods toxic.

Another factor that makes vegetarians think meat is toxic is the belief that eating the flesh from dead animals amounts to eating corpses, and absorbing it they would also absorb the negative vibrations and energy the animal would have left behind when it died. The red colour of blood and flesh, the way in which the animal is killed and the tension one supposes to be reflected in the animals muscles would also be assimilated when eating that piece of flesh, amounting to a physiological intake of the violence surrounding the process of obtaining meat.

If I eat something bloody, like meat, which is dead, in putrefaction, it’s not the same as eating something light like a salad, a piece of fruit. We are what we eat. When I used to eat meat, I was more aggressive, very violent.

Now I'm quieter. I understand more why people do the things they do.”
(Woman aged 54).

Animals are conscious. Not eating them makes no death vibrations enter our bodies. Every time we have killed, as part of the human race, we are assimilating the pain of the rabbit, of the pig [...]. (Man aged 62)

Although everything is alive on this planet, it's rather bestial to kill in order to eat. Before becoming vegetarian I did not feel like that. ...I became receptive to what I had never considered before. (Woman aged 31)

For those who became vegetarian for their health, its improvement or the curing of a specific pathology was not the only reason. It is also seen as a means of strengthening the body to resist or fight disease, as a kind of preventive medicine.

Vegetarianism is like a constant flow. It is not like when a doctor prescribes you an antibiotic or a painkiller and half an hour later you have no pain. Through vegetarianism and herbs, little by little, you cure your pains [...] Vegetarianism means a different kind of life, a way of feeling and thinking, a preserver of your health. It is like building a wall in front of illnesses. If there appears an illness, your body is better prepared if you have more defences. (Woman aged 39)

Individuals who give priority to respect towards animal life when choosing vegetarianism consider that the base of their conviction lies in the idea that animals are living beings as humans are and, because of that, they should not be food for humans and receive ill treatments in their rearing and killing.

Maybe it is because of my vegetarian conviction [...] Apart from the suffering of animals, which may be the most important point, man rules over the whole of nature. Man uses his “superiority”, his intellect or whatever it is to manipulate nature at his own will. I find this an aberration. This is what reinforces my position as a vegetarian. (Man aged 27)

Some vegetarians question their duality towards animals by asking themselves the following questions: For many saving the whales from uncontrolled hunting or seals from indiscriminate slaughter is important. Why do we not apply the same criteria to save cows or chickens? How is it possible that in a society like ours where the number of household pets is so high there are still some who, even owning pets, still eat meat from other animals?

Meat eaters also ask vegetarians the same kind of questions. For instance, they wonder how vegetarians can eat fish, accusing them of being inconsistent. But for vegetarians, this fact has different meanings, depending on the motivations which led them to vegetarianism. Those who converted because of respect of animal life consider that all animals are equal and that they cannot eat flesh of any kind.⁶ Those who adopted this diet for health or taste preferences, sometimes eat some kind of animal flesh, generally, fish,⁷ which they do not consider as “meat”, and which does not present the same degree of “toxicity”. From a meat eater’s point of view, however, fish can be considered part of the vegetarian diet (Willets, 1997: 116).

Respect for animal life can also have implications on the consumption of dairy products and eggs. Vegetarians debate whether it is reasonable to eat these foods, because in doing so they contribute in some way to the maintenance of the meat-processing industry and the continuation of the mistreatment of animals. At the same time, many of these vegetarians think they are not yet ready to abandon eggs and dairy produce. For others, the inclusion of these products in their diet makes perfect sense and does not raise any dilemma in relation to their respect towards animals.

Thinking about respect, when you milk a cow you are not killing the cow. With caviar, it’s not the same. They pick the sturgeon, cut it open and take the roe by caesarean. Then, they throw the fish away. For me, this is barbarous. It is like performing a caesarean on a woman in order to eat the child. (Woman aged 54)

A fact often repeated among vegetarians coming from a meat eating background is that they rejected meat during their childhood and adolescence. It is a latent memory in most individuals who remember how badly they felt when eating meat, poultry or fish and the consequences it had on their organism, since most of them suffered from anaemia and other nutritional

diseases. Most of them are of the opinion that if they had known vegetarianism at the time, they would not have suffered from digestive problems.

When I was little and I ate meat, I had stomach ache and sometimes I vomited. So, my mother stopped feeding me meat. She gave me poultry and fish instead, although I had many dizzy spells [...]; before becoming a vegetarian, I was anaemic. (Woman aged 26)

I don't miss eating meat, I don't want to. Maybe because I have never really liked it very much. My parents told me that when I was a child they had a hard time making me eat it. I've never liked fish either. My father had a meat and poultry shop. (Woman aged 53)

As I have previously pointed out, ecological and environmental reasons as well as those dealing with a better worldwide distribution of food do not appear to have much weight in urban Catalan society at the moment to incite individuals to adopt vegetarianism. However, both issues appear in the discourse of vegetarians, adding them as arguments in favour of their chosen diet. In that sense they say that they do not contribute as others do to the deterioration of the environment and, if vegetarianism were predominant, food production costs would be reduced, facilitating better worldwide accessibility.

The rise in meat consumption (especially beef) instead of vegetable foods requires an increased use of land space (Singer, 1984: 48-49).

If everyone were vegetarian... Amongst a hundred motives, there's an environmental reason. So many people who are worried about environment and famines could put things right by having a healthy diet lacking nothing and which would solve several problems. (Man aged 40).

LIVING WITH LESS MEAT

Humans who eat animal flesh and products, have also changed their eating habits in respect to the quantity and frequency of meat eating, in some cases because of given nutritional events in their lives.

In fact, eating meat, I mean, seriously, only from 50 years ago onwards... Nowadays we do not eat so much meat. People are educated differently and they do not have the need. We started eating only chickpeas. Then, we ate chickpeas with some meat. And now we eat meat with a few chickpeas... Why don't we eat so much beef now? Because during these last years people have had beef of bad quality. The same happens with poultry. (Man aged 53)

For the consumer, contemporary information on nutritional issues, mainly through the media (press, radio, books, TV) is wider and faster than in the past.⁸ News related to beef, chicken and dioxin, porcine disease, certain industrial cured meats and other similar news items, often broadcast at meal times, affect directly the perception consumers have of the food reaching their table, creating anxiety. They might then ask the butcher about the origin of the meat in his shop.⁹ If they are content with the answer and trust the butcher, they will continue eating meat. They might also stop eating beef and poultry for awhile, introducing the dilemma of what to eat instead. Other questions may arise related to managing a balanced diet: "If I don't eat meat, will I get sick? What foods can replace meat proteins?" (Fernández *et al.*, 1995: 146¹⁰) The general belief, reinforced by some nutritional advice is that, willy-nilly, a healthy body and mind require lots of meat (Fiddes, 1991: 226). Although meat is only one within the huge range of protein rich foods, its main distinction lies in that it is the most expensive (Singer, 1992: 189).

WHO (World Health Organisation) says we need one gram per kilo of weight and now they claim it is actually less. If I weigh 60 kilos, with 60 grams of proteins I have enough. Thus, if you eat a few nuts, cereal, some legumes, lentils with rice and a bit more, you have the necessary proteins. An excess of proteins can make you sick. The body cannot assimilate them and they are stocked." (Woman aged 54).

In the majority of cases, when the echoes of news related to meat are no longer news, meat consumers stop worrying about food. Taste, tradition and habits formed during childhood prevail and meat is once more on the plate. In some other cases, the uncertainty caused by this type of news leads the consumer to rely on organic beef, lamb or chicken, commercialised in

Catalonia for some years now in specialty shops,¹¹ although some of those establishments, heavily committed to health and environment refuse to sell any flesh whatsoever.

We have not accepted organic meat, unlike other shops who don't believe as much as we do in environmental ideals. We don't sell it. I cannot do it as I think it would be going against environmental awareness. (Shop owner, woman aged 53)

Twenty years ago, customers of that type of shop were vegetarians, adepts of naturopathy and a few meat eaters looking for specialties unavailable in pharmacies. Today it includes all the non-vegetarians who want organic produce to complete their shopping list and those who are worried about their health "conversion" to organic foods. Organic meat has some advantages and some drawbacks. You cannot buy it in supermarkets or butcher's shops. You have to go to the specialty "organic foods" shops where they sell food (organic pastry, rice, legumes, fruit, vegetables and meat) as well as books and magazines on "natural" diets and alternative medicine, clothes made with natural fibres, candles, incense and cosmetic products both for personal hygiene and for the household.¹² Meat is not displayed because it is usually bought to order and wrapped up and the customer is given it as if it were a forbidden transaction, something illegal, instead of a regular food purchase.

Price is the main factor slowing down the market development of organic meat and other products.

Depending on what you buy, a vegetarian diet can be very expensive. For example, I like wholemeal cookies with sesame seed but they are very expensive. If they were cheaper, maybe more people would buy whole grain products... (Woman aged 51)

The price can vary: if we talk of tinned food and honey, there is not much difference between organic or not, but if we talk of the price of vegetables in certain seasons, it is alarming. For instance, our customers buy artichokes for 500 pesetas a kilo, whereas in the market they cost 200 pesetas. That's a huge difference! Every organic artichoke plant produces six times less artichokes than a "normal" one. (Shop owner, woman aged 53)

People who come to the shop are not very interested in saving. They come in knowing that our products are more expensive than those of supermarkets. And the last thing they would ask is the price. (Shop owner, man aged 37)

Organic beef, according to farmers and retailers, is obtained from animals reared free in grass fields, where the cows feed their calves up to seven months. Animals are given no hormones or vaccines and are treated with homeopathy.¹³ Organic poultry¹⁴ is obtained by rearing free range chickens, feeding them grain and treating them, if needed, with homeopathy. Some regular meat eaters who have tasted organic meat think that its taste and texture are different from that of regular meat.

My wife is a vegetarian, but I eat all kinds of food. I like beef rare. One day, she bought me organic beef to taste. There are differences indeed... when you cook it, the meat doesn't shrink, it is tastier and you don't find nerves. So, now and then, I buy some steaks and I freeze them to eat them when I like, although I have to cook them myself, because she finds them disgusting. (Man aged 43)
At home, we eat organic meat.... It could be said that everything we eat is organic... On holidays, I buy non-organic food and my children say it has a weird taste... (Woman aged 45)

Non-vegetarians, besides being influenced by the media on the meat they eat, receive through the same channels different kinds of information on the treatment of animals and laboratory research in medical, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries that influence their opinion, attitude and eating habits. This letter from a reader to a Catalan newspaper is a clear example of how their attitude towards animals has changed, as well as the perception urban people have of them, if we compare this with the traditional one:

The case of cloned pigs created to replace organs for humans, is very sad. Is it logical that if there are no donors we have to do that? Is it logical that researchers use it as an excuse? [...] Why do we torment living animals? [...] Besides, scientists are the first who know that it is very likely that if we should obtain an animal organ more or less like ours, there would be a great danger of new illnesses arising [...] So, animal suffering in this case is pointless. (*El Periódico de Cataluña*, 26th of March, 2000)

The “fear” that the consumer expresses after the recent “food crises” leads him to wonder about the treatment of animals reared for human consumption, the use of animals for medical and other biological research and so on... It influences the opinion consumers will express about which is the healthier food and which is not. Although Catalans say that vegetables, white fish, rice and honey are the healthiest, followed by beef and legumes, and they say that pork, wine, butter, sugar, eggs and vegetable oils are the least healthy,¹⁵ vegetables do not have the same “social or symbolic value” as meat and they are not eaten in the same proportion

We live in an increasingly hypochondriac society, where everyday people are more and more obsessed with preserving health and protecting themselves from the number of real or fictional contamination sources [...] And we do that because we live haunted by the almost hysterical fear of sickness, dirt and corporal disorder. (Delgado, 1991: 93)

MEETING POINT: MEAT EATERS AND NON-MEAT EATERS

In urban Catalan society, vegetarians are a minority but the meeting points of the two groups are many and frequent: in the family, at work, at leisure time... A vegetarian often belongs to a family where most members eat meat as do his colleagues, classmates and friends. What are their reactions towards vegetarians and vegetarianism? What do vegetarians think of non-vegetarians?

For those who eat meat regularly, the fact that some individuals reject it is akin to an insult or, as Eder (1996) points out, a contradiction in the meat eaters’ culture. But vegetarianism can be seen as a kind of “pacific personal revolution” (Ossipow, 1997) brought about through changing eating habits.

Vegetarians, ecologists and other members of the new forms of the so called “urban religiosity” usually have animals at home as a part of their pious obligations. They serve to build the fraudulent illusion of returning to nature. Many of them are so alienated as to try to make their cats and dogs vegetarian and they even announce meatless diets for pets (Delgado, 1991: 156).

What one does not eat and why that is felt to be inedible is also an interesting question. Ignoring the concomitance can make us unable to understand some eating habits and, in consequence, consider them dietetically and/or economically irrational by the mere fact that we do not understand them (Contreras, 1993: 44).

Knowledge about vegetarianism in our society has changed, in comparison to previous decades; so has the demand for food, requiring products as “natural” as possible.¹⁶ Today information on alternative diets (i.e. vegetarianism, macrobiotics) and healing (naturopathy, acupuncture) is widespread and easy to get. Restaurants have heard the demands of many consumers, vegetarians and non-vegetarians, for vegetable dishes. In Barcelona now there are restaurants offering a vegetarian menu or dishes without animal products, health magazines publish vegetarian advice and if we add to this the increasing number of “organic products” shops, it is no wonder that vegetarianism has become “trendy”.

Amongst vegetarians, the traditional high value given to meat, and particularly red meat, has been replaced by a challenging situation (Beardsworth & Keil, 1993). Not only have they stopped eating meat, they have also ceased to think of the importance of meat-based meals (Sussman, 1993). In general, and from their minority position, they can act differently in their interaction with meat eaters. The “fundamentalists” who proselytise get negative reactions from meat eaters. Less strict vegetarians follow the live-and-let-live policy and get fewer negative reactions. Their attitude is based on tolerance towards all eating options, but they respond if criticised.

I understand meat eaters as well. Eating meat is not bad, it is bad for me. Everyone chooses their eating option. (Man aged 27)

Everyone lives his own way; everyone is perfect within his world. We are all different and I do not think one is better or worse for eating differently [...]. (Woman aged 26)

Some vegetarians who don't want to kill animals can buy a detergent, pour it down the WC and kill lots of fishes. Can you assume it all at once? No, but it can help one to be more tolerant. This is the key. Yes, I got rid of the violence of not eating animal meat, but I have 40,000 killings on my conscience. So it makes no sense that I criticise meat eaters for killing animals when I have not cleared my mind about it. (Man aged 40)

The attitude of vegetarians towards meat eaters not only responds to the fact that they consume meat but, on many occasions, it also affects other aspects of their diet such as the kind of food they eat and the way they cook it. It makes them reflect on their own type of diet, needs and lifestyles.

When I go to the supermarket I am scared by what people fill their trolleys with. It is rubbish. Prepared food is rubbish. These products are not natural. You don't eat when you eat them. I think all products have energy and, the more manufactured they are, the less energy they have [...] I am scared of cold meats cut and wrapped up in plastic with the nitrates they contain to keep them preserved. (Woman aged 31)

Nowadays, even vegetarians eat badly. But meat eaters eat worse. I think it is modern life. People work for many hours, they don't feel like cooking, they have little time and young people don't know how to cook. (Woman aged 53)

In some cases, vegetarians considered that diversity in the diet is related to the degree of evolution of individuals, based on the belief that in the future what will prevail is the more evolved, i.e. vegetarianism.

I think people are doing what they must from an evolutionary point of view. If a person eats meat, it is because he has to eat meat. For me there is a mechanism to understand. I see the image of what I was before. It enhances my understanding [...] I have started with food and other people with other things. (Man aged 40)

In other cases, diet is not the central point of differentiation between vegetarians and meat eaters: other characteristics appear that have nothing to do with eating.

Meat eaters are totally respectable. I see attitudes towards life I do not like at all in some vegetarians. Meat eaters instead... I don't know why I say meat-eaters. I've never liked the term. I think meat has nothing to do with what a human being is. (Woman aged 31)

CONCLUSIONS

In their relationship with animals, many vegetarians do not accept an “otherness” of animals. They perceive them as equal beings to humans. Thus, in the vegetarian representations of life several ideas on diet can be distinguished: eating vegetable foods is akin to the search for closer contact with nature; the rejection of meat is a way to avoid intermediaries between them and nature; if meat means death for animals and disease for humans, vegetables (fruit, legume, cereal, green legumes) mean life. And, last but not least, food is thought of as a preventive or curing medicine.

Vegetarianism and meat eating are not antithetical. They are two ways of eating which the great majority in Catalan society can choose from. Most meat eaters seem to have decreased their meat intake and many of those who see themselves as vegetarians seem to include in their diets some kind of animal flesh. Therefore, the limits between the two types of diet are not as clear as they might seem, they appear blurred.

Obviously meat has different meanings for the two groups. Meat eaters find meat fundamental for their diet and without it they could not maintain their health. For vegetarians eating meat is, amongst other things, unhealthy. To meat eaters it is not meat itself but the consumption of intensively reared animals that will shortly lead to a reduction of meat in the diet. This opens a wide field of research for disciplines such as nutrition, anthropology, history, medicine and others to better understand the development, implementation and evolution of these two trends of dietary behaviour: eating or not eating meat.

NOTES

1. The “Departamento de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca de la Generalitat de Catalunya” points out in the 1996 report “El consum alimentari a Catalunya” [Food consumption in Catalonia] that “*In Catalonia there is a high intake of fruits and vegetables (a fourth higher than the average of the European Economic Community (EEC)), meat, fish and olive oil (30% more than the Community), low intake of cereal, potatoes (30% less than the EEC), and legumes, moderate intake of milk and an acceptable one of dairy produce.*” (p.6) However, the “*Índex de consum Caixa de Catalunya. Informe trimestral sobre el consum privat a Espanya: Anàlisi, tendències i previsions*” [The Index of Consumption Caixa de Catalunya. Quarterly Report about private food intake

in Spain: Analysis, Tendencies and Predictions] (December 1996) shows that meat is the main item of expense, although it has lost its importance in the total. Besides, 1998 data showed that one out of four pesetas used to buy food (25.5%) were spent on meat, whereas 30 years ago it represented 17.6% of the total. Dairy produce was 13%, 4% more than in 1958. Money spent on fish had also increased, from 7% to 12.3%. On the other hand, bread, pastry and cereal registered a fall from 18.5% to 9.1%, and potatoes and vegetables from 13.1% to 9.7% (Dympanel, *El consumidor al filo del siglo XXI*).

2. Later on in this document, together with the reasons for rejecting animal flesh and animal life as perceived by vegetarians, this point will be explained in further detail.
3. This type of vegetarian avoids leather clothes and shoes... and even cosmetics and medicines which have been tested on animals before their sale.
4. Other authors associate vegetarians with the decrease or elimination of alcohol, tobacco and caffeine from their diets (White & Frank, 1994: 465), or with increased attention towards their health and a high economic and cultural status (Bourre, 1992: 161).
5. It is true that some individuals do not eat meat for religious reasons (for example, Seventh Day Adventists, Hare Krishna). They have been excluded from this study for two reasons. First, we think a vegetarian for religious reasons has not chosen vegetarianism, but a religion requiring a certain type of diet. Second, and due to its importance, we think vegetarianism for religious reasons should be studied in a separate investigation.
6. Some people begin a vegetarian diet by gradually eliminating red meat first, then white meat and then seafood and fish. This process can take a longer or shorter time, depending on the individual.
7. Generally, eating fish is related to eating out, in a restaurant or invited to a friend's or relative's house.
8. Nowadays, a naturopath from Navarra presents a half hour program, called "La botica de Txumari" [Txumari's pharmacy], Mondays to Fridays on "Antena 3" (private TV), giving advice and information about traditional remedies and which ingredients you can find at the grocer's. Previously, and for a year, he presented a program of similar characteristics, "La botica de la abuela" [Grandma's pharmacy] on "Televisión Española" (state TV). In the press, as an example, "el Periódico" has a weekly section dedicated to nutrition, health and ecology, that gives information about what to eat to prevent some illnesses and to practise a correct and balanced diet. Some of its headlines are: "Taking calcium is essential to prevent osteoporosis" (23rd of November, 1997). "Soy combines nutrition and antidote. Legume helps your cholesterol go down" (21st of November, 1999). "Here comes the biological coffee" (23rd of January, 2000). "Vitamin C acts as a protection in the body. The antioxidant effect of the substance makes it essential" (6th of February, 2000). "The calçot, lots of fibre, no fats" (13th of February, 2000). [The *calçot* is a kind of onion that is usually eaten in Catalonia. It is so important in the Catalan cooking culture that it has its feasts, the well-known *calçotades*, and competitions around the calçot.] "Vitamin E against arteriosclerosis" (12th of March, 2000).

9. When the media spread the news about “vacas locas” (BSE) some butchers placed signs that certified the origin of the beef they sold in their shops. Thus, in the windowpanes of butcher shops in Barcelona one could see for instance “Galician beef” or “Girona beef”. The strategy most sellers used with the chicken problem was to decrease its price.
10. “Approximately 31.5% of the proteins taken by Spaniards come from meat”.
11. In 1998, there were in Spain 200 shops selling exclusively organic products and 40 of them were in Catalonia. Besides, Catalonia is the community where more organic products are sold, representing 50% of the total production (Asociación Vida Sana).
12. Sometimes there is also a full meals service, as it is the case of “Comme-Bio”, whose brochure states that: “*Comme-Bio is not only a restaurant, a cafe, a self-service; it is not only a ready-to-eat food shop, a patisserie, an organic fruit and vegetable shop; it is not only a perfume store, an environmental product display, a centre of information, a meeting point; it is the sum of all this*”.
13. The Catalan firm “Carn de Vedella Ecològica Ecoviand de Bruguerolas” edits a brochure giving information about the kind of meat sold: “Calves are born in freedom and they stay with their mother at least seven months. Once weaned, they are fed organic products and they grow in the open air, not in stables. It is forbidden to use chemicals for their growth (hormones), liquid retention (clembuterol) and animal flour. Though not probable, because of their rearing, if there is an illness, it is treated by homeopathy and other natural techniques. Treatment, transport and killing are done carefully with strict control. The local quartering and canning plants are registered in the CCPAE [CCPAE stands for Consejo Catalán de la Producción Agraria Biológica (Catalan Counsel of Organic Agrarian Production), that regulates production, distribution and selling of organic products in Catalonia], to guarantee the consumer the origin of the meat”.
14. The Catalan firm “Aviram del Céllecs” also edits a brochure about the organic chicken it sells: “The chicken of Céllecs is a chosen fowl, different from the normal one in taste, flavour and texture, acquired only by a long and patient traditional rearing. Their main food (wheat, barley, soy...) comes from plants grown without chemical product or synthetic substances. Their growth is slow and harmonious and they have the opportunity to do all the exercise they want in a broad open space. To keep sanitary control, we give to our fowl a preventive program. So, from the first day, we strengthen immunity resistance against the possible health drawbacks. All the products to this end are elaborated by naturopaths to avoid residues in the meat. The rearing of our animals has recourse to the laws of CCPAE”.
15. *Llibre Blanc: Avaluació de l'estat nutricional de la població catalana. Avaluació dels hàbits alimentaris, el consum d'aliments, energia i nutrients, i de l'estat nutricional mitjançant indicadors bioquímics i antropomètrics*. Barcelona, Departament de Sanitat i Seguretat Social, Generalitat de Catalunya, 1996. [White Book: Evaluation of the nutritional state of Catalans. Evaluation of food habits, food intake, energy and nutrients and the nutritional state by biochemical and anthropometrical indicators].

16. Beardsworth & Keil (1993: 233) point out the existence of parallelisms between commercial strategies and the interest of some consumers in the Green Movement ideology. Thus, manufacturers and sellers have answered with “green” products, often sold at high price and advertised using “green” ideology and terminology.

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