

CHAPTER 4

Vegan Tribes

If you spend time on social media, surfing forums or reading blogs with a vegan focus, you'll come across groups of people whose shared values give them a sense of community, and sometimes one-upmanship. A talk on a particular subject at a vegan festival will draw them together. We can playfully call them tribes.

Most of these tribe members are friendly, relaxed and open minded, whereas a handful can be confrontational in asserting that theirs is the only way to be a "true" vegan.

Here's a rundown of some common vegan tribes.

Animal Activists

Many people cite animal suffering as their sole concern, and for them being vegan is purely about opting out of paying for animals to be enslaved in farms. They aren't necessarily environmentally aware or interested in healthy living. These tribe members tend to be very dedicated to their vegan lifestyle long-term, often boycotting companies with any involvement in animal farming or testing, or even refusing to listen to music or watch films made by celebrities who go hunting. This altruism can easily lead to anger and self-righteousness and you'll find a lot of arguments about that online. Most animal activists stay vegan for life and are very consistent in their views and shopping choices. The more friendly, self-aware ones share a strong sense of solidarity. Some only make friends with other activists, as they struggle too much to be around people who don't put animals at the centre of everything. Others start off purely as animal activists though broaden their horizons to include environmental and social justice considerations in almost everything they do.

Most likely to say: "Human freedom, animal rights. One struggle, one fight."

Least likely to say: "I buy the cheapest brands and hope they're not animal tested."

Animal Rescuers

Some animal activists conclude that the best way to help animals is to fill their homes with them, and they become carers to a wide range of refugees from the pet and farming industries.

The biggest dilemma these tribe members have is whether to feed cats on meat. Some insist that buying meat for cats makes no sense at all as it requires killing many animals to feed one, while others argue that cats are “obligate carnivores” and that feeding them a vegan diet is too risky. (See chapter 5 for an animal rights vet’s verdict on the reality.)

Most likely to say: “Don’t breed and buy while stray dogs die.”

Least likely to say: “Let’s go to Crufts dog show and see which breed wins Best in Show.”

Baketivists

During the 1990s, vegan cake and pudding fans got sick and tired of getting served up sugar-free date slice, sorbets and fruit salads as the vegan dessert option. The only vegan cake recipes in cookbooks were dry, chewy affairs, based on wholemeal flour. Vegan cake lovers rose up! Ronny published *The Cake Scoffer* in 2000, and an explosion of other baking booklets followed, many with cute cartoons and colour pictures. The baking revolution began, as evangelical sweet-toothed cooks spread the Good Word of vegan cake.

Nowadays you’ll find glossy hardback cookbooks with tempting photos, vegan cake cafes such as Cookies & Scream or Vida Bakery in London, craft bakers earning a living from home, and hundreds of cake and biscuit baking recipe blogs, filled with stylish fonts and photographs of beautiful food.

Most likely to say: “I’ve just made the most amazing rhubarb and custard cupcakes, using amaranth flour and vanilla dust.”

Least likely to say: “Wholemeal date slices rock my world.”

Convenience Food Fans

Food isn’t just fuel, it appeals directly to our emotions. Those who grew up eating a fried breakfast every Sunday around a table with their family can subconsciously trigger happy memories, simply by devouring a fat vegan fry-up. A kebab at 2a.m. after a wild night out

can be very satisfying, so what’s wrong with a vegan kebab? It does the job, the same way as a meat one.

Some people base their vegan diet on convenience foods and takeaways, dodging fresh salads and the chore of cooking. These people tend not to make any claims that their diet is particularly healthy due to the high fat and salt content, and it certainly isn’t cheap to live this way, though it saves loads of time. Convenience food lovers can get very excited on internet forums every time a new brand of vegan sausage, milkshake or pie hits the shops.

A typical day’s meals could be vegan sausages, scrambled tofu and beans on toast for breakfast, followed by a defrosted vegan ham and pineapple pizza with chips for the midday meal, and curry and rice from a takeaway in the evening. Those who seek a more nutritionally complete diet tend to snack on fruit, as after all, fruit is the ultimate convenience food!

Most likely to say: “Where can I get a vegan pie and ice cream sundae, in Norwich, on a Sunday?”

Least likely to say: “I’m going raw.”

Eco-Activists

Animal farming of all kinds is the most environmentally destructive activity on our planet, bar none. Eco-activists cite livestock farming as a massive waste of energy and land, as up to ten times more people could be fed on a plant-based diet. When you consider the polluting effects of animal slurry and also the additional energy required to process and store meat, milk and fish, the environmental argument makes absolute sense, and it’s no wonder that so many people go vegan as a sustainable alternative.

Some eco-activists reject the concept of animal rights and some have no interest at all in fitness or diet. Some become freegan (eating whatever they can find), as they don’t have an aversion to eating animal products, only to funding planet-trashing farming. Many also reject non-organic and highly processed food, or products that have been transported halfway around the world, like Brazil nuts.

Palm oil is a fashionable target for environmental activists, with many trying to have a diet free from this ingredient. This poses

problems when buying processed vegan food, as palm oil is conveniently solid (saturated) at room temperature and is almost universally used in vegan margarine and pastries as a healthier alternative to hydrogenated vegetable fat. Online vegan forums can quickly become heated on this subject, with opponents claiming that palm oil is “not vegan”, even though the same deforestation argument applies to sugar cane, coffee and soya.

Most likely to say: “I’m not going there, they use plastic packaging.”

Least likely to say: “Let’s go on a budget flight to Greece for the weekend.”

Fitness Junkies

Many athletes and bodybuilders go vegan, including tennis players, snooker champions, boxers, runners and triathletes. Some ethical vegans get into fitness as a way to smash the stereotype that they are pale, skinny weaklings, then realise how much they love looking and feeling toned, buff and full of energy. You’ll find thriving vegan fitness communities online, with a strong ethos of friendly peer support. Sportsmen and women with a plant-based diet who compete at an international level get promoted and celebrated a lot by this tribe.

Athletes and bodybuilders have very different diets, with athletes relying on lots of carbohydrates and wholefoods, and bodybuilders bulking up with protein and convenience foods.

Most likely to say: “I ran my personal best, and have epic, balls-to-the-wall lifting sessions on a vegan diet.”

Least likely to say: “I’m a couch potato.”

Foodies

Some vegan chefs aren’t satisfied with rice and curry slop; they want to push the boundaries and become kitchen scientists. In the hands of this small but growing tribe of geniuses, food is transformed into works of art. Foodies will try daring combinations of ingredients, such as banana peel, herbs in custard, or pomegranate seeds in salads. In fact, by the time this goes to print, pomegranate seeds will probably be old-hat and sun-dried tomatoes may have even made a comeback. Foodies will shop online for rare dried mushrooms or spices, and will travel far to check out a new vegan-friendly restaurant with a five-course tasting

menu. Nothing winds a foodie up more than the suggestion that the vegan diet is restrictive and bland.

An internet search will bring up some inspiring vegan foodie blogs, with stunning photography.

Most likely to say: “I just tried marinating Bolivian field mushrooms in red wine reduction with chocolate thyme sprigs and grapefruit foam.”

Least likely to say: “I live on chips and beans.”

Food Not Bombs and People’s Kitchen

Food Not Bombs is an all-volunteer global movement that shares free vegan meals as a protest against war and poverty. Food Not Bombs groups collect surplus food that would otherwise go to waste from grocery stores, bakeries and markets, as well as donations from local farmers, then prepare community meals which are served for free to anyone who is hungry, typically from a pasting table in the street. The movement started in America in the 1980s, though there are a few groups in Britain.

People’s Kitchens are similar to Food Not Bombs. They are events typically held in the evenings in community centres, at which a nutritious and imaginative vegan meal is served up for donations. The menu is usually family-friendly and allergy-aware.

Most likely to say: “I’m bidding on a 60 litre stockpot on ebay.”

Least likely to say: “We’re aiming for a Michelin star.”

Foragers

A very nutritious way to supplement a low-cost diet is foraging. Fruit, nuts, seeds, nettles, sorrel, wild garlic, clover and dandelions are well known foods for free. However, you might be amazed by the full list of flowers, leaves and mushrooms that are edible. There are some great foraging books out there, to make sure you don’t poison yourself!

Most likely to say: “I just foraged a sackload of blackberries on the common.”

Least likely to say: “I never much cared for greens.”

Gleegans (gluten-free vegans)

Gluten is a kind of stretchy protein found in many grassy cereal grains and products that contain them. This includes wheat, spelt, rye, barley, couscous, bulgur, triticale and some oats. It also includes processed foods that contain them, including most TVP chunks and brands of beer, most brands of vegan sausages and burgers, seitan (processed wheat gluten, used a lot in American recipes and increasingly in cafés), oat milk and most types of soya sauce.

Some people avoid gluten because it makes them feel bloated, whereas others have coeliac disease, which is a serious auto-immune condition that can cause a sufferer to become hospitalised.

Gluten-free grains and products made from them include amaranth, buckwheat, quinoa, millet, rice and rice milk, sorghum, sweetcorn (maize), polenta and cornflower, tapioca, teff. Other gluten-free foods include tamari soya sauce, pulses (including tofu and soya milk), nuts (including almond, hazelnut and cashew milk), mustard, many brands of chocolate (check the label, as gluten-free ones tend to advertise the fact), some yeast extracts (some contain barley extract, so check), all oils (including margarine), fruit, vegetables, seeds, wine, distilled vinegars and spirits.

Oats and gram (chickpea) flour are gluten-free if you buy them from a manufacturer who has taken care to avoid contamination when milling and certified them as gluten-free. Otherwise, always assume they contain small amounts of gluten. A small number of people with coeliac disease are also sensitive to avenin, another protein in oats.

Gluten-free brands of bread, pastry and cakes often contain eggs to bind them and add moisture, so being gluten-free and vegan is a challenge if you like to eat a lot of processed foods. However, caterers are becoming increasingly allergy aware, and as a lot of people allergic to wheat are also allergic to dairy products, the gluten-free option on a menu is quite often the vegan option.

If catering for a gluten-free friend or relative and you are unfamiliar with this type of cooking, don't panic. Curry and rice is a good staple, and normal pasta can be replaced with corn or buckwheat-based pasta from a health food shop or "free from" supermarket aisle. Or use gnocchi. When using gluten-free flour to make pastry, you'll find it can dry out and crack when cooked. To avoid this, add extra fat, water and

some xanthan gum. Make sure you don't offer a coeliac guest part-used jars of jam or tubs of margarine. Open new ones, so you can guarantee that no lurking bread crumbs are in there.

Type "gluten-free vegan" into a search engine to find lots of online solidarity and recipes.

Most likely to say: "What type of soya sauce is in your stir-fry?"

Least likely to say: "Pass the garlic bread."

Guru Followers

We've come across a range of self-appointed spiritual leaders with a vegan focus, who encourage their followers to adopt a lifestyle free of animal products. For example, the Loving Hut chain of vegan Chinese cafés promote the message "Be Vegan, Make Peace", and show videos of their spiritual leader, Supreme Master Ching Hai, urging diners to live a compassionate life.

We've encountered meditation centres in mid Wales, raw food retreats in Spain and new age Christians in Cornwall.

Following a guru doesn't appeal to Alex or Ronny at all, as we prefer to get our inspiration from a range of sources, however it works for some people who prefer to be advised what to think rather than having to work it out for themselves. One analogy is buying a computer with all the software you could need already on it.

There are also gurus with a non-spiritual focus that attract followers by writing books and giving lectures, such as nutrition and raw food evangelists whose opinions get quoted as gospel. We advise a healthy dose of scepticism.

Most likely to say: "I've found myself."

Least likely to say: "Some of their claims are bullshit."

Health Enthusiasts

For some people, veganism is about keeping their bodies free of saturated fat, growth hormones, pus cells in dairy and other nasties. In fact, these people rarely refer to themselves as "vegan" nowadays, preferring the ethically neutral "plant-based". Trend-setting American doctors prescribe a low-fat wholefood vegan diet as a way to reverse

heart disease, and high profile middle-aged men such as former American president Bill Clinton went plant-based for this reason.

This is a much bigger tribe in America than in Europe, and as a result, American vegan literature has a greater focus on health than ethics.

Most likely to say: “I lost twenty pounds, drink alkaline water and feel fantastic.”

Least likely to say: “Pass the salt.”

Macrobiotics

This is a Japanese wholefood diet that’s mostly or completely vegan. Macrobiotics is based on well-chewed whole grains such as brown rice and soba (buckwheat) noodles, plus steamed vegetables, pulses, seaweed, tofu and tempeh, nuts, seeds and seasonal fruit. There’s a strong emphasis on local produce and adapting dishes according to the seasons. Stimulants such as caffeine tend to be avoided.

The theory is that foods contain yin and yang qualities, and that these must be kept in balance. Some macrobiotic enthusiasts eat fish, though not meat or dairy products. The Macrobiotic Association of Great Britain website contains lots of colourful, seasonal vegan recipes.

Most likely to say: “Chew every mouthful very carefully.”

Least likely to say: “I’m bored with rice.”

Plant-Based People

These people are not properly vegan; they eat a plant-based diet. They make this distinction, because to them, avoiding animal products is a personal preference, for health and hygiene reasons. They don’t subscribe to the all-encompassing philosophical and ethical stance of veganism, and are unlikely to regard being carelessly given small amounts of food containing animal products as a massive, upsetting violation of their rights. Plant-based eaters are unlikely to go the extra mile in avoiding animal-tested or environmentally-destructive products and may not even give these issues any thought at all.

Most likely to say: “Don’t call me vegan. I’m not on the scene.”

Least likely to say: “Avocados may not be ethical.”

Pretenders

A relatively new tribe, they have some things in common with Plant-based People, in that they don’t truly embrace the ethical philosophy of veganism. The significant, and very frustrating difference is that the Pretenders call themselves vegan, even though they aren’t. We’re referring to people who join vegan groups on social media, go to meetups, or even join vegan dating sites, yet they willingly consume animal products some or all of the time, with no intention of giving this up.

The Pretenders have varied motivations, which can range from wanting the kudos of calling themselves vegan, without actually making any effort, wanting to be part-time plant-based, with the option of eating meat etc. at family gatherings, being confused about what “vegan” actually means (we have come across people who claim that fish aren’t animals, for example, because they don’t breathe air!) or, even worse, they actively seek to deceive other people. There are more vegan women than men, especially in the over 30 age group, and we’ve come across men on dating sites and apps who pretend to be vegan or in the process of going vegan, so that they can attract women. Once in an established relationship, they’ll drop the act.

Some Pretenders regard themselves as “flexitarian”, in that they’ll eat vegan food while with a particular circle of friends, so as to fit in, and then eat animal products while on their own, or with different friends. Some spend years bouncing around like this, without ever being completely vegan. This can be quite damaging, as it makes the rest of us look insincere.

Raw Fooders

This diet consists of fruits, green leafy and other vegetables, nuts, seeds, fermented vegetables, mushrooms and sprouted pulses.

Many also eat dehydrated foods, which have been dried slowly at very low temperatures, typically below 42 or 48 degrees Celsius. Fruits and vegetables contain enzymes that are destroyed during cooking, and this alternative method of processing preserves the enzymes in the food. However, there is no scientific evidence to support the claim that these enzymes survive our digestive system anyway, or bring any health benefit to us.

Furthermore, while it's true that raw foods are higher in some nutrients, cooking food may also make other nutrients more absorbable, for example the phytochemicals beta-carotene (an antioxidant that converts to vitamin A) and lycopene have been shown to be better absorbed when cooked. On the other hand, due to the high amount of whole plant foods, raw food diets are very high in fibre, minerals, vitamins and other antioxidants and phytonutrients.

The many raw food gurus, some of whom call themselves “Dr” despite not having an M.D. or relevant PhD, constantly contradict each other about what constitutes the ideal raw food diet. For example, one will say “Eat only whole, local fruit and veg,” versus “Have some of this magic powder (such as maca, lucuma or baobab) from the other side of the world which I just happen to be selling for £30 a kilo.” And “Eat raw chocolate, which I also happen to be selling,” versus “Chocolate is poison.” We don't know who's “right”, but we do know that selective citation by people who are selling stuff was what got us the catastrophic original four food groups back in the 1950s.

We suspect that 90% of any raw food system is likely to be spot on and 10% will be dubious, but right now nobody can prove which 10%.

Most likely to say: “Raw is our birthright. You're all burning your food.”

Least likely to say: “I could murder a toasted bagel.”

Religious Practitioners

Many religions have a strong vegan theme, in fact the Bible is full of teachings from Christ that involve loving animals and rejecting all human and animal slavery. Seventh-day Adventists have a strong health focus and are big advocates of a vegan diet. Quakers are staunch pacifists and many try to live a lifestyle with no violence and killing.

Hinduism has the underlying concept of *ahimsa* (dynamic harmlessness) and Jains believe that people can be reincarnated as animals, so if you are cruel to an animal, you could be hurting your own deceased relatives. Islam teaches that animals are individuals with rights and Buddhism focuses on living a peaceful, compassionate life. Hare Krishnas staunchly promote vegetarianism, though they tend to consume a lot of dairy products. Jewish grocers sell many dairy-free products such as biscuits, chocolate and ice cream, since their religion prohibits eating milk and meat in the same meal. There are societies

and websites dedicated to the promotion of vegan and vegetarian living within almost every religion.

Most likely to say: “Jesus was vegan.”

Least likely to say: “No gods, no masters.”

Spiritual Seekers of Truth

There are many diverse types of spiritual practice that are not part of any organised religion. New Age spirituality says things like, we are all made of source energy and thus are connected to every person, animal and plant. This source energy can be thought of as love, light, power, electricity or even God. It's the divine creative force, and our spirit bodies are formed of this force. We live our earthly experience in physical bodies, whether human or animal.

Spirituality doesn't necessarily involve following a religion; in fact many practitioners actively reject the whole concept of a religion involving an external God, priests, morality and following a book of rules that says it's OK to dominate certain animals or certain people.

The spiritual vegan tribe seeks to live as compassionately as possible, through interacting with animals, nature and other people in as loving and non-violent a way as possible. Meditation is used by many to still the mind and calm emotions, allowing loving intuition to break through our cluttered thoughts.

Beware! A few people get into spirituality as a way of seeking attention or trying to find a purpose in life and they aren't necessarily consistent in the way they express themselves. Some later drop their vegan lifestyle “for spiritual reasons” by arguing that an animal spirit “told them” that they don't mind being farmed and killed. This is not spirituality; it's just a self-deceiving rationalisation for doing whatever they want without accepting responsibility for its impact on others.

Events and festivals with a spiritual and holistic focus can attract quacks and charlatans who make easy money out of the naïve and gullible with little understanding of science. They market woo-woo products such as spirals that “energise” water with “life force” to have health-giving properties, or magnetic bracelets that they claim cure illness. Some also claim that going celibate somehow makes you more pure. Be sceptical.

Most likely to say: “I learned who I really am. I am love and light.”

Least likely to say: “I hate everybody.”

Skinny Bitches

In 2005 the book *Skinny Bitch* was published and went on to sell over three million copies and join the New York Times Bestseller list. Widely cited as one of the most entertaining diet and cookery books ever published, it gained a celebrity fan in Victoria Beckham (Posh Spice) and became compulsive reading for many young women.

The book was written by a former model and a modelling agent. It has a punchy, no-nonsense tone and the kind of caustic humour that previous vegan books lacked. It spawned a series of follow ups, such as *Skinny Bitch in the Kitch* (a recipe book), *Bun in the Oven* (about pregnancy), *Skinny Bastard* (a less impressive version for men) and the inspirational journal *Skinny Bitchin’* which is full of motivational quotes.

The Skinny Bitch tribe are busy, sociable, straight-talking, image-conscious women who like to look good and live an ethical way. They smash just about every stupid old stereotype about vegan hippies.

Most likely to say: “I’ve got a hot pair of Fairtrade jeans that show off my awesome ass.”

Least likely to say: “Fashion degrades women.”

Straight Edgers by Rudy Penando

Rudy co-founded Pogo, London’s first vegan cafe, and founded VX, the first vegan shop in London, and the first vegan Merch company in the UK, called *Secret Society of Vegans*.

*“I don’t eat roast beef or fish
Porky Pig is not my dish
Just go ahead and let your chickens be”*

Chicken Squawk by the punk band MDC is a silly song, but it changed my life in the late 80’s. The band from Austin, Texas, was known for their political lyrics and aggressive music style. They were raging against everything a punk band from Texas would: authority, sexism, police, religion, capitalism... and surprisingly against killing animals.

They were not the first band to have a militant vegetarian lifestyle.

British punk band Crass probably started it all. After they disbanded in 1984, a wave of bands sprung up and it seemed that, to be part of the scene, not only did you have to dress in black and hate British Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, but you also had to be vegetarian.

Probably similarly influenced by Crass and the myriad of bands keeping their spirit alive, the new breed of punk bands in the U.S. that became known as ‘hardcore punk’ would also include the vegetarian/vegan message in their music. It became particularly the case with the second wave of Straight Edge bands coming out of the East Coast. Straight Edge is a term coined by Ian Mackaye (Minor Threat, Fugazi) back in 1981: it means you don’t use drugs, smoke or drink alcohol. A total act of rebellion against society if you ask me. Ian Mackaye, who has been vegan for more than 30 years, never really mentioned anything about animal rights in his lyrics. We had to wait for the second generation of Straight Edge kids coming out of New York in 1986-1988 (Youth Crew) for vegetarianism to become part of the very popular then Straight Edge movement. Youth Of Today in 1988 released their song “No More” which forever associated Straight Edge with vegetarianism.

*“Meat eating flesh eating think about it
So callous to this crime we commit
Always stuffing our face with no sympathy
What a selfish, hardened society so
No More”*

Youth Of Today – ‘No More’

Other bands at the time, like Cro Mags or Gorilla Biscuits, were playing good and positive music. They looked great; they had an influence on me and millions of other kids around the globe. By the mid 90s, these same kids took the vegetarian / Straight Edge message and made it even more radical. And this is how veganism became the unofficial fourth law of Straight Edge. We can thank bands like Earth Crisis for that. Their blend of metal and eco-warrior attitude brought life back to the Straight Edge scene. Being vegan became cool for millions of suburban kids all over the U.S. and Europe.

Punk, Straight Edge, Vegan Edge... so many of us started a personal revolution and awakened to the concept of animal rights because we were teenagers and a band on stage was playing the most powerful music we had ever heard and singing about not killing animals. They took something from the hippies and made it cool.

Suspicious Minds

A small but very vocal tribe who start off as health enthusiasts but then go much further. This tribe believe that most aspects of modern life, such as technology, wi-fi and vaccinations, are a threat to them and their children. They'll waffle on about the dangers of microwave ovens, doctors, electronic radiation and sugar, and they always have an array of magazine articles, websites and pseudo-scientific studies to back them up. Their way is the "true" vegan way, and they can get very upset when challenged.

Most likely to say: "Mobile phone masts cause cancer."

Least likely to say: "I drink tap water, cos bottled water is a rip-off."

Trolls

Vegan internet forums and social media groups attract people who devote much of their time to arguing with us about everything from vitamin B12 to hormones in soya beans. It's a mystery why these people devote so much of their time and energy to this and we can only guess that most of them used to have a vegan lifestyle, or their ex-partner did, who dumped them. Or they simply want to stir things up and see us as an easy target. It may be they are venting their displaced anger from other unresolved areas of their lives.

Some people who eat a plant-based diet will pick fights with others about issues like not feeding cats any meat, sustainable palm oil, or claiming that some medical experiments on animals are necessary. Some are mostly vegan but harp on about honey or fish being really healthy. Some raw fooders will go on forums to rant about all cooked food being "toxic".

We recommend just ignoring the trolls. They feed on your attention.

Most likely to say: "If you need B12 from tablets, your diet is unnatural."

Least likely to say: "I don't care what people say on the internet."

Veeks (vegan geeks)

Star Trek fans often cite the iconic, pointy-eared character Spock as one of the most famous vegetarians in the galaxy, with the series mentioning that the Vulcan people do not eat meat. There are other references throughout the films and re-boots to the Star Fleet staff eating a plant-based diet and to how their society "used to" farm animals for food.

Vegan ethics are fairly common amongst programmers, DIY technology enthusiasts, hacktivists (social or political activists who infiltrate computer systems) and open-source software users. The late Steve Jobs, who founded *Apple* computers, is held up as an example of a geek entrepreneur with vegan tendencies, and the San Francisco area is full of both vegan-friendly restaurants and I.T. start-ups.

Naturally, you'll find a lot of Veeks posting their views on the internet, and they tend to get very frustrated by fundamentalists and others who make wild claims that aren't easily backed up by scientific studies. They have the Trolls for breakfast.

Most likely to say: "My new smartphone app filters out non-vegan products from my online shop."

Least likely to say: "Mobile phone masts give you cancer."

Many people come to veganism as a result of contact with a tribe's members, books, magazines, web presence or even music. Some remain in that tribe for life, while others move around. We suggest that you explore whatever interests you and create your own personal version of veganism.

CHAPTER 5

Beyond Food

VEGAN SHOES AND CLOTHING

Why vegan shoes?

It's horrifying to realise that we are still wearing animals on our feet as shoes and around our waists as belts. Whilst few today would wear fur, it can come as a shock to realise that leather and suede are also animal skins. The outer hairs have been removed chemically, and flesh scraped off the inside by a machine. Like dairy and eggs, leather and suede are part of the meat business.

We don't eat the inside and we won't wear the outside. Vegans at some point stop buying leather.

What's the alternative?

Modern synthetic leathers such as Lorica are used to manufacture 21st century vegan shoes, clothing, vehicle and airplane seats and furniture. Lorica breathes like leather, letting perspiration out, but doesn't let water in, which is great news if you've just stepped in a deep puddle.

Where to buy

There are a few dedicated shoe shops that were set up by vegans as an alternative to high street shops, with the same personal service and opportunity to try things on. In the UK these include *Vegetarian Shoes* in Brighton, *The Third Estate* in London, and *Alternative Stores* in Plant-Based Valley, Northumberland.

What if you don't live near a vegan shoe shop? The above businesses sell online too, and there are many more online vegan catalogues offering a vast selection of shoes and boots, especially in Britain, USA, Germany and Italy. You can also buy belts, jackets, bags, wallets and T-shirts.

A fun and convenient way to buy vegan shoes, boots and accessories is at one of the hundreds of vegan festivals each year around the UK and in other countries, where there might be several stalls run by vegan