

Pure Vegetarianism

Our awareness of the higher purpose of vegetarianism can be understood as we walk down the supermarket aisles selecting the foods we will eat. A truly conscientious person will understand their dependency on God and acknowledge the blessings of Mother Earth. After all, we come into this world empty handed and we leave the same. Ultimately, therefore, we are never the proprietors of anything but are merely borrowing from the Earth. When we offer our food to God first (before we eat it), we acknowledge those blessings and subsequently the food is purified of any negative karma. Hence, the term “karma-free” food.

Indeed, even in the gathering and preparation of vegan meals, there is a small degree of violence when we cut the plant or inadvertently kill bugs and microbes. Contrary to common understanding, even a vegan can never be totally karma-free or live a life of “ahimsa,” unless or until they spiritually purify their meals. If, however, we offer our food to God first, that food becomes pure, karma-free, and spiritually nourishing! Hindus call such food “*prasada*,” or the mercy of God (Krishna).

Conscientious vegans, therefore, should make the extra effort to “spiritualize” their meals and thus complete their quest for purity, peace and harmony. Despite our good intentions, if we fail to recognize God as the source of all creation, our efforts will always remain mundane, dry and inadequate.

The Three Categories of Food

In the *Bhagavad-gita*, Lord Krishna states that all foods can be classified according to the three categories of material nature - goodness, passion, and ignorance. The kind of food we eat directly affects our spiritual consciousness and subsequent behaviors. We are thus degraded by the food we eat or elevated to a higher plane of thought.

Vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, legumes, sugar, and pure milk products are foods in the category of goodness and thus can be sanctified or offered in sacrifice. As a general rule, foods in the category of passion and ignorance are not offerable to God (Krishna), who says in the *Bhagavad Gita* that such eatables “cause pain, distress and disease” and are “putrid, decomposed and unclean.” As may be guessed, meat, fish, and eggs are foods in the lower categories. But there are also a few vegetarian items that are classified in the lower categories – garlic and onions, for example. They should not be offered to God, because despite their medicinal benefits, they are polluting to the mind and create objectionable odors in the body. Hing, sometimes called asafoetida, is an acceptable substitute for them in cooking and is available in most Oriental or Indian specialty shops.

The Hidden Agenda Within Food

As much as possible, try to avoid foods cooked by people who are not of good consciousness. According to the subtle laws of nature, the cook acts upon the food not only physically, but mentally as well. Food thus becomes an agency for subtle influences on our consciousness. To give an example of this principle, a painting is not simply a collection of strokes on a canvas, but also an expression of the artist’s state of mind. The person who looks at the painting absorbs this mental content. Similarly, if we eat foods cooked by people devoid of pure thought (e.g. unhappy employees working in a dirty food factory or restaurant), we are sure to absorb a dose of negative mental energies. As far as possible, use only fresh, natural ingredients when cooking for yourself.

In shopping, you should also be aware that you might find meat, fish, eggs or their by-products mixed in with other foods, so be sure to study labels carefully.

Offering Procedure for Beginners

In preparing food, try your best to follow these rules:

Cleanliness: This is the most important principle. Nothing impure should be offered to God, so keep your kitchen work-area very clean. Always wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food and keep them clean while cooking.

Humble and devotional attitude: While preparing food, do not taste it. This is part of meditating that you are cooking the meal not simply for yourself but for the pleasure of God, who should be the first to enjoy it. Try to see food as the blessing of the Lord. Be respectful of that blessing and be happy. Good cooks smile a lot while cooking and try to infuse the food with positive thoughts.

Prepare the offering: When the meal is prepared, you are ready to offer it. Arrange portions of the food on diningware kept especially for this purpose. (No one else should eat from these dishes.)

Prayers and mantras: The very simplest form of offering is to simply pray, “My dear Lord, please purify this meal by tasting it first.” Remember that the real purpose is to show your devotion and gratitude to the Lord; the actual food you are offering is secondary. Without this devotional feeling, the offering will not be accepted. God is complete in Himself; He has no need of anything. Our offering is simply a means for us to show our love and gratitude toward Mother Earth and the Supreme. Following the offering, the now sanctified food (*prasadam*) may then be served.



Advanced Offering Procedure

You may wish to make a more formal offering according to the procedures established in the ancient Sanskrit scriptures of India. This involves following the steps described in the beginners section, along with setting up a simple altar with a picture of Lord Krishna and reciting a special Sanskrit mantra.



The word *mantra* in Sanskrit is a combination of two words: *man* - Mind; *tra* - To purify or deliver. A mantra, therefore, is a sound vibration used to purify the mind and is an especially effective way to communicate with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The following mantra is written phonetically to make it easier for you to pronounce the sound correctly and thus experience its full spiritual potency. Before reciting, light some incense, sit down on a clean mat (*asana*) and while ringing a small bell, recite the following mantra three times:

*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare*

After the Offering

Leave the room and return after 5 minutes. Clean the offering plate and place the sanctified food inside the containers of food that it came from. All the food is now *prasadam*! Serve the meal. Before serving, however, you may wish to recite the following song of grace. A Vaisnava saint called Bhaktivinoda Thakur in the late nineteenth century wrote it.

Prasada Sevaya (The glory of Spiritual Food)

“O’ Lord, this body is very ignorant and the senses are a network of paths to death. Somehow, we have fallen into this ocean of material pleasures, and of all the senses the tongue is the most voracious and uncontrollable; it is very difficult to control the tongue in this world. But You, my dear Lord, are so kind to us because You have blessed us with this *prasada* by which we can control our tongues. We therefore accept this blessing of *prasada* to our full satisfaction and glorify your holy names.”

Facts About Food for Life Global

- Served more than 100 million sanctified meals to the needy since 1974
- Serving free meals at a rate of one every second of the day
- Relief programs now operating in 60 countries
- Services now include: emergency food relief, medical care, clothing, education, housing, organic farming, cow protection, and drug rehabilitation.
- Has or is currently collaborating with UNICEF, UNHCR, OXFAM, Red Cross, The Salvation Army, FIMA, The World Food Program and numerous other NGOs and governmental departments around the world
- More than 95% of Food for Life workers are volunteers
- Because of its low overheads, an average meal served by Food for Life costs only a few cents, making it the most cost efficient relief organization in the world.

The Mission of Food for Life Global

- **Welfare:** To eradicate hunger and malnutrition by providing free sanctified vegetarian meals to the disadvantaged, and victims of disaster (natural or manmade), wherever there is a need in the world.
- **Health:** To establish Food for Life Health Education centers throughout the world. These centers will provide free or inexpensive vegetarian meals, counseling, health education, and living skills training to those in need.
- **Youth Development:** To establish Rural Academies for Youth ("Krishna's R.A.Y. of Hope"), whereby people from the ages of 16-25 are trained in bhakti yoga, cow protection, and sustainable agriculture, centered around spiritual values.
- **Hospitality:** To revive the ancient Vedic culture of hospitality, and to teach people by example, that there is spiritual equality among all beings.

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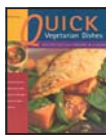
Pure Vegetarian Cookbooks



Great Vegetarian Dishes - The first cookbook of one of the world's leading proponents of pure vegetarian cuisine, Kurma Das. Dubbed as "Australia's Vegetarian Guru," he has been writing cookbooks, teaching students and hosting internationally broadcast TV shows for decades. Visit: <http://www.kurma.net>



Cooking With Kurma is an invitation to embark on an exciting journey of culinary exploration. Each lucidly explained recipe is an adventure into new lands of international culture, taste and nutrition. Whether you are looking to prepare a quick lunch or a twelve-course dinner, Cooking With Kurma will serve you well. The chapters are full of enticing soups, breads, condiments, drinks, main courses and desserts.



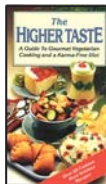
Quick Vegetarian Dishes - Life in the fast lane doesn't necessarily mean life in the fast-food lane. Even if your life is moving at Web speed, you can, with Kurma's expert guidance, quickly prepare something hot and fresh, stunningly original and tasty, for yourself, or two, or a few others. In Quick Vegetarian Dishes, you'll find essential gourmet vegetarian delights that deliver the most palatable results with the least amount of time and effort.



Lord Krishna's Cuisine: The Art of Indian Vegetarian Cooking - This impressive volume introduces light, nutritious food that lends itself to attractive presentation. Piquant pairings include banana-and-pomegranate salad, minted cucumbers and strawberries, and lemon stuffed with almond-chickpea pate. A prodigious, 800-page labor of love illustrated with lovely, delicate line drawings, the meticulous, encyclopedic cookbook faithfully reflects the philosophy that cooking is "a spiritual experience."



Yamuna's Table - An exciting new perspective on a cherished cuisine" (The San Francisco Chronicle), the Vegetarian Table series celebrates the rich diversity of flavors, fruits and vegetables, grains and legumes, and the variety of enticing spices found all over the world, providing the perfect opportunity for indulging the vegetarian palate. Lavishly illustrated with stunning full-color photography and text by some of the finest food writers in the industry.



The Higher Taste - With more than 30 million copies sold around the world, this softcover has great recipes, and all the ecological and moral reasons to become a vegetarian. Discover the health and economic advantages, as well as the important ethical and spiritual considerations, of a Krishna conscious approach to diet and nutrition.

For more information on any of these cookbooks or for ordering, please visit: <http://www.fll.org> or write to cookbooks@fll.org

PURE VEGETARIANISM



FOOD FOR LIFE GLOBAL

Serving Karma-Free Meals Worldwide

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