



Potential of Vegan Lifestyles

Veganism, which entails avoiding the eating or using of animal-derived products, is gaining attention as a sustainable lifestyle. Vegan consultant Alex Derycz stresses that veganism is not a hard lifestyle to adopt. After appearing on MARUI GROUP's community site in June 2016, Derycz once again joins us to discuss the potential of veganism with two MARUI GROUP employees.



Various Paths to Veganism

Ishii: Mr. Derycz, you are promoting veganism under your brand, Vegan Prince, in Japan. Is your family also vegan?

Derycz: My family is not completely vegan. I became a vegan at age 17, when I was in high school, because I wanted to help preserve the environment and protect animals. My father and little brother recently embraced veganism while my little sister and her boyfriend are vegetarians. My big brother and mother are neither vegan nor vegetarian, but their refrigerators are mainly stocked with vegan food. However, if someone who is unfamiliar with vegan food were to open their refrigerators, they would not know that their contents were vegan. They would see things that look like meat and cheese without realizing that these "meats," "cheeses," and even "ice creams" were all made entirely from plants. In fact, the foods I eat now do not really taste that different from those I ate before I became a vegan.

Uezono: Did your mother learn to cook vegan food for your father?

Derycz: I think my father cooks for himself. The reason he became a vegan was to prepare for triathlons. When he turned 50, he suddenly decided to take part in the Ironman race, the longest of all triathlon events. He needed to get in shape to participate in this race. When researching the diet that would provide the best nutritional balance, he found that it was a diet consisting primarily of vegetables, with the only meat being a little bit of chicken. This is when he realized that his ideal diet was essentially a vegan diet.

Ishii: What was your path to veganism, Ms. Uezono?

Uezono: My path traces back to my 10-year-old daughter's elementary school homework assignment. She brought home a survey on the degree of eco-friendliness of our lifestyles. All members of my family checked the actions we did and didn't do and then tallied the results. One of the actions was "eat fresh and seasonal vegetables." I was surprised that this was considered "eco-friendly." I mean, when you think of eco-friendliness, you tend to think of turning off lights and not leaving water running, right? When my daughter asked why this was eco-friendly, I could only reply "because it is good for the environment." However, I could not help but be curious. Committed to finding the answer, I studied the matter with my daughter and came to realize that the issue was my lack of environmental awareness.

Ishii: It is not often that you see a homework assignment teach both children and their parents. I was not aware of these kinds of issues when I was in elementary school. There are a lot of different paths to veganism, like that of Mr. Derycz's father or your path, Ms. Uezono. I love meat. However, my big sister became a vegan about a year ago. Her path to veganism was a concern for animal welfare and issues surrounding clothing made from animals. I didn't know anything about veganism at the time, but one day my sister and I went to a vegan restaurant. I was shocked at how good the vegan hamburger I ate there was. You wouldn't have guessed that it was vegan if no one told you. I was also amazed at how good the custard pudding tasted,



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Alex Derycz

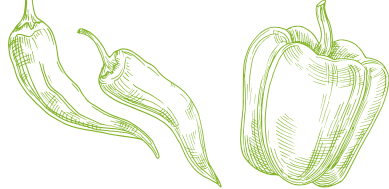
Model, Entertainer

Born in 1996, Alex Derycz comes from a multicultural background, with his father being from the United States and his mother being from France, and speaks five languages—English, French, Spanish, Japanese, and German. Adopting a vegan lifestyle at age 17, Derycz moved to Japan after graduating from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2017 to promote veganism. While working as a model and entertainer, he also provides information on vegan products, stores, and lifestyles via social media under his brand, Vegan Prince. After being named Ocean Ambassador in 2019, he leveraged the personal networks he had established in Japan's entertainment industry to launch a vegan consulting business in 2020. Employing more than 100 vegan influencers and 100 non-Japanese social media influencers, Derycz is developing a business that includes public relations and vegan-related consulting and collaborative product planning and development with influencers.



Please refer to the following website for Alex Derycz's appearance in June 2016 (Japanese only).
www.to-mare.com/tf/2020/s001.html





A vegan diet is great for your health as it lets you eat plenty of vegetables while offering satisfactory substitutes for meat. I don't think that there is any other way to contribute to the environment that is so enjoyable.


Hiroko Uezono
Soka Call Center
Epos Card Co., Ltd. (joined in 2004)

despite not using eggs. I think that the taste of vegan food is a simple yet legitimate path to veganism.

Derycz: It looks like everyone has their own path to veganism.

Ishii: We have launched a new section on the MARUI GROUP community site in which employees are able to post YouTube-style views based on the theme of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. A call went out asking people to submit videos, and I volunteered out of my desire to spread awareness of the appeal of eco-friendly vegan food. I was chosen and was able to talk about veganism as part of the first wave of videos!

Derycz: That is wonderful. I think that such efforts have a lot of meaning because there are so many people who are uninformed or misinformed about veganism.



Please refer to the following website for community site videos (Japanese only).

www.to-mare.com/ytube/

Option of Veganism Available to Future Generations

Ishii: Veganism is primarily thought of in terms of food, but it is actually a lifestyle that rejects all animal-derived products, whether they be clothing or other items. Mr. Derycz, how does your veganism influence your life in areas other than food.

Derycz: If we look at fashion, for example, the majority of items, such as leather coats, shoes, and belts, are made from animals. Wool and silk also come from animals. Lately, sustainable vegan

fashion, or fashion that does not use animal materials, is gaining popularity. One example would be the shoes I am wearing right now—they are made of cork.

Ishii: Cork? You mean like a wine cork?

Derycz: The very same. My belt too is made of cork, even though it looks like leather.

Uezono: I never would have thought that was cork. It looks very fashionable.

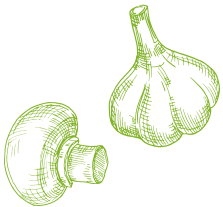
Derycz: Using eco-friendly materials to make clothing, belts, and accessories is a way to enjoy fashion while contributing to the environment, feeding two birds with one scone, if you will.

Uezono: Speaking of fashion, back when furs were in style, I remember collecting a number of animal products, ranging from fox, to raccoon dog, and even alligator. I wish I had recognized these issues earlier as I now regret how I contributed to the problem back then.

Ishii: A lot of people in their 20s are actually using vegan products in ways that might not always be apparent. For example, I use vegan cosmetics. Recently, using cosmetics that are not tested on animals is coming to be seen as something fashionable.

Derycz: It is just as you say. Cruelty-free products* are coming to be regarded as fashionable while also having less adverse impacts on the environment, meaning that they can be purchased with peace of mind.

* Products and their source materials that were not tested on animals during the development or manufacturing processes



Diverse Lifestyles

Ishii: MARUI GROUP began charging for shopping bags in July 2020. I think it was the rise in environmental awareness that prompted this move. Vegan foods also started appearing in supermarkets around that time. I hope that we are able to involve more people in the drive to spread awareness regarding veganism through venues such as the videos posted on our community site.


Derycz: I suspect that there are many people within MARUI GROUP who are interested in veganism like you two. Do you have any plans to launch vegan-related initiatives within the Company?

Ishii: We are planning vegan-related initiatives as part of our business. Personally, though, I want to introduce vegan meals into the menus of company cafeterias. Even meat lovers like me can help preserve the environment by eating vegan once a day, or even just once a week. If everyone at MARUI GROUP were to do this, the benefits would be massive.

Derycz: When considering embracing veganism, some people think they need to take an “all or nothing” approach. However, I believe your approach, Ms. Ishii, is just fine. You can just eat vegan more often or maybe make one day a week a vegan day. It is okay to adapt the lifestyle to meet your needs. There are actually a lot of people who don't eat vegan at work, but are fully vegan at home.

Even meat lovers like me can help preserve the environment by eating vegan once a day, or even just once a week.





A video of this conversation is available on MARUI GROUP's community site (Japanese only).

www.to-mare.com/tf/2020/i001.html

Uezono: A vegan diet is great for your health as it lets you eat plenty of vegetables while offering satisfactory substitutes for meat. I don't think that there is any other way to contribute to the environment that is so enjoyable. My father once had to be hospitalized for heart issues, after which the doctor placed dietary restrictions on him. He had to cut back on sodium, and even meat was deemed to be problematic. I had him eat a meal using vegan meat substitutes, and he didn't even notice the difference. My daughter, meanwhile, is allergic to eggs and can't eat mayonnaise. When I make vegan mayonnaise, however, she is happy to use it.

Derycz: Vegan meals can be enjoyed by everyone, whether they are recovering from an illness, have allergies, or are limited in what they can eat due to their religion, as is the case for Muslims and Hindus. That is something I love about vegan foods: they let us all sit down and eat at the same table.

Ishii: Vegan foods support diverse lifestyles by letting us form connections with a wide variety of people around the world through food.

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(As of August 2020)

