Veggie POWER!

For vegetarians, or anyone looking to reduce or eliminate meat from their diet, the *Veggie Power Burgers* cookbook opens a whole new world

BY SUSAN DEGRANE

For vegetarians looking for delicious and fun new recipes, and for anyone wanting to reduce or eliminate consumption of meat, the *Veggie Power Burgers* cookbook opens a whole new world.

The easy-to-read book includes 20 recipes for international style burgers—Mediterranean, Asian, American Southern, Southwestern—10 recipes for smaller two-inch breakfast or snack patties, 29 special sauces and relishes, and 20 complete menus which suggest vegetable accompaniments for the burgers.

The book also serves as a vegetarian primer, extolling the virtues of vegetarianism both for humans and the planet, and offering instructions for making egg substitutions, for sprouting beans and seeds and for cooking beans and brown rices. It also provides a helpful glossary of terms for ingredients such as Aduki Beans and Arrowroot flour, and lists additional vegetarian information resources.

I made the Deep South Kidney Bean Burgers and was absolutely blown away. It could have been the red peppers and onions taking on a special sweetened flavor. Or it could have been the smudge of tomato paste and magical two tablespoons of maple syrup. Whatever it was, these burgers, which were made with mostly ingredients I already had on hand, were absolutely delicious.

I also made the Mediterranean Chickpea burgers containing Bulgur wheat, and my husband, a meat eater, immediately gobbled down four. My son uttered a muffled "Good," while taking another big bite.

When I made the lentil burgers containing fresh ginger, carrots, onions and curry, I opted for a double batch. Those went like hotcakes too, and even my dog was desperately begging—maybe not opting to cut back on meat, as we were attempting to, but realizing something truly delicious was being eaten.

All of the burger recipes require a brief baking period so the patties will hold together, something on the order of soft-baked cookies. Freezing the burgers after this stage is a good idea if you want to make extra, says author Cathy Gallagher. The burgers can be thawed, then heated up and grilled on a lightly oiled George Foreman-style grill or lightly browned in a frying pan.

This book particularly struck my interest, since my son and several friends are eliminating meat from their diets. I wanted to know how to construct meals which would contain essential proteins.

Gallagher, a 30-year vegetarian, and the book's co-author Barbara Schugt, a macrobiotic nutritionist, consulted with several vegan cooks in developing nutritionally balanced recipes.

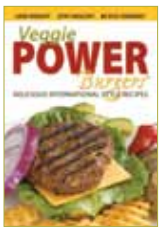
The book promises that cooks who follow these recipes can lose

weight, look younger and be healthier. Gallagher, who is in her 60s, claims to be living proof: "I haven't seen a doctor in 30 years, and I feel great!"

But beyond the health benefits and delightful taste sensations, the book infers a strong spiritual component to vegetarianism. The chapter espousing its value for fostering a healthy mind, body and soul, also mentions several brilliant minds who happened to be vegetarians, including Leonardo da Vinci and Leo Tolstoy.

Gallagher is a resident of Aurora, Ill., and conducts orientation and vegetarian cooking classes for the Science of Spirituality Center in Naperville, Ill. The center is part of a global organization committed to a spiritual way of life based on meditation, service to others, and personal transformation.

"This (vegetarian cooking) is not a religion but an inner path that can come from any faith," said Gallagher, who believes that not eating animals conserves the earth's resources and leaves people more at peace for meditation. "This is good for the environment from an ethical point of view. Plus, it just tastes really good."



The book can be purchased by visiting *veggiepowerburgers.com* or by calling 630.561.5425.

Susan DeGrane is a Chicago-based freelance writer.