

# NEW YEAR, NO MEAT, NO DRINK: GOING VEGAN WITHOUT THE AID OF ALCOHOL

That's what my first month of 2018 is shaping up to be at least, as my roommates and I embark on a month of vegan eating and sober living.

Like most great things that happen in this world, this decision was brought on by a New Year's Resolution, and my utter and complete lack of healthy living in the final months of 2017. For me, 2017, was a year that can be summarized as a year of "in flux." Really going back to late 2016, I came home from traveling, didn't really know what I was doing or wanted to be doing. I ended up getting a job that I actually enjoyed, only to be let go in the fall of 2017. So, I've just been freelancing and job searching since.

That time was marked by a series of highs and lows – and in each, I ate...and I drank. When I got home from my travels, I was a little low. I did not want to be back. Then I got my kick-ass job and I made some really amazing work friends that quickly transitioned into real friendships. We went out all the time and *I loved it*. We were modern ladies (and some men) going on work lunches to nice places, getting a few drinks after work. It was like everything the media had ever told me being an actual bonafide ADULT was like. And then...I got let go. In the wake of losing a job full of people I enjoyed and worrying about money/my professional life, I began to stress eat. Boredom eat. Depression eat. Happy eat. Treat yo' self-eat. Ya know.

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My roommates fared just as well. With a year filled with tumultuous inner-lives, not to mention the anxiety and fear of a seemingly incompetent, bigoted government weighing on our shoulders, 2017 was a year filled with stress and eating poorly and drinking with the ladies of my home. Being completely self-aware, we decided to change this. We decided to make a New Year's Resolution – which is a binding legal contract. It always sticks, right? *Right*. Good.

No. Y'all, of course, I'm completely aware that resolutions don't always stick and most people drop them after the first month. Of course, we're hoping for a better outcome for ourselves. And in knowing ourselves we knew we just couldn't make a vague declaration of "better living". We knew we had to fully discuss the reasoning behind these changes, and then put into motion an actual plan. Reason + Plan + Support System = Trifecta of accomplishing your goals.

We decided to go vegan starting January 1. Not just vegetarian, but V-E-G-A-N. Yup! Living that no animal by-product life! One of my roommates was already vegetarian, so it wasn't a hard leap for her, and we know none of us should have dairy (I won't get too detailed but it destroys our insides).

But no meat? No honey? No eggs? And a slew of other things I probably haven't even encountered yet, and when I do, I'll cry because I can't have it!

I'm a big meat eater and I have eggs at least 3 times a week. I also put honey on my toast and in my tea. And I absolutely love to cook. But the decision to go vegan for the month of January was born out of a strong desire to overhaul the way I looked at food and thus my relationship with eating. To know that living on a whole foods, plant-based diet could be satisfying, fun, innovative, and a joy to cook.

I wanted to feel good again. I wanted to have a bunch of energy. I didn't want to constantly be bloated. I also wanted to feel like I was doing something good for this world while I worked on myself. And reducing the amount of meat you eat has been shown to significantly reduce your carbon footprint and be better for the environment. Also, bees are dying, y'all. And we need them.

Now, I know one can still be unhealthy when eating vegan. After all, fries are vegan. Oreos are vegan. I could just live on those two things and call myself a vegan and I wouldn't be lying – just extremely unhealthy. No, we're making the conscious decision to not just be vegan but eat whole, healthy foods. A rich tapestry of fruits and vegetables and nutritional yeast! It helps that my two roommates are down to be vegan. It makes the transition and the meal prep and the going out a lot less challenging. If I only have vegan and healthy options in the house, well, I'm going to just have to suck it up and eat it.

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It also helps that my roommates are down to clown with NOT drinking. We are a house of decadent indulgers. We enjoy good food, good company, and good wine. We also enjoy a nice night out, filled with socializing and booze. However, in the last few months of 2017, we indulged more than we abstained. We went out more than we didn't. And I was hungover more weekends than I was clear and focused. And while I had a good time, the recovery was not ideal. My body did not thank me and my soul was on the fence.

In years past I'd scoffed at people who did sober January. Ok, Susan, you're not going to drink for the month of January? Are you not an adult, can you not control yourself? Also, good for you for choosing a month where literally nothing happens, so you won't really be resisting temptation. Hi, I am now Susan. The scoffer has become the scoffee.

I know. But we knew that A) Our drinking, while not catastrophic, was not exactly healthy and B) That eating healthy while still drinking and subsequently marinating in the constant bloat from that...well it kind of defeats the purpose.

I'll admit. We did pick this month to do both, not just because it's the beginning of the year but we also fully recognize that it's a month where there aren't really any holidays. There aren't really any birthdays or events we need to celebrate, etc. It makes the transition and the positive outcome of this experiment a little easier to obtain. That being said, I've already met a friend out for drinks once

this past week and had to order a club soda with lime over my usual red wine or Gin & Tonic, and I had to turn down her plea to go to A Tavola (local, delicious fancy pizza).

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It’s only been a week or so, but I am happy with what we’re doing. I do feel good. I do have more energy, I’m not bloated, I want to get out and move my body, and I have a bit more mental clarity. Who knows exactly what it’s from – veganism, cutting out alcohol, both? Would I feel just as good on a diet consisting of lean protein and veggies? I don’t know. I just know I like it right now.

What do I hope to accomplish with this? Redefining my relationship with food, especially “healthy foods”, as well as alcohol. I want to really test my body to see what it can do and how it feels. Will I continue being vegan post-January? Probably not. But I might opt for more vegetarian options a few nights a week, and have a greater understanding of how to be truly dairy-free but not unsatisfied. Will I ever drink a drop of alcohol again in my life? Yes. I will definitely drink again. I love the pairings of alcohol with food and the simple elegance of a glass of red wine. However, I know this month off will be good for my brain and my liver (not that I drank an inordinate amount, but you get the point). It will also, I hope, redefine my relationship with alcohol and the need to go out and drink. I’m an adult lady, my body doesn’t like lots of alcohol, and I need to start listening to her. I just need to pull a Kris Jenner and pour myself a generous amount of red wine each night and go to bed. The simple life.

I’m excited to see what this month unfolds for myself and my roommates. I’m excited to not only feel better but to see how creative we get with our meals. I’m excited to see what we cook and how it tastes and how we’re communing with one another. I’m looking forward to how this community we’re building in our apartment and the healthy eating/drinking habits we’re forging will continue to manifest throughout the rest of the year. I’m wondering if at the end of the month, will I even *want* to eat meat or have a drink. Probably, but in lesser amounts.

I’m just jazzed for 2018! The possibilities and hope a new year brings. The changes this year has already brought. 2018 is the year of the witch and I’m excited to get back to my roots...vegetables.