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Although all diets share the common component of giving up certain foods and ingredients, students' diets can range greatly from the restrictions they place on students to the motivation each student has for starting one. Some of these diets include vegan, paleo, gluten-free, and vegetarian although there are far more than four diets followed by students.

Vegan

The makeup of a vegan diet is fairly simple: avoid all animal products. Siri Mandava '21 has been vegan for four months now and

thinks her diet is easy to follow for the most part. "People think that going vegan is really expensive, but it really is not if you actually plan out your meals," Mandava said. "People think that you literally cannot eat anything, but once you start planning out your meals and think about what you're eating it is much easier to get the protein and everything you need."

While being vegan comes almost naturally to her now, Mandava does acknowledge that the diet does not come without struggles. "During my birthday I really wanted to have cake, but I couldn't so I guess that was a struggle," Mandava said. "I guess in the beginning I struggled with giving up meat cause like I used to eat fish and other meats

so much. And now I don't really think about it as much, but I'm still trying to get over ice cream and some other dairy products that I can't eat anymore."

One of the most common things people want to know about someone's diet is their reason for starting it. For Mandava, being vegan was a choice she made. "I read this one article about how being vegan helped decrease climate change and how if everyone in the world turned vegan, you would be able to save 5.6 million people," Mandava said. "I know that as a person myself that I am not going to be able to make that big of a difference, but I guess me being vegan shows other people what my beliefs are and what I stand for."

Gluten-Free

For some, a medical diagnosis makes dieting unavoidable. Sylvie Heard '22 is one of those people. Ever since she was diagnosed with celiac disease, Heard has been restricted to a gluten-free diet which means she cannot eat glens which includes barley, rye, oats, and wheat.

For Heard, the transition to a gluten-free diet was not easy, especially when adapting to school lunches. "The first time I ordered gluten-free lunch through the school was in 8th or 9th grade," Heard said. "And you sign up before and mark which months you want to eat. And then that first time, I don't know why, but they forgot that I signed up for that lunch so I didn't really have lunch that day."

Despite the mix-up, Heard did not have any more issues with ordering school lunch. However, class snacks have proved to be another issue. "In some classes, it is hard when kids bring food," Heard said. "Like I know for advisory class, my class brings snacks every time and no one really asks about dietary things. So I know last week was cosmic brownies, and so I usually just bring my own things."

One thing Heard wants people to be aware of the levels of severity when it comes to diet restrictions. "Well, there's a big difference between having celiac disease and being gluten intolerant because with celiac disease you really have to worry about the cross-contamination and if the food has been in the same area as gluten," Heard said. "And like whether it [gluten] has touched it because then I still have to worry about it and sometimes gluten intolerant people do not have to."

Paleo

No sugar. No dairy. No grain. Madison Dunn '20 and her family went on the paleo diet for almost two years, following those restrictions. "Basically the Paleo diet is like what like cavemen ate," Dunn said. "That's supposed to be the idea."

Since the paleo diet limits the use of a majority of pre-packaged food, Dunn advises people who plan on going on the diet to plan ahead. "It is hard to find that kind of food when you're in a rush," Dunn said. "So make sure you have enough time set aside to prepare everything. And maybe at the beginning of every week, you put a bunch of carrots in individual bags and like different fruits in individual bags then you can just grab a bag and throw it in your lunch box or something and bring it to school. Initially, it is a lot more time but it is more convenient

Teen Diet Facts

3 meals per day

Serving Size **Varies**

Average Expected Daily Intake

Calories 2,200-2,800

% U.S. Statistics

Following a specific diet 36%

Consumers incorporating

plant-based foods in their diet 39%

Vegan Diet 6%

Paleo Diet 7%

Wheat-free or gluten-free diet 8%

Increase in vegans in U.S. in the

past three years 600%

U.S. consumers choosing products

with no artificial ingredients 69%

*Statistics provided by healthychildren.org, food revolution network, food business news, and statista research department

throughout the week since it's already there."

Even with preparation, Dunn acknowledges that she did not always feel a need to follow the diet exactly. "Usually I would bring my own lunch to school, but I wouldn't necessarily strictly follow the paleo diet cause like it was only really for my mom and my brother," Dunn said. "So if I went out with friends I would just get whatever I wanted cause that was also what I would consider my cheat time. And then I would have a stash of food at home in my room that I hid from my mom so she wouldn't find it and get mad at me."

Whether it is the Paleo diet or another diet, Dunn stresses the importance of understanding how to make it a healthy diet. "Make sure you're being balanced about it," Dunn said. "Don't only eat lettuce or whatever. Be mindful about what you're eating, but also don't take it too far."

Vegetarian

Often mixed up with a vegan diet, a vegetarian diet limits the consumption of only meat compared to a vegan diet that pertains to all animal products. Emma Renaud '20 made the transition to a vegetarian diet in April of her freshman year. "My original motivation was an ethical one," Renaud said. "To me, it has always felt wrong eating meat. It never felt right. It always felt like even though I didn't kill the animals, it felt like I took part in that system."

While Renaud is passionate about being a vegetarian herself, she stresses that the decision is up to the individual. "I feel like when people find out you're vegetarian and find out you're vegan, they automatically assume that you're going to start pushing them to do the same thing. I'm in a relationship where my boyfriend eats meat and I'm perfectly fine with that. The rest of my family eats meat. I have no problem with other people's decisions. It is just my own personal decision."

Renaud's decision to switch to a vegetarian diet has come with some difficulties with school lunches. "It started happening that multiple days per week I would not be able to eat lunch because there were not nutritious, filling options available to me," Renaud said. "Something that a lot of people say is 'oh you could just go to the salad bar and get something'... I guess that's another misconception that is all we eat is rabbit food. And we really can't."

Renaud did reach out to the director of food services for the high school, however, she still sees room for improvement in vegetarian options offered for students. "I expect the school to provide me with the nutrients I need if I'm going to be stuck here legally during the day," Renaud said.