

vegetarian

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LIFE

close-up

Visitors to CNN.com know Nicole Lapin as the anchor of the Web site's "Now in the News" hourly updates, as well as the host of the weekly interview series "Young people Who Rock," which profiles individuals under 30 making a difference. Having logged her share of 15-hour days, Lapin, 24, has learned to be creative when it comes to sticking to her vegan diet on the set, in the field, or at the expense-account meal with producers. "I can even find something to eat in a steak house," she says.

ONE-ON-ONE with nicole lapin

BY TRACEY PEPPER

As a journalist and news anchor, you're on the go a lot. How do you stay vegan with such a busy job?

I improvise. When I was out on the field reporting, I learned how to make a lovely meal out of fast food. At Starbucks for example, you can get the trail mix, cut-up fruit, and a soy drink. In the food court at CNN [in Atlanta, the network's headquarters], I've just discovered a fast-food burrito joint called Moe's where I can order a tofu burrito. I would love to see lots more vegan places to eat, but I think that when I go to a restaurant and ask for soymilk, every little request makes a difference.

How old were you when you stopped eating meat?

I was probably 11. It started because I love animals, but later I realized that meat was unnecessary in my diet. My family is Israeli and I was raised in a kosher household, so we didn't eat a ton of meat; we ate a lot of Mediterranean foods like hummus and baba ghanoush or cucumber, tomato, and onion salad. When my grandpa would come from Israel to visit us in Los Angeles we'd take him to Baja Fresh and he'd go to the salsa bar and think that was the salad.

What inspired you to go from vegetarian to vegan?

I went to Paris to study and, because I was a vegetarian, all I ate was bread and cheese. At some point over those six months, I developed an intense aversion to dairy. When I got home, I could not even look at a piece of cheese, even my favorite, Brie, but it's really important for me not to waver. People compromise too readily on their beliefs, and I just don't think it's necessary to eat meat and dairy to stay healthy and active and to have energy.



This CNN anchor stays on top of her vegan diet as well as the news

What do you do about any cravings?

I have soy cheese or soy lattes, which have a creamy consistency, when I crave that creamy dairy thing. I've also got a major sweet tooth, and I found this woman in Georgia who makes vegan cupcakes. I brought them to a meeting for "Young People Who Rock," and these big producer guys said, "These are great, I love these." I didn't say anything until afterward when I told them, "By the way, they're vegan," and they said, "They're what?"

Have your colleagues expressed curiosity about your being vegan?

The thing that gets most people is that I don't eat any butter -they're like, I can't imagine giving up butter. Also, I think there's a misconception that vegans are high-maintenance. Give me an avocado, a cucumber, and a piece of tofu and I'm good!

