



Meatless Monday: Almond milk and other surprises

by Jenny Abel

Is it just me or does this year seem busier than most? The first 8+ months have just flown by and I feel like I haven't had the time for some of the things that I normally do, like reading the bi-monthly *Sierra* magazines that come in the mail. I just recently picked up the March/April 2018 edition and found two great articles about the meat industry and its impact on greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, and threats to air quality. If you've still got your copy lying around, page 38 has a great infographic detailing some of the most egregious facts. If you put yours in the recycling bin a while ago, allow me to share a few of them:

- "The agricultural sector is responsible for about 9 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions.
- Livestock accounts for almost half of that figure—4.2 percent—more than the emissions from the aviation sector.
- This is mostly due to something called *enteric fermentation*. Like all ruminants, beef and dairy cattle naturally emit methane, a greenhouse gas that is 25 times more heat trapping than CO₂.
- Beef cattle alone are responsible for about a quarter of the emissions from U.S. agriculture."

These stats come from the article "The Sacred Cow: Allan Savory says putting more cattle onto the landscape can help address the climate crisis. Just one problem: The science doesn't add up." Earlier in the magazine you can find an article called "Hog Hell: CAFO farming is an environmental and public health disaster."

I'll admit that vegetarians like me can sometimes get a little self-righteous about our planet-friendly diets. That is, until I read an article this week in *The Guardian* about how it takes 1,611 gallons of water to produce one liter of the almond milk that I like to put on my cereal every morning. 80% of the world's almonds are produced in California and amid horrific droughts in that state, citrus farmers are replacing their orange trees with almond groves to meet the high demand for this crop. Evidently almonds require a lot more water than citrus, so farmers are digging ever deeper wells to get at the water they need to irrigate their trees. The article highlights lots of other products that we think are sustainable but actually fall far from the

mark. You can check it out here: <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2018/sep/05/ditch-the-almond-milk-why-everything-you-know-about-sustainable-eating-is-probably-wrong>.

So really, what is a conscientious consumer to do? (Apparently I'm supposed to swap my almond milk for oat milk if I want a sustainable non-dairy morning beverage.) I think the important thing is to stay just that: conscientious. We need to keep informed and make the choices we can that contribute to a healthier planet, but not berate ourselves or friends and family when we can't make the grade 100% of the time. When things get too overwhelming, that's when it's time to turn to an easy and satisfying recipe like this one:

Simple Summer Squash

The key word here is simple. This is a recipe that you can whip up in a flash on a weekday evening. Simple doesn't mean you're skimping on nutritional value, though. This dish is chock full of veggies and if you omit the cheese it's vegan. It's adapted slightly from a recipe that I helped serve recently as part of my day job. Three volunteers, another staff member, and I handed out samples at the Arlington Farmers Market on a Saturday back in August as a way to encourage healthy eating and more vegetable consumption. Marketgoers couldn't get enough and my favorite comment was "it was a hit with my 20 month-old." Even though fall is approaching you can still find a lot of these ingredients at local farmers markets.

2 tsp. canola oil (can substitute olive or vegetable oil)
1 onion (white, yellow, or red), chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
3 medium zucchini, yellow summer squash, or a mixture, thinly sliced
3 medium tomatoes, chopped
3 T chopped fresh basil
Salt and black pepper to taste
1/3 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese

Heat the oil in a skillet and add the onion and garlic. Sauté until the onion becomes translucent, stirring often to prevent the garlic from burning. Add the zucchini/squash and sauté until tender. Add the tomatoes and continue sautéing until some of the liquid has evaporated, about five minutes. Add the basil, salt, pepper, and cheese; sauté just until the cheese is melted. Remove immediately from the heat and check the seasoning. You want to preserve the basil flavor and heat is an enemy to some fresh herbs like basil, so that's why it gets added at the end.

Serve by itself or over whole wheat pasta, rice, farro, or another favorite whole grain.

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