



## LESSON 21: "WHAT TO AVOID AND/OR CONSUME IN MODERATION"

As we've seen in some of the previous lessons, there isn't just *one* vegan diet, there are plenty of different ways to eat when you are vegan. That means that even though processed vegan foods are still healthier than processed non-vegan foods for the most part, going vegan is not necessarily synonymous with a healthy lifestyle. You could eat donuts and cupcakes all day and still be vegan. In the same manner, there are other things and habits that influence our lives and health that could technically be considered vegan, but that are still not the best for us. That doesn't mean we need to exclude them entirely, but it might be worth considering consuming them in moderation only. Before looking at some of these habits and items, I just want to add a note about "moderation" in general. The phrases "everything in moderation" and "it's all about balance" are good starting points, but the way many people use them is problematic. I often come across people who eat a mostly plant-based diet but who do include the occasional egg, dairy product or even meat under the guise of doing "everything in moderation" or because it's "not good to be so extreme". While I believe in the "moderation" part, I see an issue with the term "everything" and how it is being defined, because they don't really mean "*everything*". They mean whatever they deem edible and often use this logic to criticize veganism. Their logic is, however, flawed because they don't seem to have a problem with excluding the flesh and by-products of animals that we as a society are not used to eating (cats, dogs, elephants, gorillas etc.). No one would call them 'extreme' for excluding these animals from their diets. As vegans, all we are essentially doing is adding a few species to that list of animals that are not considered food. So, when I say "in moderation", I mean foods and habits that fall into the "vegan" category. I believe that we can live abundant and balanced lives without having to resort to animal products.

### **Things to consume in moderation**

You can find vegan versions of all of the following foods, which is why these are not really "No Go's". Whether or not you consume them is up to you, but I'd like to give you some tips in case you do wish to avoid them or enjoy them in moderation only. A rule of thumb to figure out which items belong on the No Go list and which items can be consumed in moderation is asking yourself "*Does me eating this affect anyone other than me in a negative way?*". If the answer is yes, then it belongs on the No Go list.

## Processed foods

Processed foods include so-called vegan “junk food” and anything that has been modified/processed from its original state. Technically speaking, even heating and blending ingredients means that you are processing them and it’s not all black and white. A great way to find out just how processed your food is, is taking a look at the ingredient list. If it’s longer than a few ingredients or contains words you can’t pronounce and/or have never even heard of, chances are you’re better off not eating it. You can easily make your own healthier version of processed foods with just a few ingredients! Some examples include vegan candy and other sweets (Oreos are vegan in some countries like Australia, for instance). These have been heavily processed and aren’t very nutrient-dense. Remember that what you do often affects you a lot, while what you do only occasionally, won’t affect you as much. If you want to occasionally indulge in a vegan treat, then that’s perfectly fine and you shouldn’t feel bad for doing so.

## Alcohol

Not all alcohol is vegan. According to [www.vegsoc.org](http://www.vegsoc.org), “[m]any alcoholic drinks such as beer and wine, will have been clarified/stabilized (fined) using animal derived products, causing concern for vegetarians and vegans. Fining agents are used as a processing aid (as opposed to an additive) which means in theory none should remain in the final product; however this is impossible to guarantee. Animal derived products used in the production of alcohol include:

- Albumin – derived from egg whites (may be caged eggs);
- Casein – Protein derived from milk;
- Chitin – derived from the shells of crabs, lobsters, etc;
- Gelatin – from bones and connective tissues of cows or pigs;
- Isinglass – obtained from fish swim bladders.”

There are many brands, however, that are suitable for vegans. According to the German beer industry’s “Reinheitsgebot” (purity law), for example, the use of animal products is not permitted, which means that German beers are vegan (the same goes for most Belgian beers). If you want to check whether your favorite alcoholic beverage is vegan, you can do so on [www.vegsocapproved.com](http://www.vegsocapproved.com).

But should you consume alcohol at all?

Alcohol can be addicting and if consumed in large quantities, it can be harmful for your health as well. The occasional glass of wine is fine.

### **Caffeine**

Caffeine is a stimulant a.k.a. a substance that raises levels of physiological or nervous activity in the body, which means that you're likely to experience detox symptoms like headaches or even nausea after cutting it out from one day to the next. The problem with coffee is that we often use it to get more energy instead of listening to what our bodies really need. If you're so tired that you can't function without coffee, then what you need is more rest, not more caffeine. That being said, many studies have found a moderate amount of coffee in one's diet to be safe, so if you do want to enjoy the occasional cup of coffee or espresso, feel free to do so, but try to also explore healthy alternatives that really do give your more energy like fresh green juice.

### **Cigarettes**

The tobacco industry is very involved in animal testing and store-bought cigarettes are therefore not vegan. Technically speaking, you could roll your own cigarettes with tobacco and still be vegan, but there are many reasons why a smoke free life is not only healthier but also more enjoyable. Before going vegan, I was a chain smoker for over decade, so if you're currently struggling with this nasty habit, I completely understand. You can know something to be true and still not believe it. Many people thus have a hard time giving up smoking because even though they know that it is bad for them, they truly believe that they wouldn't be able to enjoy social situations or handle stress without cigarettes. The best book I can recommend to help you quit smoking is *The Easy Way to Quit Smoking* by Allen Carr. It's what helped me quit and I've heard countless other people say that it helped them too. In the book, Carr breaks down what exactly happens in our bodies and minds when we smoke and explains the mechanism of this kind of addiction in detail. His method is based on logic rather than asking you to replace cigarettes with patches or similar things.