NO MEAT MAY BLOG #1

By: Catherine Causley



# REFLECTIONS FROM A FAMILY OF FOUR

This year, our family decided to take part in No Meat May (see over for more about the challenge), with support from Exmouth Town Council. We are a local family of four who love cooking, eating, and trying new foods, so this felt like a good challenge for us. That said, going completely meat-free for a month was still a bit daunting, especially with two teenagers in the house.

**Meet the family**

Our children are 12 and 14, a girl and a boy, and while they're generally adventurous eaters who enjoy plenty of vegetables, they weren't exactly thrilled at the idea of a whole month without meat. That made my personal challenge very clear from the start: could I make vegetarian food that they'd genuinely enjoy?

We're a fairly typical family in how we eat. We do eat meat, though not every day. One of our children has a dairy intolerance, so we already limit dairy, and we rarely eat fish (aside from the occasional fish finger sandwich). In theory, a vegetarian month should have been manageable but Week One quickly reminded me that theory and practice aren't always the same thing.




## *I'd forgotten I'd signed up!*

**A slightly chaotic start ...**

The first challenge was entirely my own fault: I'd forgotten I'd signed up. I had some sandwich meat in the fridge that needed using, and I didn't want to waste it. So for the first weekend, the children still had chicken in their sandwiches, while my husband and I stuck strictly to vegetarian meals. I also decided that while I would follow the No Meat May rules carefully, I'd allow the children flexibility when they were out of the house. Twice a week they have school lunches, and I felt it was important they felt comfortable with their choices.

On Bank Holiday Monday, we headed to a local car boot sale. We'd been setting up since 7am and were absolutely starving. Unfortunately, there were no vegetarian food options at all. In the end, I settled for a coffee. It wasn't ideal, but it taught me a valuable lesson very early on: **planning and preparation** are going to be key this month.

Another learning curve came with social situations. I'm visiting my parents this weekend, and my step-mum is a wonderful cook, had planned a roast lamb dinner with all the trimmings. I had to make a quick phone call to explain the **No Meat May** challenge. Luckily, she was completely understanding, and I'll happily enjoy the roast potatoes and vegetables instead.

**ADOPTING FAMILY FAVOURITES**

Once I got over the initial mindset shift, the week became easier. Rather than reinventing everything, I mainly adapted recipes we already love.

- A cottage pie with tinned green lentils instead of minced meat
- A colourful vegetable chow mein
- Mexican-style spiced beans served on flatbreads with plenty of toppings!

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Cottage pie with lentils



Spicy beans on flatbread

The meals were filling, comforting, and familiar enough that no one felt short-changed. I'm genuinely looking forward to the weekend, when I'll have more time to get creative and try some new recipes. Instagram has also been a brilliant source of inspiration. One unexpected bonus this week has been fibre. Like many people, we probably don't get enough of it day-to-day, and No Meat May has encouraged us to eat more beans, lentils, and tofu.

**How has it felt?**

Physically, I haven't noticed much difference yet. I do find I need to eat slightly larger portions, as vegetarian meals can be lower in calories, but that hasn't been a bad thing. I'm currently on a weight-loss journey and, despite eating what feel like generous plates of food, I've continued to lose weight this week. More than anything, Week One has been about adjustment mentally, practically, and socially. It's reminded me how ingrained meat is in everyday routines, from takeaway food to family visits, but also how easy many swaps can be once you start.

**Looking ahead**

Week One hasn't been perfect, but it's been positive, eye-opening, and surprisingly enjoyable. I'm learning, the children are eating well, and I'm feeling motivated to keep going. I'm genuinely looking forward to Week Two of No Meat May – and seeing what else we can create in the kitchen.

## ABOUT NO MEAT MAY

"No Meat May started in 2013. We come back bigger and stronger every year, partly because the food keeps getting better! But mostly because of the incredible stories people share with us about how taking part in this 31-day challenge has changed their lives for the better. This is the fuel that keeps our engines firing. 🔥

"We are determined to inspire more people to change the world by shifting to more plant-rich eating. And we are committed to ensuring everyone has a good time & does it well. Funds raised through the No Meat May challenge are directed 100% to improving the event year on year and to supporting more people to shift to plant-rich eating for those 4 BIG reasons."

**SIGN UP HERE!**

https://www.nomeatmay.org/




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