

Vegan overnight oats with strawberries and mango (At Elizabeth's Table/Elizabeth Varga)



by Elizabeth Varga

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March 2, 2022

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***Editor's Note:*** *In this series, Elizabeth Varga will explore how fasting from meat impacts our relationships with self, others, the rest of creation and God. Her reflections and recipes will be posted on the Wednesdays and Fridays of Lent 2022. To receive this series via email, sign up for EarthBeat Reflections.*

Catholics fast during Lent and abstain from eating meat on Fridays. We give something up that inhibits our relationship with God or take something on that helps us grow in that relationship.

By removing things that aren't serving us spiritually — or otherwise — we create daily routines that more fully align with God's will for our lives and for the world.

Often, we grow the most during these times of "lack."

Maybe the "without" is actually better than the "with." Maybe some fasts shouldn't be temporary.

Many Catholics not only abstain from eating meat during the Fridays of Lent, but also on every Friday of the year. Some Catholics, like me, have chosen to abstain from meat on every single day of the year.

What if fasting from meat has benefits beyond the Lenten practice?

Meat might taste good, but just because something is enjoyable doesn't mean that it is right. A case can be made that by eating less meat, we are living more in line with God's will by improving our health and the health of the world.

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Meat and animal products come with cholesterol, saturated fats and other substances that are detrimental to our health. Eating less meat, especially less red meat and less processed meat, can drastically improve our health and give us the opportunity to eat nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables that can heal our bodies.

Fasting provides the benefit of giving our bodies a chance to reset — whether we fast from all food, or just a particular group of foods.

Eating less meat, or entirely fasting from it is also beneficial from an environmental perspective. Animal agriculture contributes a large proportion of the world's greenhouse gas production. Livestock in particular emits methane, which is much more destructive to the environment than carbon dioxide. And it takes much more water to produce a pound of animal protein than a pound of protein from plants.

Animal agriculture is the leading cause of species extinction, ocean dead zones, water pollution, and habitat destruction. It also contributes significantly more waste than humans create. By eating even a little less meat, we can help reduce destruction to the environment and be good stewards of creation.

This Lent (and perhaps beyond), maybe the simple act of abstaining from meat can help us grow closer to God by improving our health and stewarding the planet's resources well.

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## Recipe: Overnight oats

Overnight oats are a great option if you want to prep your breakfast. The oats soak in water or milk overnight to become a soft porridge in the morning. Make them plant-based with non-dairy milk, (optional) vegan protein powder and plenty of fruit!



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**Ingredients**

- 1/3 cup rolled oats
- 1/4-1/2 scoop plant-based protein powder (optional)

- 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4-1/2 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1/3 cup fresh or frozen fruit — blueberries and peaches, strawberries and mango or mixed berries

**Instructions**

1. Add oats, protein powder, flaxseed and cinnamon to a mason jar or container.
2. Chop fruit into bite-sized pieces, if necessary. Add fruit to the jar.
3. Add vanilla extract and almond milk, using as little milk as needed to mix well.
4. Place in the fridge for a few hours or overnight. Enjoy!

*Find recipe notes, substitutions, and other nutritional information on atelizabethstable.com.*

This story appears in the **Recipes for an ecofriendly Lent** feature series. View the full series.