

## The Flexitarian Diet

**By: Dawn Jackson Blatner**

**Published by: McGraw Hill, 2008**

**Reviewed: April 2009 by the What's Hot, What's Not Book Club**

Dawn Jackson Blatner is a registered dietitian who outlines a “mostly vegetarian” way of eating. The payback? The author promises you’ll “Be healthier, prevent disease and add years to your life.” She offers no hard and fast rules or restrictions. People can follow the flexitarian diet as little or as much as they want. The author reinforces that there is “no right way, just have fun and experiment.” This book is aimed at people who are motivated to try new vegetarian dishes and who like to cook.

### Pros

*The Flexitarian Diet* is an easy-to-read book with an upbeat tone. Jackson Blatner makes vegetarian eating less scary for meat lovers with her flexible approach to vegetarianism. Peppered with time crunch tips, fact stack boxes and craving control advice, the book encourages the reader to try out different vegetarian recipes. The Flex Five food groups are grounded in science and the author provides lots of great practical food information e.g. how to soak beans and essential kitchen tools. The discussion of umami, the fifth taste in food often found in meat, is eye-opening and the author offers ideas on how to get the same savoury taste sensation to avoid craving meat.

### Cons

The book is American-centric and should have been edited for release to a Canadian market as there are several examples of information that is incorrect for the Canadian consumer. For example, the tofu terms listed and the seasonality of fruits and vegetables are different in Canada. While the recipes provide a variety of vegetarian ideas (with options to swap for meat, poultry or fish), the shopping lists are not helpful if you pick and choose how much or little you’re going to follow this plan. Seeing the meal plans in chart format may make them easier to use. As well, the single-serve recipe quantities create work for households of more than one person. In addition, some of the recipes don’t seem nutritionally balanced and the portion of protein may be lower than recommended by national nutrition guidelines.

### The Bottom Line

*The Flexitarian Diet* is a good way for people who want to explore and incorporate vegetarian options into their diet. Its flexible approach will get even the most die-hard carnivore to take note. We would recommend the book as a starting point for both consumers and health professionals looking to steer their clients to a more plant-based diet. Those who wish for more adventurous recipes will have to look elsewhere.