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Looking at food as a healing agent



Prashanti Ganesh
Express News Service

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CHENNAI: Canadian raw vegan chef Lisa Pitman, who will be at Auroville for a workshop, demystifies the various myths associated with the vegan diet. And coming just a day after World Vegan Day (Nov 1), this seems an apt time to understand the basics. While doctors here have advised many to not go the vegan route for the lack of a balanced diet, Lisa says, "If you're eating a variety of whole, plant-based foods, you will get all the nutrients your body needs. In fact, eating a whole food plant-based diet has been shown to prevent and reverse many of the lifestyle diseases, including diabetes and heart-disease."

She goes on to add, "Dieticians and doctors agree that eating a vegan diet is healthy for people in all stages of life and all levels of activity." But she is quick to inform us that the vegan diet lacks the essential Vitamin B12 that is produced by bacteria and needs to be supplemented for.

Apart from a balanced diet, most vegans also worry about replacing the cow's milk, which is one of the main sources of calcium. Lisa believes that the cow's milk is perfect food for calves alone and the human milk that we consume till we wean is sufficient. She says, "Calcium can be found in plenty of plants without any of the cholesterol found in milk. Research has shown that we don't need milk for strong bones. In fact, the countries that consume the most milk also have the highest incidence of osteoporosis." She suggests the usage of nut-based milk such as cashews and almonds or sesame seeds. These are known to have ten times more calcium than cow's milk per 100 grams.

Lisa's workshop will lay emphasis on treating food as a healing agent. "I think the best way for people to see the healing power of food is to experience it. What you can learn from eating a well-balanced, plant-based, whole food diet for a month cannot be replaced by any statistic or fact I can share," she says. Lisa also strongly advocates the eating of raw food. "Many vitamins and photochemicals are easier for our bodies to absorb from raw foods and some vitamins are destroyed when food is heated. However, one of the greatest benefits of eating a diet rich in fresh, raw foods is that there is a lot less room for the processed, refined foods that are harmful to our health," she explains.

Lisa is excited about her workshop and is looking forward to using Indian products. "India has a variety of greens and leafy vegetables that I can't wait to discover. I've been dreaming about all the wonderful spices that are widely available in India," she says.

(The workshops will be conducted at Auroville on November 7 and 9. For registration and more details, contact 9488935424)

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