



# SHARAN

Sanctuary for Health And Reconnection to Animals and Nature



## SHARAN Newsletter - Issue #6 - January 2010

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### Special Feature: The Facts About Genetically Modified Food

We often hear about **genetically modified (GM) food** and the issues surrounding it, which continue to be hotly debated. What do we need to know as consumers? Should we be **concerned about genetically modified foods**? Are they **good or dangerous**? How do **genetically modified foods affect our health, the environment and animals**?

**A genetically modified food is one whose genetic make-up has been altered through genetic engineering.**

Through this technology, **characteristics from one or several unrelated organisms are taken and combined to**

**create a new organism.** For example, **strawberries have been inserted with genes from fish** to make them resistant to frost. **Other examples of genetically modified foods** include: **rape, corn, soya and sugar cane which resist certain herbicides** (so that only weeds are killed and not the plant); **sweet corn, cotton and potatoes** which produce a poison harmful to insects; **'golden rice'** which is rich in A vitamins; **tomatoes, strawberries, pineapples, sweet peppers and bananas** which stay fresh longer.

**How can you know if you are eating genetically modified foods? You can't tell by just looking at or tasting** a tomato or strawberry to know if it has been genetically modified. **Whether you're eating GM foods may depend on where you live.** In 2006, **97% of the world's GM crops were produced in the United States (53%), Argentina (17%), Brazil (11%), Canada (6%), India (4%), China (3%), Paraguay (2%) and South Africa (1%).** ([Source](#))

In the **European Union, Australia and Japan, the labelling of GM foods is compulsory.** However, in the EU, the **milk, eggs and meat produced from animals fed GM feed do not have to be labelled.** Since most of the genetically-modified soy and corn crops grown are fed to animals, **animal products are likely to contain GMOs.**

### Potential effects on health

**Not enough is known about the safety of GM foods** and it is difficult to predict their **long-term effects on human health.** GM plants which produce pesticides fatal to insects can also be **potentially toxic to humans.** Another potential effect on human health is an **increase in allergic effects:** if genes from plants which commonly cause allergies are included in other organisms, this can cause reactions in people prone to allergies. Also, **many GM foods contain genes which make them resistant to antibiotics.** As a result, this may lead to the **development of 'superbugs' which cannot be controlled by antibiotics.** Lab studies on animals have revealed **negative effects on the health and well-being of animals** (see below).

The tryptophan disaster is an example of the **potentially fatal effects** of genetically modified organisms. A **genetically-altered version of Tryptophan, a food supplement,** was produced in 1989 by Showa Denko,

a Japanese company. This led to an outbreak in the US of a new disease, Eosinophilia Myalgia Syndrome (EMS). **The toxic side effects resulted in the death of 37 people and permanent disability of 1500.** ([Source.](#))

For more information on health effects, see [this link](#) and [this link](#).

### Environmental effects

There are many **environmental concerns** related to the production of GM foods:

- Plants which have been modified to be herbicide resistant can **cross-breed with weeds, creating 'superweeds' resistant to herbicides.**
- The tendency of insects to develop resistance to pesticides can result in **increased pesticide use.**
- **GM plants can interbreed with neighbouring crops, creating new organisms unintentionally.** In the US, traces of a type of maize which was approved for feed use only appeared in maize products meant for human consumption.
- GM plants **may alter soil bacteria** in ways which are harmful to soil health and may lead to soil depletion.
- In Argentina, GM soya production has caused environmental problems, including the **spread of herbicide-resistant weeds, soil depletion, and increased pests and diseases.**
- The insecticides produced by GM crops can be **toxic to water life and soil organisms.**

For more information on environmental effects: see [this link](#).

### Effects on animals

GM plants can have **negative affects on the health and well-being of animals** and other organisms. Studies have revealed that:

- **Monarch butterfly caterpillars that ate milkweed plants dusted with pollen from genetically-modified pesticide-producing corn did not survive.**
- **GM feed disturbs animal's body functions.** Farmers have reported that animals fed GM feed suffer from ill effects.
- The **potential development of superbugs** resistant to antibiotics can prove fatal to farm animals.
- Sheep fed insecticide-producing GM maize over three generations revealed **disturbances in the functioning of the digestive system of ewes and in the liver and pancreas of their lambs.**
- Rabbits fed GM soya experienced **enzyme function disturbances in the kidney and heart.**
- Laboratory studies designed to assess the long-term health effects of GM feed have shown **harmful health effects** on animals.

For more information on the effects on animals: see [this link](#) and [this link](#).

To find out more about GM, watch [this video](#).

See also: [WHO: 20 questions on GM foods](#)

### What you can do

#### Don't buy GM foods

Find out **which food companies use GM foods** and **boycott** their products. See the [Greenpeace India Safe Food Guide](#)

#### Buy organic

The **only way to ensure that your food is GM-free** is to buy organic.

#### Avoid animal products

They are likely to contain GMOs as **most of the GM soy and corn crops grown are fed to animals as feed.**

#### Write to supermarkets and food companies

Tell them that you **do not want to buy any foods made with GM ingredients.** Ask them to stock / use only **GM-free products.** Ask them to label any products which include GM products.



For more information, see [Say NO to GMOs](#)



### Fact or Fiction?

**Organic meat is healthier and more humane.**

### FICTION!

Meat, whether it is organic or not, is **high in cholesterol and saturated fat and devoid of fibre**. The consumption of meat and other animal products has been **proven to cause heart disease and cancer**. See [The China Study](#).

Organic meat is not more humane because **there is no such thing as a humane slaughterhouse**. All animals raised for human consumption are sent to the same slaughterhouses, whether they were raised organic, free-range or on factory farms.

### Recipe

#### VEGAN CURD (YOGURT)

##### **Ingredients:**

Peanut milk  
Rejeuvelac

##### *For the peanut milk:*

Wash and soak ½ cup of unroasted peanuts for 2 hours in water. This should yield about ¾ - 1 cup soaked peanuts. Pour out the water and rinse. Remove the thin outer skin if desired (it is not mandatory). Put peanuts in a blender and blend till you get a smooth paste adding a little water only if necessary. The less water you add, the smoother the paste will be. Then add 3 cups water to the paste and bring to boil, allowing it to boil up 2 - 3 times. This will yield a fluid a little thicker than cow's milk. If you like a smoother milk and curd, sieve the mixture. Yield: 3 ½ cups of milk.

##### *For the rejeuvelac:*

Wash ½ cup of wheat berries (wheat grains that have not been milled) Soak them in a jar in 1 cup drinking water. Leave this jar open for 24 hours in a cupboard or keep it lightly covered. In case of very cold temperatures it could be left a little longer. Depending on the climate it should take between 1 – 5 days. You will know that it is ready by the color and taste. The water will turn a little yellowish or serum-colored and will have a sweet fermented smell. Pour this rejeuvelac into a glass. If desired, another cup of water may be added to the wheat berries to produce more rejeuvelac after another 24 hours. It can be drunk or used to make still more cheese. After 2 such uses the wheat berries are usually thrown away.



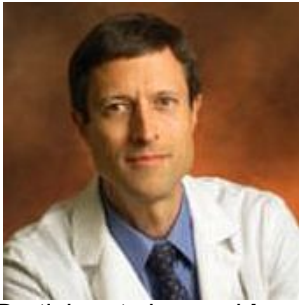
##### *To make the curd:*

Warm peanut milk to body temperature and stir in some rejeuvelac. (The amount depends on the temperature - the process is similar to making dairy curds.) Allow the curds to set for about 8 hours depending on the outside temperature without moving the container, and then refrigerate unless used immediately. In cold weather set in a warm place.

Tip: Save some of the peanut curd to use as a starter for the next batch (instead of rejeuvelac). This can be stored in the freezer.

For more exciting recipe ideas, visit the [recipes page](#) on the SHARAN website!

## News from SHARAN



SHARAN recently organised seminars on **Reversing Diabetes in Mumbai and Bangalore** with **Dr Neal Barnard of the Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine**. Over **70 participants** attended the one-day seminar in **Mumbai** on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

The **Bangalore seminar ran over three days**: December 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> and here **the 25 participants also had the opportunity to attend cooking demonstrations** by Dr Nandita Shah.

Participants learned **how to reduce or eliminate their need for medications**, lose weight and improve cholesterol levels through **simple, but powerful changes to their daily diet**. This program is based on **breakthrough research led by Neal D. Barnard and funded by the U.S. National Institute of Health** which shows that **people with type 2 diabetes can improve dramatically**. The focus was on **healthful foods, not medications**.



Many participants have called or written back to say that they have already **cut down on their medications and experienced a lowering of their blood sugar levels**. Others are **completely off medications**. And many more friends and relatives of participants have been inspired to change their diets due to the good results that they have seen. We are very happy to hear this news.

Dr Nandita Shah's popular **Peas vs Pills workshops** teach participants how a **healthy diet can prevent and cure** common illnesses and even many lifestyle diseases. These take place regularly in **Auroville, Mumbai and Bangalore**.

### Upcoming workshops:

**Peas vs Pills in Auroville**: 31 January, 14 February, 7 March

**Mumbai**: 14 March and 21 March - **Workshop on Reversing Diabetes and Overcoming Obesity**

**Bangalore**: 28<sup>th</sup> March - **Workshop on Overcoming Obesity**

For more information visit the [events page](#) on the **SHARAN website**. If you're interested in hosting a workshop in your area or to keep informed of upcoming workshops and events, contact [info@sharan-india.org](mailto:info@sharan-india.org)



SHARAN holds weekly **Vegan Cooking Classes** in Auroville. Participants learn **how to cook vegan meals with minimum or no oil and refined products** and also learn about **alternatives to dairy and animal products**. We are hosting a cooking class by Taiwanese vegan cooks on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January at Aurolec Cafeteria.

For more information, see [this page](#).

In addition to our cooking classes, SHARAN has released **2 new cooking DVDs** to help people learn how to cook healthy vegan food. **Healthy Kitchen Part 1** shows how you can easily make dairy alternatives at home (Cost: 100 Rs + postage). **Healthy Kitchen Part 2** is a compilation of YouTube videos of vegan recipes or other recipes which can be easily veganised (Cost: 50 Rs + postage). To order, please contact [nandita@sharan-india.org](mailto:nandita@sharan-india.org)

### Other news:

SHARAN has started selling **vegan cheeses** at the Auroville Saturday market. We have 5 different flavours of cheese and each time we have to make more and more since they just fly off our tables!

**SHARAN is looking for volunteers** who are interested in promoting a vegan lifestyle for the sake of people's health, the planet and animals. Can you help us in any way? Could you either help us financially to employ more staff or volunteer your own expertise? We need help with data management, graphic design and advertising, design of SHARAN t-shirts and aprons, filmmaking and photography, administration, event management and much more.

SHARAN is also looking for people who have done the Peas vs Pills workshop and who would like to train as cooking instructors for their cities. Please contact us: [info@sharan-india.org](mailto:info@sharan-india.org)

**Vegan potlucks** are a great way to **meet other vegans in your area** and share experiences and recipes. For information on monthly vegan potlucks in **Mumbai** and **Bangalore**, [visit this link](#).

Visit also the [Vegan Bangalore](#) and [Mumbai Vegans blog](#).



**Did you miss past issues of this newsletter? Have a look at the [SHARAN newsletter archives](#).**

Visit the [SHARAN website](#) regularly to read about the [latest news](#) and [upcoming events](#).



Join the [SHARAN India group on Facebook](#) to find out about upcoming events, join in the discussion board and share experiences, and meet other like-minded people!



### What is SHARAN?

We are a non-profit organization with the goals of spreading holistic health awareness, and an ecologically sustainable compassionate lifestyle. We believe that all life on the planet is interconnected. By reconnecting we can heal ourselves and our earth.

Visit our website: [www.sharan-india.org](http://www.sharan-india.org)

Contact us: [info@sharan-india.org](mailto:info@sharan-india.org)

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