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T1 - Understanding Vegetarianism. A Sociological Perspective on the Abstention from Meat in the Contemporary West

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AB - Voluntary vegetarianism involving a significant minority of the general population is a comparatively novel phenomenon in Western culture. This paper discusses the historical roots of this phenomenon, as well as its contemporary manifestations. Estimates of the proportions of vegetarians within European national populations are presented, & set in the context of an analysis of the economic, political, & ideological conditions in which a popular vegetarian option has emerged in Western culinary systems. Evidence concerning the motivations & attitudes of vegetarians is presented, & the dynamics of the conversion process assessed, along with a discussion of the debate over the distinction between vegetarianism as a "movement" & vegetarianism as a "lifestyle." The paper is rounded off with an overview of the complex relationship between vegetarianism & modernity & of the significance of the potent symbolism of meat, seen as vegetarianism's defining object of abstention & rejection. 1 Table, 70 References. Adapted from the source document.

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