And your point is?

December 22, 2009 By Paul Dalton

Today's New York Times Science Section has a ridiculous article titled, 'Sorry Vegans, Brussels Sprouts Like to Live.' While I am not vegan, and I dislike brussels sprouts, this article deserves some of my scorn.

The gist of this thought piece is that plants do what they can to survive, that they in some sense 'want' to live and therefore there really isn't a substantive difference between eating a head of cabbage or a head of a pig.

One of the most basic features of all life- from the simplest single celled amoeba to the most complex mammal- is the instinct to survive. So it shouldn't exactly be news to anyone, be they herbivore or carcass chewer, that plants- no less than any member of the tree of life, do whatever they can to survive when threatened.

The article gives some fairly neat-o examples of this: almost instant chemical reactions by plants in response to insects chewing or the production of tumor like cells to rid themselves of larvae. Cool. And irrelevant to the questions arisen by dietary choices.

The subset of vegetarians and vegans who base our food choices on ethical principles are, I feel safe in saying, universally aware that plants are alive, and hence attempt to stay alive. Given that photosynthesis isn't an option for us, we draw the line at the Kingdom level (remember high school biology? Kingdom Phylum Class Order Genus Species- the basic hierarchy of taxonomy King Phillip Came Over From Greece Stoned?)

We are well aware that plants are alive and that they want to stay alive. We also know that chemical changes are not the same thing as thought or feeling. Responding to stimuli isn't equal to sentience. Simply, we aren't vegetarians because we can't stomach any form of killing, just the killing (and torture, warehousing, and other forms of mistreatment involved in the meat industry) of *animals*.

Hell, if the standard is not to kill any living thing, well we couldn't wash our hands lest the millions of *staphylococcus aureus* critters be destroyed. We couldn't take antibiotics. We couldn't brush our teeth, sterilize surgical instruments or pretty much do anything.

All life seeks to live- to persist and usually to reproduce. It is our prime directive, our most basic of instincts. Vegetarians and vegans do not labor under the illusion the food we eat wasn't once alive. In short, we are not as delusional, misinformed or just downright silly as this article is.

Happy Holidaze everyone. Time to make the Tofukey.

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