

World Vegetarian Day celebrated today: diets appropriate for all stages of life

Helena Grech Thursday, 1 October 2015

Malta Independent Online



Dr Mario Caruana

In celebration of World Vegetarian Day, which is being celebrated today, Hard Rock Cafe has launched a vegetarian and juice menu that will be available throughout the month of October.

Shandelle Azzopardi, director of operations explained that the scope behind this campaign is to raise awareness and attract all members of society, including non-vegetarians. The target is to retain a selection of the items offered on the new menus throughout the rest of the year.

The selection process for both menus was based on ingredients that are not so common in Maltese dishes. For the drinks menu in particular, juices were chosen that contain pear, apple, cucumber, kale, beetroot and ginger, which is not very typical for fresh juices sold on the island, Ms Azzopardi said.



The most challenging part of setting up the new menus, said operations manager Adrian Darmanin, is ensuring a constant supply of all ingredients as many are not widely available in Malta. He also said that the preparation work of the dishes and in particular the juices require a lot of time and attention to detail.



Ms Azzopardi said that people can expect a varied menu where each dish is packed with flavours from various herbs and spices that leaves you feeling satisfied.

More and more people all over the world are choosing a vegetarian diet and the benefits from this are well researched.



Dr Mario Caruana (photo on top), an expert in nutrition and dietetics, spoke with this newsroom about the benefits associated with a vegetarian diet. Dr Caruana explained that “well planned vegetarian diets can be nutritious and healthy. Research indicates that such diets are associated with lower risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, obesity, certain cancers and lower cholesterol levels. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we recommend all to follow a vegetarian diet. A carnivorous diet which has a good proportion of fruit and vegetables can still provide health benefits.”

On the subject of how to switch to a vegetarian diet while maintaining a well balanced and nutritional diet, Dr Caruana said “Well-planned vegetarian diets are appropriate for all stages of life and have many benefits. It is important to consult the change-over with a registered dietician especially if the case involves pregnancy, breastfeeding, infants during the weaning process and children to ensure that all nutritional needs are met. Other medical conditions that might be present need to be discussed as there are food components of the vegetarian diet that might interact with drugs prescribed or affect the medical condition itself! Once they learn how to begin a vegetarian and vegan eating pattern, clients quickly understand that there is much more to it than simply removing meat and all animal products from their diets.”