



Mardi Gras Gives Us All a Big Fat Break Because Carnival Means "So long" to Meat *John Hopkins' project offers delicious recipes to get us through.*

New York City (February 20, 2008) - For centuries Mardi Gras – also known as Carnival, or Fat Tuesday – has been a time to consume the last bits of fat and meat in millions of homes in preparation for Lent, a time of purification when people traditionally give up one or more favorite foods. Meat is often chosen for this observance, as indicated by the word *Carnival*, arising from the Latin words *carne vale*, or “farewell to the flesh.”

Today, there are more good reasons than ever to reduce the meat in our diets – not only improving our personal health, but environmental and economic imperatives as well. Meatless Monday’s online database of recipes – like this yummy [Louisiana Style Meatless Jambalaya](#) – can easily help observers through the “lean” weeks of Lent and beyond. In addition to breakfast, lunch, snacks, appetizers and [18 different types of chili](#) – there are recipes for intriguing entrees like [Locked Room Ragout](#), [Jamaican Jerk Tofu](#), [Sweet Potato Shepherds Pie](#), and [Hopi Vegetable Stew](#).

[Meatless Monday](#), a project of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health’s [Center for a Livable Future](#), suggests that people can reap big benefits by forgoing meat just one day a week. “It’s easier than you think, but the payoff can be huge” says Center Director Dr. Robert Lawrence. “Eating less meat not only helps lower cholesterol and decrease cancer risks, it reduces your carbon footprint and helps conserve fresh water. And plant-based meals cost less money, an added bonus during these economically tough times.”

Diets high in meat are tied to increased rates of heart disease, cancer, stroke, and other common chronic preventable ailments. With American children contracting what used to be considered adult-only diseases like diabetes, and millions of overweight kids at risk for high cholesterol and heart disease, reducing meat consumption is preventative medicine of the very best kind – a simple step with many rewards.

At the United Nations Summit on Global Warming in December, meat production was cited as a primary source of greenhouse gas. Meat farming also depletes and pollutes our water supplies. A single pound of beef can take up to 5,000 gallons of fresh water to produce, and waste from factory farms poisons ground water and surface water alike. So going without meat just one day a week can have a big impact on your health and the health of the planet.

All good things to consider as Mardi Gras draws to a close February 24 and millions of people bid “farewell to the flesh.”

Find more recipes and great ideas about reducing meat in your diet all year long at meatlessmonday.com