



The Pescetarian Plan: The Vegetarian + Seafood Way to Lose Weight and Love Your Food

By Janis Jibrin, Sidra Forman

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With more than 100 mouthwatering recipes, switching to a vegetable- and seafood-based diet has never been easier, healthier—or more delicious!

You can go vegetarian to slim down, help reduce your risk for cancer and cardiovascular disease, feel great, and probably live longer. Or you can eat fish to help protect your heart, quell appetite, stay sharp, be happier, and even have better skin. (You read that right!) Better yet, you can enjoy the best of both worlds with *The Pescetarian Plan*—a delicious, easy-to-follow, one-of-a-kind program for weight loss and optimal physical and mental well-being.

Inspired by the traditional Mediterranean way of eating (“pesce” is the Italian word for “fish,” and “pesca” is Spanish for “fishing,” thus the alternate spelling “pescatarian”), veteran nutritionist Janis Jibrin, M.S., R.D., offers step-by-step portion- and meal-planning instructions, including a wide variety of quick and easy breakfast, lunch, and dinner recipes to help you meet your weight-loss and health goals. She shares her deep knowledge of the science behind the healthiest diet on the planet, deftly explaining the amazing potential benefits of eating the pescetarian way—including whittling your waist, reducing chronic inflammation, preventing arterial plaque, and possibly warding off Alzheimer’s. She also breaks down the latest information about mercury, overfishing, and the environmental impact of your ingredient choices.

With Chef Sidra Forman’s expert guidance, you’ll become confident in the kitchen—fish and other types of seafood are much easier to prepare (and much harder to mess up!) than you may think. And the mouthwatering recipes and photos—including Broiled Trout with Preserved Lemon and Thyme, Grilled Shrimp with Peach BBQ Sauce, Roasted Chick Pea Snacks, Blueberries Baked with Sweet Cream, and Chocolate Cupcakes with Mint Icing—give you options the whole family will love.

Quite Possibly the Healthiest Eating Style on the Planet!

On the Pescetarian Diet you will:

- See inches around the waist disappear
- Feel more active and productive
- Fill your plate with the best, most nutritious food
- Stop counting calories—it's all in the portions
- Go at your own pace: start slowly or dive right in
- Really enjoy your food and its many benefits

Praise for *The Pescetarian Plan*

“The [recipes] in this book are designed to leverage both science and satisfaction.”—***The Washington Post***

“Informative and inspiring . . . [includes] 100 approachable recipes.”—***Publishers Weekly***

“Great for your overall health, longevity, and waistline!”—**Bob Greene, author of *The Best Life Diet***

“This life-changing diet will help improve your health and longevity. The easy-to-follow recipes and step-by-step instructions make adopting the plan simple and delicious. It is a must-read if you are committed to embracing a healthier lifestyle.”—**Rebecca Reeves, Dr.P.H., former president of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics**

“Better sex through diet? Yes! In addition to weight loss and brain and heart health, that's one of the impressive benefits of this vegetarian-plus-seafood diet. Furthermore, it's well-researched, approachable, sustainable, and delicious!”—**Brandi Koskie, director of publishing at DietsInReview.com**

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The Pescetarian Plan: The Vegetarian + Seafood Way to Lose Weight and Love Your Food By Janis Jibrin, Sidra Forman Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #88094 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2014-03-11
- Released on: 2014-03-11
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.60" h x 1.20" w x 6.50" l, 1.25 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 384 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

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About the Author

Janis Jibrin, M.S., R.D., is a contributing nutrition editor at *SELF* magazine and the lead nutritionist for Best Life (a weight loss and wellness company), writing weekly blogs for TheBestLife.com. She has written hundreds of articles for *Family Circle*, *Good Housekeeping*, *More*, *Men’s Health*, *SELF*, *Prevention*, and other popular publications. She is the co-author (with Best Life founder, Bob Greene) of *The Life You Want* and *The Best Life Guide to Managing Diabetes and Pre-Diabetes*, and she also wrote *The Supermarket Diet* series, all of which have been *New York Times* bestsellers.

Sidra Forman is a chef, florist, urban farmer, and recipe contributor to Janis Jibrin and Bob Greene’s books who lives in Washington, D.C. Her philosophy of cooking, whether for her family, friends, or clients, is that the best-tasting and best-for-you foods should be one and the same.

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Jibran / THE PESCETARIAN PLAN

Chapter 1

Your Fabulous Pescetarian Figure

In the beginning, I didn’t plan on writing a weight-loss book. When I initially started, my primary purpose was to guide you through a way of eating that keeps your brain sharp and your heart healthy and also reduces your risk for cancer, diabetes, and other conditions. But guess what? The more I researched, the more it became crystal clear that this is the ideal diet to help you lose weight—and lots of it, if you need to do so. The research simply confirmed my real world experience: This is the diet I’ve been giving my clients for decades, because it’s the one that produces the best long-term results.

What if you don't need to lose weight? Stay with me here, don't go anywhere! Being a pescetarian may very well be your best bet for preventing unwanted pounds from creeping on.

The Pescetarian Weight-Loss Edge

I've found that it's easier to lose weight on a pescetarian diet than on a vegan or vegetarian one. The reason: seafood. Seafood is a low-calorie concentrated protein source, just what you need when you're trying to lose weight. That's because protein, compared to carbohydrates and fat, is particularly appetite-quelling. Meaning, after a meal containing a high-protein food, you last longer before getting hungry again.

Vegans and vegetarians do have tofu—also a healthy concentrated source of protein—but how much tofu do you feel like eating? And vegetarians also have eggs, but again, they're a little limiting. Legumes, which I recommend highly in this book as a healthy carb, aren't the best protein source if you're trying to lose weight. That's because you have to rack up a lot more beans—and calories—than seafood to get substantial protein levels. For instance, three ounces of cooked trout offers up 18 grams of protein for just 113 calories. To get that much protein from beans, you'd have to eat about one and a half cups of beans, for about 300 calories.

Loads of research from across the globe—the United States, Europe, northern Africa, or anywhere else—shows that people who eat along the lines of the Pescetarian Plan are slimmer. How much slimmer? Pescetarians are, on average, about 20 pounds lighter than regular eaters, according to a study tracking 89,000 Seventh-day Adventists in the United States and Canada. Adventists are an ideal group to study because their religion advocates a vegetarian diet (only about half are actually vegetarians, while another 10 percent are pescetarians; the rest are “regular eaters,” eating meat, poultry, and everything else). Vegetarians and pescetarians also had about half the risk for diabetes and high blood pressure.

A Mediterranean diet is also slimming. As I've explained already, the Pescetarian Plan is basically a Mediterranean diet that takes a pass on poultry and red meat and embraces the form of animal protein favored in Mediterranean countries: seafood. A Spanish study tracking university students for five years after graduation found that men and women who closely followed a Mediterranean diet were only half as likely to gain 11 pounds or more compared to their classmates whose diets were furthest from a Mediterranean pattern.

How's this for a triple threat: The Pescetarian Plan rolls all three fat-fighting diets into one. It's Mediterranean and basically vegetarian with the addition of seafood.

You'd think that the words diet and painless would go together about as well as socks and sandals. But my clients tell me that the Pescetarian Plan is the most painless way they've ever lost weight. There are lots of biological and psychological ways this plan makes it easier to lose weight, including:

It tastes good. You're eating food you actually like, and the sky's the limit when it comes to recipes.

You won't walk around hungry. Personally, I can't last a day on a diet if I'm hungry. This diet is so filling that my clients often tell me they can't eat all the food! Not only are the meals large (thank you, fruits and vegetables) but the diet is designed to minimize spikes and dips in blood sugar. The brain reads blood sugar dips as “time to eat,” while a nice even blood sugar suppresses appetite.

You'll have energy to exercise. What keeps energy high? Getting enough calories (but not too many); enough vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients; and the right kind of carbs (to stabilize blood sugar). Of

course, sleep plays a role, too (sleep tips in chapter 9). With sleep and diet in place, you'll have more energy than ever to work out.

You can break your sugar or salty snack habit. Sugar begets more sugar—the same with chips and salty snacks. Even if your breakfasts, lunches, and dinners are reasonable, your treat habit can sabotage your effort to drop those pounds. For some people, these foods are as addictive as alcohol or drugs. The Pescetarian Plan acts as a junk food reset button, training your tastes away from high-sugar, high-salt foods such as cookies, candy, fries, and the like and allowing you to enjoy the tastes of real food like ripe fruit, grilled fish sprinkled with fresh herbs, and a grain-and-toasted-nut pilaf. (If you can handle a little treat daily, great! Those treat calories, for sweets, alcohol, or whatever you'd like, are built into the plan.)

Slimming Pescetarian Foods

The Pescetarian Plan is how trimmer people eat. Check out these results from the U.S. arm of INTERMAP—an international diet and blood pressure study. You'll note that those at a healthy weight ate a lot more fruit, seafood, and nuts: core Pescetarian Plan staples. And obese people ate a lot more of foods that are either off this plan (red meat and processed meat) or are recommended in moderation (alcohol).

Those at a healthy weight ate:

Three to five times more seafood as obese people

Twice as much fruit

Two to four times as many nuts

Obese people ate:

25 percent more red meat than those at normal weight

Twice as much processed meat (bacon, pepperoni, etc.)

Six times as much alcohol (only the men, no difference in women)

Three times as many sugary beverages, including soft drinks, fruit punch, and sweetened iced tea (only for women, not much difference in men)

The Deck's Stacked to Favor Maintenance

You can lose weight on any diet as long as you're cutting calories. But maintaining weight loss is still a gigantic challenge. The truth is, most people who lose weight don't keep it off. The reasons are both biological (for instance, metabolic rate—the rate at which you burn calories—slows) and behavioral (maybe you lost weight on a diet that was unsustainable or didn't instill good habits).

That's the bad news. But much more encouraging is the fact that enough people do maintain their weight loss to show clearly that it can be done. I know a number of them who have maintained large weight losses of 50 or 100 pounds, even more. The National Weight Control Registry, a study tracking the habits of more than ten thousand of these "successful losers," is documenting how they do it. They're exercising and eating a lot of fruit, vegetables, lean protein, and other mainstays of the Pescetarian Plan. Research shows that these

foods can just about double your chance of successfully maintaining your weight loss.

It's not only the types of foods that make a difference—the percentages of each also play a role, according to research. The makeup—both types and amounts of foods—of the Pescetarian Plan promotes weight maintenance.

In other words, I've stacked the deck fully in favor of weight maintenance. Here's how:

- Your metabolism will stay relatively high. When you lose weight, your metabolic rate tends to drop. That's a major reason why it's so difficult to maintain weight loss. But research from the Boston Children's Hospital shows that eating along the lines of the Pescetarian Plan somewhat offsets that drop in the amount of calories burned.
- It's a diet you can live with. Unlike wacky, expensive, or restrictive fad diets, this one is easily adapted to your lifestyle. In some cases, it's just a healthier version of what you're already eating.
- You might be happier. My clients report feeling "good," "light," and "energized" on this plan. Sure, it feels great to shed pounds, but it's also the omega-3s that can perk up your mood, as explained in chapter 4. When your mood's up, so is your motivation to eat well and exercise. Which, in turn, puts you in a good mood. It's a happy cycle!

Outsmarting Your "Fat Genes"

You, your co-worker, and your friend could all go on The Pescetarian Plan, get the same amount of exercise, and lose very different amounts of weight. Why? Chalk it up to genetics.

If you've been heavy since childhood and seem to have a harder time than others keeping your weight down—despite valiant efforts—you probably have more than your fair share of "fat genes." Genetics are thought to account for 65 percent of the reason that one person has more body fat than another.

But don't despair! Genetics rarely fate you to be heavy. Fat genes need the right environment to thrive. That's why forty years ago, when the food environment was vastly different, the obesity rate in the United States was 13 percent compared to 35 percent today.

Our genes haven't changed—our environment has. We don't need to walk anywhere these days, most of our jobs involve sitting (plus all the time we spend in front of TVs and video games), and, of course, there are excessive amounts of food everywhere.

Fat genes devise sneaky ways to interact with the environment and pile on body fat. This was useful when we were hunter-gatherers and burned calories like mad all day and relied on our fat stores in times of food scarcity. But now, obviously, it's counterproductive.

The Pescetarian Plan is designed to outsmart your fat genes and our toxic food environment. How so?

How Your Genes Make You Fat: You have strong cravings for—or are even addicted to—fatty, salty, and sweet foods.

We're all wired to like these foods. They're the foods that kept our hunter-gatherer ancestors alive; it took a lot of berries, grubs, and lean antelope to rack up desperately needed calories. Salt was also hard to come by,

and, believe it or not, you do need some to stay healthy.

It's even worse for some people—they have either a stronger genetic predilection for these high-calorie foods or a brain chemical imbalance that leaves them unsatisfied with a moderate amount (similar to the way a drug addict develops tolerance and needs higher doses).

How the Food Environment Makes It Worse: We live in a toxic food environment—28-ounce sodas, cookies the size of salad plates, and all the other ridiculous portions out there that are considered normal. Don't forget about the infestation of round-the-clock fast food joints with their super-sized, penny-pinching meals, and all the other ways we can easily satisfy our sweet, salty, and fatty cravings. In fact, food manufacturers design some foods to be addictive, a disaster for the people most wired for addiction.

The Pescetarian Solution: You'll get to enjoy fat, sugar, and salt, but you'll do it in a diet- and health-friendly way. For instance, you'll get your fair share of fat on this plan (35 percent of your calories from fat), but you'll get it from healthy sources like nuts and olive oil. As for salt, I'll show you how judicious use of the salt shaker at the table delivers a satisfying salt hit but keeps sodium levels reasonable.

Here's how we'll handle sweets on this plan: You'll get a certain amount of treat calories each day, and I'll point you toward lower-sugar options. Remember, the more sweets you eat and the sweeter the foods (think M&Ms vs. dark chocolate), the more you crave them. By limiting sweets and opting for lower sugar (but never artificially sweetened) choices, you could see your sugar cravings diminish dramatically in two weeks on this plan.

How Your Genes Make You Fat: Some people are genetically programmed to deposit more fat deep in the abdomen. This “visceral fat” spurs on heart disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes, so it's something you want to minimize. To find out whether you're carrying around too much visceral fat, check out the “Busting Belly Fat” section later in this chapter.

How the Environment Makes It Worse: Too much white flour and sugar tend to encourage fat deposition to your midsection more than to other areas of the body. So does being sedentary.

The Pescetarian Solution: You'll be eating foods associated with a smaller waistline: whole grains, fruits and vegetables, calcium- and fiber-rich foods, and lean protein. Added sugar like white sugar, honey, and other sweeteners stay under 6 percent of total calories, which is considered a healthy level. Throw exercise into the mix, and you've got the ultimate gut-shrinking plan.

How Your Genes Make You Fat: Your genes drive you to eat frequently. Again, that was adaptive for hunter-gatherers who were foraging all day, but not necessarily for most of us.

How the Environment Makes It Worse: You can't go anywhere—and I mean anywhere—without being faced with food. Think about it: There are candy bars at the counter of Home Depot and Staples and even a bowl of candy at my hair salon! The old “three squares” model has been thrown out the window—it's perfectly acceptable to eat anytime, anywhere.

The Pescetarian Solution: You don't have to work against your genes in this case—you can eat a number of mini-meals on this plan and keep your weight down as long as you stay within the guidelines for fruit, dairy, and the other food groupings. And for those (like myself) who prefer the “three squares plus snacks” approach, you can take that route on this plan as well.

How Your Genes Make You Fat: It takes a lot of food to feel full. It could be that your genes are stingy when it comes to making hormones like leptin, which quell appetite, or that you're somewhat resistant to their effects. Or you might be overproducing hormones that stimulate appetite.

How the Environment Makes It Worse: We're surrounded by calorie-dense foods, such as fried foods, doughnuts, Häagen-Dazs, french fries, and more. These foods contain extraordinary amounts of calories for a relatively small volume. You can scarf down a lot of these foods before your stomach really starts expanding.

The Pescetarian Solution: To fool you into feeling full on fewer calories, I've made these Pescetarian Plan meals large. Vegetables, fruit, and soup stretch the stomach on relatively few calories; nerves in a stretched stomach send a "full" signal to the brain. It's not the only signal, but it's a powerful one. Another appetite-quelling signal is a nice, stable blood sugar level, which you should experience on this plan thanks to its low glycemic index. (Such meals elicit a relatively small and slow rise in blood sugar; for details, see "The Glycemic Index," page 42.)

A Gut Instinct About Body Weight

It's been called the "forgotten organ": the microbiota, or "intestinal flora," the hordes of bacteria—some harmful, most neutral or helpful—that populate our intestines. While the microbiota is not a true organ, it certainly behaves like one. The microbes in your gut, which outnumber the cells in your body (there are a hundred trillion of them), influence immunity, hormones, inflammatory compounds, and, as emerging research is starting to discover, your body weight.

Animal studies were one of the first tip-offs that your gut can, well . . . give you a gut! You can make a mouse fat simply by inoculating its gut with a small amount of intestinal flora from an obese mouse. And studies in humans are turning up microbiota differences between overweight and trim people.

Scientists are just beginning to figure out how those tiny single-celled organisms affect that number on your scale. For instance, they can wring more calories out of your food. Also, certain bacteria make it easier for your gut to absorb glucose (and its calories). Others put the brakes on metabolic rate, in other words make you burn calories more slowly and store more calories as fat. You might even be able to blame your microbiota when you reach for that third helping of mashed potatoes. Yes, the little bugs might also increase appetite!

Scientists are trying to develop probiotic supplements (consisting of friendly bacteria) that would shift the balance of bugs to help you lose weight. Also, changing your diet may help. Typical American fare seems to encourage the growth of intestinal bacteria that promote obesity. But a plant-based diet, like the one in this book, appears to favor a "skinny microbiota." Researchers at the University College in Cork, Ireland, have put 1,250 elderly people living in various European countries on either a Mediterranean diet (similar to the Pescetarian Plan) or their usual Western diets. Because diet changes take a while to influence the microbiota, the study will last a year. Stay tuned for those results—I'll be posting them on ThePescetarianPlan.com.

Busting Belly Fat

If you're overweight, you are perfectly justified in wondering whether it really matters to your health. You're certainly not getting any help from the media, where conflicting headlines either scare the heck out of you ("Obesity is killing you!") or make you wonder if you should let your gym membership lapse ("Being overweight makes you live longer!").

So which is it? It seems to boil down to this: Where you deposit your fat is much more important than how much fat you're carrying around. Too much visceral fat—also called “abdominal fat”—the deep belly fat that settles in and around your liver, pancreas, and other organs, is very risky. Being “apple-shaped” is a ticket to pre-diabetes, diabetes, and heart disease. It is also linked to cancer. This is in contrast to subcutaneous fat right under the skin, the more “pinch-able” fat, which appears to be medically neutral. Meanwhile, if you’re “pear-shaped,” packing more of your fat in your hips and thighs, you may actually be more protected from these diseases, according to new research.

Of course, you can be at a “healthy” weight but carry too much visceral fat. (Healthy, overweight, and obese are generally measured by the Body Mass Index or BMI, a number derived from a formula that includes a person’s weight and height. For a link to a BMI calculator, go to ThePescetarianPlan.com.) While it’s true that a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is considered “healthy weight” because it’s generally linked to lower risk from chronic disease, all bets are off if your visceral fat levels are high. A National Institute on Aging study—a huge one, tracking approximately 250,000 men and women—showed that people with a “healthy” BMI but a large waistline were 20 percent more likely to die sooner than those with a healthy BMI and a smaller waistline.

How can you tell if you have too much visceral fat? In research labs, scientists use computed tomography (CT) scans or DEXA scans—X-ray images of cross-sections, or “slices,” of the body, showing both visceral and subcutaneous fat. But you have a pretty good tool right in your sewing kit: a tape measure. In fact, waist measurement is used in a lot of research studies, and it has been found to correlate well with the fancier and pricier equipment!

So, summon up your courage and put that measuring tape around your waist. Here’s how:

1. Stand up in front of a mirror.
2. Place the tape measure around your belly, just above your hipbones. Place the bottom edge of the tape measure at the top of your hipbones. This will probably correspond to the largest part of your belly, but not necessarily.
3. Check in the mirror—the tape should evenly circle your body (as opposed to riding up on one end and down on another).
4. Breathe out (but don’t suck in your waist), make sure the tape is snug, but not pinching the skin, then measure.
5. Write down the number. Every few weeks, or at least once a month, remeasure to note your progress.

The risk for chronic diseases goes up with a waistline measurement greater than 35 inches for women or greater than 40 inches for men. (For Asians, disease risk increases at 31.5 inches for women and 35.5 for men.)

If you’re over the cut-off points, don’t panic! Instead, use this reality check to become extra-determined to stick to your chapter 5 portions and keep exercising: Exercise preferentially removes visceral fat. That’s because visceral fat is the last fat to deposit, and it’s the first your body removes.

Pescetarian Foods That Fight “Belly Fat”

Stock your cabinets and fridge with foods (or food components) that take aim at visceral fat. Note: If you're following the Pescetarian Plan, you'll be getting these in sufficient supply.

- Fiber. The Pescetarian Plan is high in fiber thanks to all the fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes.
- Whole grains. The Pescetarian Plan recommends whole grains only and the healthiest form: the coarser type (like steel-cut oats) as opposed to the more pulverized flours (like what Cheerios are made from). That's important, as the bigger particles help reduce blood sugar and insulin, which, in turn, reduce visceral fat. Also, whole grains are rich in magnesium, which helps keep the body more sensitive to insulin.
- Calcium. Eating calcium-rich foods is linked to lower visceral fat levels. The yogurt, nonfat and 1-percent milk, and calcium-enriched soy and other nondairy milks on this plan are chock-full of calcium.
- Fruits and vegetables. You're certainly getting plenty of these on this plan! The higher the intake, the lower the visceral fat, found a study tracking 22,570 Danish men and women for five years.
- Protein. That same Danish study has linked adequate protein levels with less visceral fat. (Other studies have confirmed the result.) The Pescetarian Plan provides not only adequate amounts of protein but also the healthiest forms: seafood, egg whites, and soy.

Hit the Sweet Spot: Slim Down and Stay Satisfied

For a minute, try to forget about all the negatives associated with cutting calories—you know, the panic that you'll never get to enjoy food again, the obsession with the scale, the hunger, the deprivation.

Instead, I want you to wipe the slate clean and take a different approach. I'm going to help you figure out how much food you really need—just enough to feel comfortable and satisfied. In other words, you're not walking around hungry (unless it's just before meal time). We're going to work on hitting the sweet spot where you get enough food to keep you happy but are still losing weight.

How much weight? Typically, about 1/2 to 1 pound per week, but if you have a lot to lose, it could be as much as two pounds a week, especially at the beginning. I can't—and wouldn't want to—promise you anything more than that because that's not only unrealistic but also unhealthy and unmanageable for the long term.

Let's make a pact: If you can live with gradual weight loss, I can deliver a way of eating that's satisfying and energizing. And, even better, it's one that you can maintain over the long term. Add exercise to the mix, and your chances of losing and maintaining skyrocket even further. Plus, as you'll read in the next few chapters, you'll get way more than a leaner body. This pescetarian plan also helps prevent and treat heart disease, reduces cancer risk, keeps your brain sharper, lifts your mood, and helps keep you young.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Hamrick:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or read a book called The Pescetarian Plan: The

Vegetarian + Seafood Way to Lose Weight and Love Your Food? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have various other opinion?

Joyce Murphy:

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