



Along the Trail

► by **Dan Green**, “*Along the Angus Trail*” author

Backsliders

“*Along America’s Angus Trails*” is giddy at the news that 84% of the nation’s vegetarians eventually backslide and go back to eating meat.

Surprising admissions

That’s right, the Humane Research Council’s (HRC’s) newest study says that after less than a year, a large majority of new vegetarians and vegans go back to eating meat. Only one in five of new vegetarian converts sticks with the diet, it says.

The HRC is a vegetarian, pro-animal rights outfit, so no one can say that the meat industry or other special interests bought and paid for the study. Members and sympathizers were grossly disappointed in the survey results, but to keep from driving even more folks off the Vegan Reservation, took a very generous, understanding view of the revolt in their own ranks — probably out of necessity.

They’ve even coined a term for such backsliders: omnivores.

The disappointment inside the HRC is palpable. It says “the study offered some potentially disappointing but illuminating conclusions.”

Interestingly, though, former vegans told the HRC they disliked their diet “for making them stick out in a crowd,” they were unable

to interact with other like-minded dieters, and they didn’t see the vegan diet as part of their identity — and not so much the food they were limited to.

The HRC has even acknowledged that it’s not so bad going back to eating meat. It says “the truth is that eating meat is the most convenient source of protein and iron. If lean, grass-fed cuts are eaten in moderation, they can be — [gasp!] — good for you. Oh, and for animal lovers, these cuts stem from a much more humane process,” whatever that means.

Vegan ... until 6 p.m.

An example of the HRC’s problem is Mark Bittman, author of *How to Cook Everything* and food writer for the *New York Times*. He professes to be a vegan, but treats himself to meat after 6 p.m. and limits meaty main dishes to holidays and special occasions.

Bittman says, “To me, this little package sets the tone for a lifetime of more reasonable flexitarianism — a diet that skews radically away from the Standard American Diet, while preserving moderate amounts of something

that most Americans still love about it: meat,” he recently told *Prevention* magazine.

Bittman reluctantly admits in one of his writings that “Omnivores can get all their essential amino acids from meat. Vegans and vegetarians must eat certain plant foods in combinations, such as rice and beans, to get them all. Meat also contains important vitamins and minerals, such as iron, selenium, zinc and B vitamins. It is also one of the main sources of Vitamin B₁₂, which is essential for the formation of red blood cells and maintenance of the central nervous system.”

His startling admission: A healthy diet can still include meat. There may be plenty of reasons to go vegan or vegetarian, but health isn’t necessarily one of them.

At least now I know what I am: a flexitarian. I flex every once in awhile from beef to pork to lamb and, occasionally, even chicken or fish. I’m not an omnivore. I’m a dedicated, proud carnivore. I’ll bet you are, too.

For *Angus Talk*, I’m Dan Green, *Along America’s Angus Trails*.

Editor’s Note: *Dan Green is a Denver-based historian, author, retired editor of the The Record Stockman and the voice of “Along America’s Angus Trails,” a regular feature on Angus Media’s SiriusXM satellite radio program, Angus Talk. Angus Talk airs at 10 a.m., Central time, every Saturday on Rural Radio, Channel 80.*

