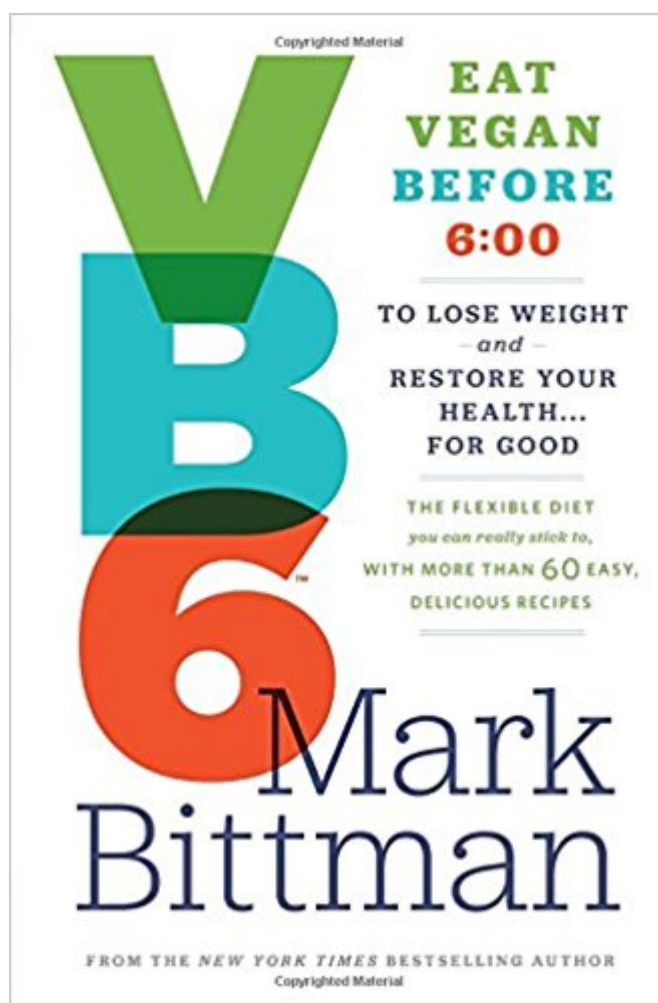


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VB6: Eat Vegan Before 6:00 To Lose Weight And Restore Your Health . . . For Good



Synopsis

If you're one of the millions who have thought of trying a vegan diet but fear it's too monotonous or unfamiliar, *VB6* will introduce a flexible way of eating that you can really live with for life. Six years ago, an overweight, pre-diabetic Mark Bittman faced a medical directive: adopt a vegan diet or go on medication. He was no fan of a lifelong regimen of pills, but as a food writer he lived and worked to eat. So neither choice was appealing. His solution was a deal with himself. He would become a "flexitarian." He adopted a diet heavy in vegetables, fruits, and grains by following a healthy vegan diet (no meat, dairy, or processed foods) all day. After 6:00 p.m. he'd eat however he wanted, though mostly in moderation. Beyond that, his plan involved no gimmicks, scales, calorie counting, or point systems. And there were no so-called forbidden foods—he ate mostly home-cooked meals that were as varied and satisfying as they were delicious. He called this plan Vegan Before 6:00 (VB6 for short), and the results were swift and impressive. Best of all, they proved to be lasting and sustainable over the long haul. Bittman lost 35 pounds and saw all of his blood numbers move in the right direction. Using extensive scientific evidence to support his plan, the acclaimed cookbook author and food policy columnist shows why his VB6 approach succeeds when so many other regimens not only fail, but can actually lead to unwanted weight gain. He then provides all the necessary tools for making the switch to a flexitarian diet: lists for stocking the pantry, strategies for eating away from home in a variety of situations, pointers for making cooking on a daily basis both convenient and enjoyable, and a complete 28-day eating plan showing VB6 in action. Finally, Bittman provides more than 60 recipes for vegan breakfasts, lunches, and snacks, as well as non-vegan dinners that embrace the spirit of a vegetable- and grain-forward diet.

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Customer Reviews

Mark Bittman is one of the country's best-known and most widely respected food writers. His *How to Cook Everything* books, with one million copies in print, are a mainstay of the modern kitchen. Bittman writes for the Opinion section of *New York Times* on food policy and cooking, and is a columnist for the *New York Times Magazine*. His "The Minimalist" cooking show, based on his popular NYT column, can be seen on the Cooking Channel. His most recent book, *VB6*, debuted at #1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list in its first week on sale.

Six years ago, the man I most trusted with my health said to me, "You should probably become a vegan." Not exactly the words I'd wanted to hear, and certainly not what I was expecting. But I'd asked Sid Baker, my doctor of thirty years, what he recommended, given that he'd just told me that at age 57, I had developed the pre-diabetic, pre-heart-disease symptoms typical of a middle-aged man who'd spent his life eating without discipline. He'd laid out the depressing facts for me: "Your blood numbers have always been fine but now they're not. You weigh 40 pounds more than you should. You're complaining of sleep apnea. You're talking about knee surgery, which is a direct result of your being overweight. Your cholesterol, which has always been normal up until now, isn't. Same with your blood sugar; it's moved into the danger zone. A more conventional doc would've simply put me on a drug like Lipitor, and maybe a low-fat diet. But Lipitor, one of the statin drugs that lowers cholesterol, is a permanent drug: Once you start taking it, you don't stop. I didn't like the idea of that. Furthermore, its effectiveness in healthy people has never been established, and it's also been implicated in memory loss and other cognitive complications; I didn't like the idea of any of that, either. And at this point, low-fat and low-carbohydrate diets have essentially been discredited: They might help you lose weight, but they're not effective for maintaining that loss in the long term, and they may even wreak havoc on your system. But becoming a vegan? A person who eats no animal products at all? Calling that a radical change to my lifestyle was more than a bit of an understatement. Yet it was clear that something had to be done. I asked Sid, "Is a compromise possible? Any other ideas?" "You're a

smart guy, he said. “Figure something out.” I thought about this for a few days, and I recognized that what he was saying made sense. There are no silver bullets, and over the years it becomes increasingly clear—much as none of us wants to hear it—that the most sensible diet for human health and longevity is one that’s lower in animal products and junk food and higher in vegetables, fruits, legumes, and minimally processed grains. I knew that, and I’m guessing you do, too. Yet the idea of becoming a full-time vegan was neither realistic nor appealing to someone accustomed to eating as widely and as well as I do. Furthermore, I had no interest in becoming an isolated vegan in a world of omnivores and—though I have vegan friends, to be sure—the world of omnivores is where I live. Full time. Yes. I like vegetables and grains; I love them. I love tofu, too, when prepared well. Even back then, I was eating beans far more frequently than I ever had. But none of this got in the way of my enjoying pork shoulder, pizza, bacon, and burgers. I was not prepared to give up that kind of food. That sounded untenable and, more importantly, unsustainable for more than a couple of weeks. So the question became: What could I do with the conflict between what was undoubtedly Sid’s very sound advice—“become a vegan—and my own established, beloved, well-socialized lifestyle? The answer, to me, was this: I’d become a part-time vegan. And for me, this part-time veganism would follow these simple rules: From the time I woke up in the morning until 6 in the evening, I’d eat a super-strict vegan diet, with no animal products at all. In fact, I decided to go even beyond that: Until 6 p.m., I’d also forgo hyper-processed food, like white bread, white rice, white pasta, of course all junk food, and alcohol. At 6 p.m., I’d become a free man, allowing myself to eat whatever I wanted, usually—but not always—in moderation. Some nights, this meant a steak dinner; some nights, it was a blow-out meal at a good restaurant; other nights, dinner was a tunafish sandwich followed by some cookies. It ran, and runs, the gamut. Whatever happened at dinner, though, the next morning I turned not to bacon and eggs or a bowl of Trix but to oatmeal or fruit or vegetables. For lunch, rice and beans or a salad—or both. Throughout the day I snacked on nuts and more fruit. I called the diet “vegan before six,” or VB6. And it worked. A month later, I weighed myself; I’d lost 15 pounds. A month after that, I went to the lab for blood work: Both my cholesterol and my blood sugar levels were down, well into the normal range (my cholesterol had gone from 240 to 180). My apnea was gone; in fact, for the first time in probably thirty years, I was sleeping through the night, not even snoring. Within four months, I’d lost more than 35 pounds and was below 180—less than I’d weighed in thirty years. And

the funny thing was, the way I ate in the daytime began to change the way I ate at night. Å Å So why be vegan just until 6 o'clock? Am I suggesting that 6 p.m. is some kind of magical metabolic witching hour? Not at all. Truthfully, the hour itself doesn't matter much, and if you habitually eat dinner very early, your plan may be VB5 or VB9, if you live in Spain. The point I was making to myself, and that I'm saying to you, is that dinnertime sets you free. Dinnertime, because that's when you're likely to want to eat the most, because that's when you're most likely to drink (and lose discipline!), because that's when you're most likely to combine eating with socializing, an important and even beneficial thing. Å Å But even though the time itself is arbitrary, it has the power to make you stop and think before acting. In fact, the rules are what VB6 has in common with "regular" diets; because anyone can say (and many people do), "Eat sensibly, don't overeat, increase your consumption of fruits and vegetables, eat less junk and high-calorie, low-nutrition foods." If it were that easy, there'd be no need for diets. But by telling you "Don't eat animal products or refined foods during the day, and feel free to eat what you like at night," VB6 gives you the structure you need to exercise limited but effective discipline in a way that accomplishes all of those things. Å Å During the day you'll be observant, and eat way more fruits and vegetables than you probably have until now, and virtually none of the foods that we know cause your metabolism to go haywire, putting a downward spiral in motion. In the evening, you'll still eat more thoughtfully, but won't necessarily avoid or limit foods you love and can't imagine eliminating from your diet. Simply put, at 6 o'clock you can put "the diet" on hold – a compromise that offers the benefits of restraint without the hardship of perpetual denial. Even reading this now, six years after I began, it still sounds pretty good to me. Å Å This is not to say that my adapting to VB6 was seamless. I wasn't exactly "becoming a vegan," but this new diet was certainly not the way I was used to getting through the day. In 2007, when I first embarked on this plan, I'd been a professional food writer (and eater!) for more than twenty-five years. My diet had become increasingly indulgent and untamed, and my opportunities for eating "well" – that is, lavishly – were near constant. I had few rules and, I thought, little need for them. Like many of us, I ate what tasted good to me. Å Å Even before this conversation with Sid, my thinking about food and eating had begun to change enough so that his suggestion that I become vegan wasn't completely out of left field. I knew, for example, that we Americans eat too much junk food and too many animal products. I knew that food was being produced in an increasingly mechanized and unprincipled

manner, without taking into account the welfare of consumers—that’s us—or the environment or animals or the people who grew or processed it. And I knew that our health as a country was going down the tubes, and that the Standard American Diet (SAD for short, and it is just that) was at least in part responsible. The combination of thinking that way and my new way of eating led to profound changes in my life; it changed not only my diet but my work. I didn’t want to become a preacher or even a teacher, but the more I thought about our diet, the more I practiced VB6, the more I recognized that these changes were essential not only for our health but for that of the planet and many of the things living on it. I began to write not only about cooking but about eating, about food. I began speaking publicly about the relationships among eating, health, and the environment, and I began changing my work at the New York Times: After nearly twenty years of writing about recipes, cooking, and the delights of food, mostly for the Dining section, I branched out to Week In Review and other sections. This led, eventually, to my becoming a Times Opinion writer, with my main subject being food: how, what, and why we eat, and the forces that affect those things. There’s no lack of subject matter, that’s for sure: Food touches everything. You can’t discuss it without considering the environment, health, the role of animals other than humans in this world, the economy, politics, trade, globalization, or most other important issues. This includes such unlikely and seemingly unrelated matters as global warming: Industrialized livestock production, for example, appears to be accountable for a fifth or more of the greenhouse gases that are causing climate change. But chances are you didn’t buy this book to save the planet, or to improve animal welfare, or even to think about those things. You probably bought this book because you wanted to improve your own health or, even more specifically, because you wanted to lose weight. If that’s the case, you’ve come to the right place, because VB6 can help you do both of those things. My own weight has stabilized and my health has improved over the course of the last six years, and VB6 can do the same for you and help you to do it, not with some two-week snake-oil miracle cure—though you’ll probably see changes for the better in the first two weeks you’re on this diet, if you take it seriously—but with an easy-to-make change that you’ll want to stick to for the rest of your life. And best of all, you will be able to do just that while eating as well as (or better than) you ever have before, and without denying yourself any food you really love.

I’ve been following this type of lifestyle since last year and I’ve lost nearly 100 pounds so far. I didn’t have to wait on this book because Bittman has openly shared his VB6 lifestyle for a few years, and

I've read every article and blog post with interest. I couldn't wait to get hold of his new book and I ordered the Kindle version at midnight when it was released. VB6 is informative and inspiring. It provides the basis for a very liveable lifestyle that has the potential to turn your life around, just as it did mine. The book includes a 28 day menu plan to get you started, complete with a variety of delicious recipes. Weekly wildcards let you bend away from plants if you are in a pinch or social situation that requires it. The recipes range from simple to complex, but none require special skills or hard to find ingredients. The recipes include more nutrition info than most other healthy cookbook provides. They include calories, cholesterol, fat, sat fats, protein, carbs, sodium, fiber, trans fats, and sugar. I've lived a plant strong lifestyle, but not 100% plants, for the last decade. I still ate cheese and other dairy products. I ate seafood a few times a year. I also ate a lot of junk. Processed foods, too many grains, and way too much sugar. Definitely not enough vegetables. I battled my weight and felt terrible. I strongly dislike labels such as vegan and vegetarian. Labels give some people reason to judge others and their dietary choices, which is really just silly. They also evoke guilt and confusion when someone struggles to conform. This is NOT a book about being vegan. VB6 is not about perfection or 100% adherence to a specific plan. It's about making better choices that we can live with. If you've read Food Matters, another book by Bittman, then you are already familiar with the concept behind this lifestyle. Both books go into detail about how consuming excessive animal products can potentially damage not only our health, but also our environment. Either book, in my opinion, should be read by everyone who is concerned about their health and/or the planet. The statistics in the book are both shocking and depressing. However, the lifestyle changes suggested also offer hope and new possibilities. Aside from doing my part for the environment, VB6 has allowed me to make dramatic changes with my health. As I mentioned earlier, I've lost a lot of weight with this lifestyle. I still have a way to go before I reach my goal, but I have no doubt that I'll make it. Why? Because this is easy. It's the easiest thing I've ever done, and I'm 51 years old. The first principle of the VB6 philosophy is to eat fruit and vegetables in abundance. I eat a LOT of vegetables and fruits every day. Bittman suggests that as we eat more fruits and veggies, we will naturally shift away from animal products and junk. I found that to be true in my case. I even snack on spinach, which is something I would have never done a few years ago. I eat large amounts of green veggies, and I always eat the rainbow. I initially spent a lot of time planning my meals and prepping veggies. This became easier with time and experience. I have also learned to like a lot of foods that I never enjoyed before. Bittman suggests trying new vegetables, and lets us know we may not like everything we try. That's ok. We'll still end up expanding our menu as our tastes change. It's been well worth the extra effort to adapt to this lifestyle. Every meal is filling and

delicious. I slip away from a pure plant diet at dinner when I add wild caught fish or other seafood to my meal. I really love seafood and missed it when I tried to conform to a more strict veg diet. If I really want a little cheese or other dairy then I'll eat it. Guilt free. I eat what I want to eat. The difference is that I no longer want the foods I used to eat. I crave healthy food! I cook from scratch and don't buy packaged, processed foods anymore. I avoid or limit added sugar. I can't even remember the last time I ate a potato chip. My favorite snack or dessert now is fresh fruit. With VB6 I could eat a little of those things with dinner if I wanted them, but I honestly no longer want them anymore. Bittman points out that weight is only one component of our health. My fasting blood glucose levels used to average between 100 and 120 before I changed my lifestyle. Now they average in the 70s! My energy level is unbelievable and I never get tired. My skin even looks better. I exercise every day and I have the energy to stick with it. I no longer have to struggle to explain my dietary lifestyle to people. No, I'm not vegan. I'm not even vegetarian. It's so much easier to just say I follow a VB6 lifestyle. Maybe that's a label I can live with.

Even with just sticking to his plan Monday-Friday, I lost 10 lbs in the first two weeks! I have been a fan of Mark Bittman for many years and love his simple, whole foods based recipes.

A disclaimer: I came to this book with a lot of skepticism. As a (vegan) fan of Mark Bittman, who has relied heavily on his columns in Runners World, his columns/recipes in the New York Times, and on his How to Cook Everything Vegetarian book, the concept of eating vegan only until 6PM, and then eating a heavy meal, did not make sense. But from Dean Ornish's foreword, endorsing the approach, I realized that if the few hours per day one is not vegan are in the morning, noon, or evening matters little. What matters is that most of one's diet is vegan, and that those evening meals aren't heavy, either. Bittman explains that his approach developed when his own doctor advised weight loss via a vegan diet as a requirement to avoid the diabetes and cardiovascular issues towards which he was heading. Even readers like myself, who don't have "numbers" pointing towards those problems, can recognize that weight loss is a benefit in relieving any orthopedic problems which are developing. There are a lot of "convenience foods" which people rely on, whether dieting or not, and Bittman goes into a lot of depth as to why the Lean Cuisines and packaged "diet" bars are really no better, for nutrition or weight loss, than their non-diet cousins. The key is making your own meals, and "cooking" doesn't have to be such a big production. Bittman explains the diet and then provides some great breakfast, lunch, and (non-vegan, but not very fattening) dinner recipes. The lunches include lots of salads and soups, and since I've never been

disappointed with a Bittman recipe, I'm looking forward to trying these. And the concept makes sense: if you have a dinner meal which you'll look forward to because, despite the diet constraints, it's in your (omnivorous) comfort zone, you're more likely to stay on board and achieve your weight loss goal. One final note: "vegan" doesn't mean "low calorie", and not all vegans are thin. Bread, oil, and lots of amazing desserts are all vegan, but should be avoided when one is trying to lose weight.

I have tried eating vegan in the past. It was just too drastic a change to make all at once. I have read some of the other vegan books. They all seem to try and push the idea based on cruelty to animals. I saw Mark Bittman when he appeared on "The Chew" show. I liked what he had to say and so I purchased the book. I have purchased Mark Bittman's books in the past including his "How To Cook Everything Vegetarian." It was a great book to pair with the VB6 book. Go vegan part time for your health.

I have only been following the advice (the majority of it) in this book for 3 weeks and have lost 6 lbs. It can be difficult to find options to eat vegan when traveling but it can be done.

Terrific book. Mark Bittman explains it all. It all makes sense. I have finally found a way of eating that I enjoy, is an adventure and I don't feel deprived of anything. My chocolate and ice cream cravings are GONE. I have lost weight and my cholesterol has dropped 26 points on months. I am now vegan 99% of the time and my meat eating husband has absolutely no complaints with our new life style.

I think this concept works in helping people still feel like they have choices. It's not all or nothing. There's a lot of flexibility and choice. It also functions as a healthy cookbook.. or actually more like a how to cook healthy, plan your cooking and get your kitchen organized. I recommend it to people even if you don't have a health problem... this way of eating will bring you lots of energy and good digestion.

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