

Are Wiccans Vegetarians?



The short answer is, some are, some aren't. Wicca recognizes that there are medical, social, moral, and personal reasons to keep a vegetarian diet. All these motives are legitimate; and *a vegetarian diet is certainly consistent with Wiccan principles.*

It is widely written that "Wicca is a religion of personal responsibility." This is usually explained in terms of acknowledging and making up for our mistakes. But "responsibility" is more than "taking the blame"! Being responsible means that we are "able to respond," and true responsibility embraces authority as well as liability. Wiccans believe that each of us is naturally responsible for our own relationships with deity and the cosmos. In practical terms, this means that *Wiccans make a good many religious decisions on their own.*

In some faiths, minute devotional details are specified, but in Wicca, many decisions are reserved for the individual practitioner (or group) to make. Wiccans notice Nature's example of diversity, and see Wicca's many forms, and individual Wiccans' personal styles, as reflections of this same sacred variety.

Some of the choices Wicca allows us to make include

- ⊗ which Altar Tools to use
- ⊗ when and where to meet and work
- ⊗ where to place the Altar
- ⊗ what Tradition(s) to follow or draw on
- ⊗ whether to fast before ritual
- ⊗ whether or not to follow an initiatory path
- ⊗ **WHETHER OR NOT TO EAT MEAT**
- ⊗ whether to work skyclad, in robes, or in street clothes

These decision range from everyday questions – what about diet, for instance? – to the metaphysical significance of the Tools we use. Every Wiccan is responsible for interpreting the Rede and the Three-fold Law, and we make our religious decisions based on our individual understandings of these and other liturgical materials.

But for incarcerated Wiccans, most choices about how to practice are made according to the facility's rules and regulations, sometimes by people who know little of Wicca's tenets and customs.

⊗ The range and choice of Altar Tools is tightly restricted – candles, wine, and athames (the sacred blade) are forbidden altogether, and the form other Tools can take is strictly delineated.

⊗ What time, how often, where, on what dates, and with whom Wiccan inmates can gather for Esbats, Sabbats, or study groups is decided for them (with varying degrees of inmate or outside influence on the details).

⊗ The number of books an inmate may have is limited. This means that learning enough about Wicca's Traditions to follow or draw upon them can be difficult.

⊗ The choice to follow an Initiatory path is effectively removed by protocols that forbid most elements of Initiations.

⊗ Skyclad gatherings are not permitted, and robed gatherings may not be allowed either; "street clothes" is most often the only option.

Thus, the few choices incarcerated Wiccans can make without risk to security are all the more sacred and significant. **Whether or not to eat meat (or dairy), and whether or for how long to fast before a rite are two choices that should be left to individual Wiccan inmates.**

Many Wiccans do eat meat; but for many, the Wiccan Rede – *an ye harm none, do as ye will* – and the Goddess' promise in Her *Charge* to ask "naught of sacrifice" sound a call for vegetarianism. **Not every Wiccan Tradition requires vegetarianism of its followers, but all Traditions support an individual's choice to be vegetarian.**



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