

PLANTS VERSUS ANIMALS IN THE DINING HALL

CHEM-643 Intermediary Metabolism Case Study in Amino Acid Metabolism Written by Harold B. White



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Even as a child, Maura Pease really didn't like the idea of eating meat, yet burgers were standard fare at her home and it seemed unlikely to change. Not until her freshman year at college did Maura feel free to adopt a vegetarian diet. She and several of her new friends took advantage of the variety of meatless meals offered at the dining hall and soon were tallying their meatless weeks. They still ate dairy products like yoghurt and cheese but mostly they ate breads, cereals, potatoes, rice, beans, salads, and pasta. As Thanksgiving Break approached, Maura became increasingly uneasy. How would she deal with her family in the presence of a golden-brown stuffed turkey?

Maura's apprehension was justified. Her mother noticed right away that Maura didn't put gravy on her mashed potatoes and had passed on the white meat without serving herself. "Aren't you hungry?" she asked. "I'm fine." Maura replied. But that didn't satisfy her mother who had spent her adult life being sure her children were well nourished. Soon things escalated so that the total dinner conversation focused on how dangerous it was to eliminate meat from one's diet and what sort of odd-ball ideas Maura was getting now that she was away at college. It seemed as though she had somehow violated a sacred family value and that her diet somehow threatened everybody. She felt it was a personal choice that in no way represented a rejection of her family. In her frustration she said, "Well, if you really want to know, I'm thinking of going vegan."

After she returned to campus and had some time to reflect on the recent events, Maura reluctantly had to admit that she really didn't know what her Mom meant when she asked, "Don't you know that plant proteins are *incomplete* and *unbalanced* and sooner or later you will develop *deficiency symptoms*?" She realized that her rebuttals were weak and based on hearsay, not on things she really understood. In fact, she really didn't have any idea whether there was reason for concern. She also suspected that her Mom wasn't any better informed and hadn't questioned her own beliefs either. Maura promised herself to be prepared with convincing information so that she could agree or disagree with her mother when she returned home at the end of the semester.

What kinds of information should Maura want to locate to decide whether or not her mother's concerns about vegetarian diets had any basis?

Make a list of at least ten questions that Maura might want to answer.