

### THE ETHICIST

**question from Jayn Line, Cincinnati,**

As a business owner, I sometimes take customers out to lunch. But as an ethical vegan, I don't want to subsidize the cruel meat and dairy industries. People seem to take my veganism as an affront to their lifestyle. Is there a way that I can, without losing customers, let them know I just can't underwrite killing animals?



**answer by Kwame Anthony Appiah**

First, let's consider a practical matter. The person picking up the tab ordinarily gets to choose the place to eat. If there are vegan restaurants in your area, you can take your customers there. 4-1

Second, let's consider the consequences of your lunch order. Your practice of eschewing animal products might have some impact on the number of animals that suffer, at least over the course of a lifetime, by reducing demand for those products. On the other hand, not paying for others to consume meat on a few occasions probably doesn't have any such effect. 4-2

Third, though, let's consider the nature of your commitments. You wonder that people take your veganism as "an affront to their lifestyle." Shouldn't they? Your guests would surely be right that you think they're in the wrong: It's what ethical veganism entails. Why aren't you interested in defending your veganism? No doubt you'll want to take into account the possibility that you'll lose business. But ethical veganism isn't a personal preference, and it isn't confined to a concern for your personal virtue; it aims to reduce harm to animals, even to challenge the idea that animals be treated as property. 4-3

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