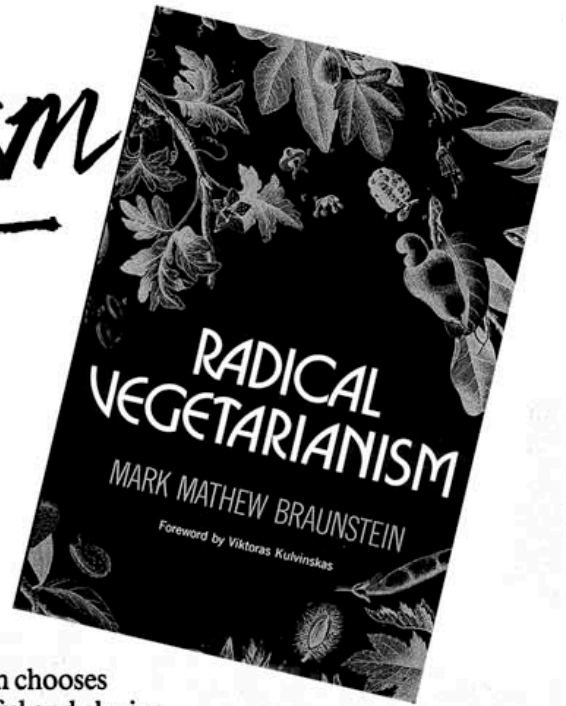


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# Radical Vegetarianism

## A Dialectic of Diet and Ethic

BY MARK MATHEW BRAUNSTEIN  
FORWARD BY VIKTORAS KULVINSKAS  
(PANJANDRUM BOOKS, LOS ANGELES, CA; 141  
PAGES, \$6.95.)



This month, we're doing something different with our In Print section—devoting the entire space to *Radical Vegetarianism* by Mark Braunstein.

*Radical Vegetarianism* is an unusual book in both style and perspective. It does not offer any of the usual nutritional information or exercise tips found in most books dealing with diet and lifestyle, except in the sense that it is food for thought and an exercise in semantics and philosophy.

Braunstein would probably appreciate that description because that is the kind of word play he frequently uses throughout the book. Who else would title a chapter, "Ashes to Ashes, Life to Life"?

But more to the point, Braunstein is a philosopher. He's also a great writer, with a good sense of humor.

Vegetarianism differs from other popular diets of the day because of its heritage. The diet has historical roots and has, at times, been something of a social and religious force. The fact that vegetarianism influenced George Bernard Shaw, Gandhi, Tolstoy and other such giants, sets it apart, in my mind, from the dietary teachings of Pritikin, Dr. Atkins and all the rest of today's dietary gurus. More than a mere diet, vegetarianism is really a mind set—a philosophy.

Just as all social movements have their factions or schools, there is a distinct vegetarian movement which you might call the "East Coast Vegetarian Movement" since most of its adherents live in the East between Washington D.C. and Boston. This group of largely ethical, animal rights-oriented vegetarians numbers less than a thousand, but it's a very vocal and influential group. Mark Braunstein would qualify as a member, indeed a leader, of this group (although he hates to be categorized).

Put another way, I'd say that Mark, whom I've known for years, is an intellectual, an artist and a New Yorker with strong convictions. He can be intense, but

more often chooses to be playful and elusive.

The book is very much like the author. It is not the kind of book you'll find at your health food store (in fact, a national distributor of health food books told Mark there was "no market" for books on vegetarian ethics and dialectics), but it *is* the kind of book you might find in an "alternative" type of book store.

Braunstein has succeeded in raising the ire of many prominent people in the Jewish vegetarian community with his outrageous assertion in the book that the Holocaust was somehow related to the Jewish people's consumption of meat. We find this part of the book irresponsible and ludicrous, but we hope that this doesn't totally discredit the book in some people's eyes. It's unfortunate that Braunstein has probably succeeded in offending his most likely readers (Israel has more vegetarians per capita than any country aside from India) because his ideas, overall, are far above such an irresponsible level.

Even with these readers, the book would probably never have achieved the popularity of *The Complete Book of Running*, but it's the kind of book that will endure, perhaps well beyond the life of the author (he's in his early 30s).

Books such as this are rare in comparison to the large number of vegetarian cookbooks and books on diet and health. That's why we've devoted so much space and have asked two writers who have long been familiar with the material published on vegetarianism to give their impressions of *Radical Vegetarianism*. The reviewers—V.T.'s West Coast Editor Scott Smith and Ted Zagar ("The Vegetarian Astrologer")—are regular contributors to this magazine. For a sample of Mark Braunstein's style and opinions, you might want to look up his essay "On Being Radically Vegetarian" in Issue 36 of *Vegetarian Times*, March 1980. —Paul Barrett Obis

