

Thursday Veggie Day in Ghent – detailed information

Period

April 2011

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1. What is Thursday Veggie Day?

Thursday Veggie Day is a campaign of EVA (Ethical Vegetarian Alternative, Belgium's biggest vegetarian organisation), wanting to stimulate the large public to eat a least one day a week no meat nor fish and this to the benefit of our health and the health of the planet. Npo EVA won with the Thursday Veggie Day campaign the Big Prize for Future Generations 2009 as well as the Food & Health Award for the Best Project 2008.

2. Impact of Thursday Veggie Day

Thursday Veggie Day is good for the environment

The impact of cattle breeding and meat consumption on the environment is pretty large. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) stated in 2006 that cattle breeding ranks in the top 3 of the causes of each important environmental problem such as the warming up of the earth, deforestation, over-fertilisation, water problems and the lost of biodiversity. Throughout the world, cattle breeding is responsible for 18% of the emission of greenhouse gasses. That is more than the entire transport sector. Furthermore, 70% of the world-wide farmland is used to pasture cattle or to cultivate fodder plants. World-wide, about 3 millions of hectares of forest are chopped for the benefit of meat consumption. The production of meat also requires an enormous amount of water which has become relatively scarce.

Eating less meat is the biggest step you can take if you want to decrease the ecological footprint of your food.

If all 243.000 inhabitants of Ghent participate in Thursday Veggie Day, they reach the same effect as when 19.000 cars are taken off the road.

Thursday Veggie Day is good for your health

A vegetarian meal is not only a sustainable but also a healthy meal. In Flanders, we generally eat too much meat and too few vegetables. This has a very bad influence on our health. Eating a large amount of meat raises our cholesterol level and consequently the risk on heart and vascular diseases, some cancers, diabetes and overweight. If you participate in Thursday Veggie Day, you choose for less meat and more vegetables and fruit. If you do so, you will automatically eat more fibres, vitamins and minerals.

Thursday Veggie Day is good for your fellow man

World-wide cattle breeding uses 40 % of all the corn in the world but brings in less food than the amount of corn which is consumed by the animals. For 1 kg of beef seven to ten kg of corn is required. As a result of which less corn is available for human consumption at a much higher price. Eating more vegetarian meals means saving water too. The production of one kg of beef requires 15 000 litres of water.

Thursday Veggie Day is good for the animals

An average Belgian citizen eats during his life-time some 1800 animals: 891 chickens, 42 pigs, 5 cows, 789 fishes, 7 sheep, 43 turkeys and 24 rabbits and other game. Plus one third of a horse. Those animals spent almost their entire short life in intensive cattle breeding. If you would eat vegetarian during one day a week, you would save the life of 250 animals during your own life.

Thursday Veggie Day is good for your taste buds

If you would eat vegetarian one day a week, you would certainly discover new, delicious and colourful ingredients from all corners of the world. Experimenting at home in your own kitchen or tasting new dishes elsewhere: you will certainly discover a brand-new world.

3. Decision of the City of Ghent

April 16th 2009, the Board of Mayor and Deputy-Mayors decided to support the Thursday Veggie Day campaign, launched by npo EVA on the level of the City of Ghent. The entire municipality backed up the project.

Tom Balthazar, Deputy-Mayor for the Environment and Social Affairs officially declared on May 13th 2009, during a public event at the Groentenmarkt, that Thursday would from then on be 'Veggie Day' in Ghent.

Why did Ghent choose to support the Thursday Veggie Day campaign?

- The campaign fits in with the climate and health policies of the City of Ghent
- The campaign helps to reach the climate objectives
- It is a positive and strong campaign developed by an organisation which is known for its professional approach and its experience in the field of vegetarian

food and the impact of it on the environment and the health.

Thursday Veggie Day fits in with the policy of the City of Ghent:

- The Health Service supports Thursday Veggie Day because a lower meat consumption, coupled to a larger vegetable consumption helps to create a more healthy style of living for all Ghent citizens. Research regarding the actual consumption of the Flemish citizen reveals that too much meat is consumed in comparison with the norm, see the Flemish food triangle.
- The Environmental Service supports this initiative because the decrease of the meat consumption is the most efficient measure to reduce the ecological footprint of food. After all, the impact of cattle breeding on the environment is tremendously big. Because the emission of greenhouse gasses (CO₂, methane and nitrous oxide), cattle breeding is one of the most important causes of the climate change. The decrease of the meat consumption will certainly help Ghent on its way to a climate-neutral city, an ambitious target to be reached by 2050.

4. Reactions on the initiative

After the initial start in May 2009, the City of Ghent became world-famous because of the initiative, and even now, new interview applications are arriving. The campaign as well as the City of Ghent were a hot item in the media from Canada to Japan and from Australia to Sweden.

In Belgium, the cities of Hasselt, Mechelen, Eupen and Brussels followed the example. On international level, numerous cities and organisations considered how they could copy the initiative. Sao Paulo (Brazil), Bremen (Germany), Washington, San-Francisco (USA) and Cape-Town (South-Africa) all started similar campaigns. Ghent was playing a real pioneering role!

On local level, we mainly received positive reactions on the campaign. The awareness that eating too much meat damages our health and our planet has increased considerably during the last years.

5. Co-operation with npo EVA

For the announcement and implementation of Thursday Veggie Day on Ghent level, the city closely co-operates with npo EVA, Ethical Vegetarian Alternative, Belgium's biggest vegetarian organisation, is a unique information centre for vegetarian food and the impact of it on the environment, our health and the health of the animals. A service assignment has been given to npo EVA.

6. Municipal services which are involved

Leaders: The Environmental Service and the Health Service

Co-operation with:

- Local Employment Office (personnel restaurant) for domain 2

- Economy Department for domain 3
- Department for Education and Training for domain 4
- Tourist Information Service and Municipal Promotion for domain 5

7. Approach of the City of Ghent

The Environmental Service and the Health Service work on several domains with respect to Thursday Veggie Day:

- The **Ghent citizens** are encouraged to skip at least one day a week meat or fish on the menu for environmental and health aspects.
see 8. Thursday Veggie Day for the citizens
- The **own municipal services** are informed and stimulated to participate in the initiative, a.o. through the distribution of the Veggie plan to all the personnel members of the City of Ghent, lunch discussions about Thursday Veggie Day and the extension of the vegetarian offer in the personnel restaurant.
see 9. Thursday Veggie Day for the municipal personnel
- **horeca-businesses** and companies. Alle horeca received via the Economy Service a package containing a Veggie for chefs guide in which they can find lots of information with respect to fully fledged vegetarian meals. Besides, the businesses are encouraged to participate in Thursday Veggie Day and to put (particularly on Thursday) veggie on the menu.
see 10. Thursday Veggie Day for the horeca
- On October 1st, Thursday Veggie Day was introduced in the **municipal schools and day-care-centres in Ghent**. From then on, all children between 18 months and 12 years are served a warm vegetarian lunch on Thursday. Parents and teachers have been largely informed.
see 11. Thursday Veggie Day in schools and day-care-centres
- In the framework of **municipal promotion and tourism**, Thursday Veggie Day became one of the Unique Selling Points of the City of Ghent.
see 12. Thursday Veggie Day as a means of municipal promotion

Furthermore, we are constantly looking to develop the project in the City of Ghent. To this effect, we encourage partners to take part in Thursday Veggie Day and to arrange within their own setting for a standard vegetarian meal on Thursday and, optionally, for a tasteful vegetarian alternative on the other days of the week. In the meantime, contacts have been made with the following partners:

- the companies, via the Economy Department
- the hospitals, via the Health Service
- the University and the schools of higher education in the framework of the counselling project for making their catering more sustainable
- hotels and B&Bs, via Tourist Information Service

8. Thursday Veggie

No Thursday Veggie Day without motivated citizens who take part in the campaign!

Day for citizens

To reach the 243.000 Ghent citizens and to motivate them to participate is the biggest challenge!

The most important pillars are a well-developed communication campaign and an annual event for the public. Via the municipal personnel, the horeca and the schools it is possible to reach a large public.

Communication via:

- the **municipal magazine** (monthly magazine for all Ghent citizens)
- the **website** of the City of Ghent www.gent.be will be directly linked to www.gent.be/donderdagveggiedag.
- **Information pillars** that are used to hang up posters for Thursday Veggie Day.

Actions in Ghent:

- **A veggie hap-pening for the citizens**
An annual amusing and festive event during which Thursday Veggie Day is introduced to the large public on the first occasion and afterwards,
- **Engagement declaration**
The citizens are encouraged and motivated to sign an engagement declaration. This allows us to keep up how many people are effectively participating and calculates the quantity of CO₂ emission which is saved in Ghent. The engagement declaration can be found on the website www.gent.be/donderdagveggiedag

9. Thursday Veggie Day for the municipal personnel

No Thursday Veggie Day in your city without the exemplary role of the most important propagators, the municipal personnel!

Therefore, it is extremely important that Thursday Veggie Day is integrated in the catering offer for the personnel and that the personnel is encouraged to participate in the project.

Vegetarian offer:

- **Personnel restaurants (AC Zuid & Ac Portus)**
Every day, a vegetarian dish is put on the menu in the personnel restaurant. And on Thursday, the dish of the day is always vegetarian.
- **Other restaurants for the municipal personnel**
Members of the personnel of the City of Ghent can also lunch in 'De Centrale' and in the HotelSchool Ghent. They participate in Thursday Veggie Day; on Thursday, these are some of the places to be to enjoy a delicious vegetarian meal.
- **Veggie catering**
Besides the Environmental Service and the Health Service, many other municipal services assure a vegetarian offer during their events with catering services (e.g. lunch discussions, lunch meetings, ...).

Communication via:

- **Intranet**

Here colleagues can find a file containing a list with veggie caterers, recipes, intrinsic information, a presentation and promotional material.

- **Magazine Moment**
In June 2009, a large article about Thursday Veggie Day in the personnel restaurant of the City of Ghent appeared in the magazine 'Moment'.
- **Circular letter**
May 2009, a circular letter was issued, giving elaborate explanations about Thursday Veggie Day and mentioning the arguments why the City of Ghent and more particularly the Environmental Service and the Health Service support this campaign.
- **Communication in the personnel restaurants**
In the personnel restaurants it is obvious; there are posters, table stands; the restaurants clearly participates in Thursday Veggie Day.
- **Reception training** for new personnel members
In the two-day Reception Training for new employees, a separate part about Internal Environmental Care has been included, providing all necessary information about the Thursday Veggie Day campaign.

Actions within the City of Ghent:

- The distribution of a **veggie-street map** to the personnel
The veggie-street map has been created by npo EVA. It includes all vegetarian restaurants or restaurants with a large vegetarian offer. Furthermore, all bio-shops, bio-package collection shops or other related businesses are indicated on the map. The City of Ghent has printed 5.000 street maps which can be distributed among the personnel and on activities with respect to vegetarianism.
- **Lunch meetings** (veggie lunch with presentation between 12 a.m. and 1.30 p.m.)
- **vegetarian lunch** offered by the Board of Mayor and Deputy-Mayors
At the start of Thursday Veggie Day in Ghent, a vegetarian gastronomic lunch was offered to the entire Board of Mayor and Deputy-Mayors; coupled to a press conference.

10. Thursday Veggie Day for the horeca

Without horeca there would be no Thursday Veggie Day! If we wish to motivate the Ghent inhabitants to eat vegetarian on Thursday, we have to make sure there is a specially adapted offer of vegetarian dishes in the restaurants where they want to eat on Thursday.

Furthermore, Thursday Veggie Day has become a real tourist product, owing to the world-wide attention which has been paid to the campaign. Tourists visit hotels, bed & breakfasts and restaurants with particular expectations on Thursday.

In Ghent there are already a lot of veggie restaurants and restaurants which offer a delicious veggie dish, but still we want every restaurant to participate on Thursday in Thursday Veggie Day. We even ask them to make this clear to all the passengers and tourists. To this effect, they have to hang out the Thursday Veggie Day-door banner, they have to serve a vegetarian dish of the day on Thursday, the vegetarian dishes on the menu have to be extra attractive. The restaurant keepers can even spoil people

who eat vegetarian on Thursday by means of a free cup of coffee or an extra discount.

The City of Ghent and the npo EVA have started a communication towards the horeca businesses in order to motivate them to take part in the campaign:

- a **starters parcel** for the horeca
 - A starters package has been made, which was sent to all horeca businesses, asking them to participate.
 - Via the police department, the starters package will be distributed to all newly-starting horeca businesses.
- **Communication channels** of the horeca
an article with respect to Thursday Veggie Day appeared in horeca-zine and the horeca brochure.
- contest “**Best veggie-sandwich of Ghent**”
 - In March 2010, all sandwich bars in Ghent received a letter, asking them to have their best vegetarian sandwich tasted by a jury.
 - All businesses which offer a tasty vegetarian sandwich will receive free communication material to display their offer to the public.
 - The business with the best veggie-sandwich in Ghent will receive extra attention during 1 year.

The horeca businesses can count on the support offered by the City of Ghent and the npo EVA via:

- **communication material**
Thursday Veggie Day-door banners, posters and stickers
 - the Thursday Veggie Day-poster
- **free consultancy**
 - In the free Veggie for Chefs guide of npo EVA, the vegetarian information centre, you can find all necessary information, tips and recipes with respect to vegetarian dishes. You can retrieve the same information at <http://www.veggievoorchefs.be/index.php>.
 - Npo EVA regularly organises workshops vegetarian cooking for chefs. These workshops are also announced on above-mentioned website.
 - Above all this, the City of Ghent and npo EVA offer free consulting sessions for professional cooks. Together with an expert in vegetarian food you can examine in which way you can use more vegetarian elements in your kitchen and restaurant.

The participating businesses are highlighted in different ways:

- On the **website**
 - <http://www.gent.be/donderdagveggiedag>: there, you can find a list with all participating businesses as well as their respective offer on Thursday.
 - <http://www.gentverwent.be>: on the site, the businesses which are associated with ‘Gent Verwent’ are directly linked to the list of the Thursday Veggie Day restaurants.
 - http://www.donderdagveggiedag.be/veggiestad_gent: also a site where you can find the list of all participating businesses and their respective offer on Thursday.
- In the **press**

11. Thursday Veggie Day in schools and day-care centres

Participating in Thursday Veggie Day will certainly be beneficial for the image of your horeca-business. The tourist Service regularly send journalists and visitors to participating restaurants.

- In the **veggie plan**
The name of your business can always be added to the list during the next printing of the Ghent Veggie Plan.
- In the **communication of npo EVA**
 - in the Thursday Veggie Day-newsletter of npo EVA
 - in the magazine of npo EVA

No better channel for the promotion of Thursday Veggie Day towards the parents, the children and the school going youth than the Ghent schools!
Besides a fixed veggie meal on Thursday it is important to communicate on a regular basis about the campaign and the integrate an educational section in the teaching package.

Change in the offer:

- **municipal schools and day-care-centres**
 - Since October 1st 2009 children as from the age of 18 months receive a vegetarian lunch on Thursday in the municipal schools and in day-care-centres. Parents can always ask for an alternative menu with meat.
 - The caterer receives support from consultants who provide recipes and feedback with respect to the quality, the attractiveness and the taste of vegetarian meals.
 - Parents of children who do not eat a warm meal at school are informed about vegetarian sandwich filling. On Thursday, they are asked to skip sandwich filling which is based on meat.
- **Non-municipal schools**
 - non-municipal schools are stimulated to take part in Thursday Veggie Day. LOGO gezond+ and the CLB's (centres for student counselling) are in important partner in this project.

Communication:

- **Communication and persuasion**
 - A change in the offer is never self-reliant. Communication towards the parents, the educational staff and the caring personnel is necessary to stimulate all the parties involved to participate in the project. Especially for Thursday Veggie Day in education, the image of the campaign has been adapted, featuring Little Red Riding Hood who is glad it is Thursday Veggie Day, the big bad wolf who will eat fruit and vegetables instead of little girls...
- **Towards the parents**
 - All parents received a letter from the Deputy-Mayor explaining Thursday Veggie Day and the changes. If they had any questions, they could always ask them to the contact person. Interested parents could ask for a Thursday Veggie Day Guide and/or a Lunchbox guide.

- Parents were also invited to a tasting-session, where they could taste samples of some vegetarian dishes their children get at school
- Towards the **pupils**
 - At the start of Thursday Veggie Day all students/pupils received a refrigerator magnet. The children liked the illustration of Little Red Riding Hood and the parents were reminded about Thursday.
 - The City of Ghent asked npo EVA to elaborate an educational package around Thursday Veggie Day for the pupils of primary education. This package will be distributed to all municipal schools of primary education.
- Towards the **teaching and caring personnel**
 - All Directors of the municipal schools of primary education received a short explanation about Thursday Veggie Day, as well as some background information regarding the campaign.
 - All teachers received an information document with background information and ideas as well as a Veggie Plan from Ghent.
- an **evaluation** of Thursday Veggie Day at school
 - In co-operation with LOGO gezond+ and the students of the training for nourishment and dietetics Thursday Veggie Day was evaluated in the schools. Another student undertook a nutritional investigation of the vegetarian meals.

12. Thursday Veggie Day as a means of municipal promotion

Ghent became a hot news item when Thursday Veggie Day was launched. The progressive attitude and the attention which was paid to a sustainable and ecological way of living which are characteristic of Ghent were remarkable. These features are further developed by the Service for City Promotion and the Tourist Service; Thursday Veggie Day is one of the Unique Selling Points of the City of Ghent. Besides, tourists who come to Ghent should be offered the possibility to participate in Thursday Veggie Day.

Communication:

- During the presentation of the City of Ghent, Thursday Veggie Day is mentioned as one of the typical features of the city.

Actions in Ghent:

- The **veggie-street map** of Ghent was translated in English
- Besides restaurants also the **hotels** will be actively stimulated to participate in Thursday Veggie Day
- A real **product line** can be developed for Thursday Veggie Day

13. Communication material

Survey of the communication material of the City of Ghent:

- Campaign image "Ghent chooses for Thursday Veggie Day"
- Veggie plan Ghent
- General poster "Ghent chooses for Thursday Veggie Day"

- poster “*Veggie hap-pening 2009*”
- poster little red riding hood (education)
- banner horeca businesses
- banner “wij doen mee” (we participate) (developed for schools and others)
- refrigerator magnets little red riding hood (education)
- mini-expo with 4 information banners
- recipes
- educational parcels for schools
- information document for teachers
- letter for the horeca businesses
- letter for the parents

Supporting communication material npo EVA:

- Veggie plan Ghent
- Thursday Veggie Day guide
- Veggie lunch box guide
- Veggie for Chefs guide
- Vegetarian food triangle poster

14. Websites

www.gent.be/donderdagveggiedag
www.donderdagveggiedag.be
www.donderdagveggiedag.be/gent
www.gentsklimaatverbond.be

15. Contact data of the City of Ghent

Tom Balthazar, Deputy-Mayor for the Environment and Social Affairs, via Alain Tack, member of the cabinet – 09 268 50 33 – alain.tack@gent.be
 Pascal Goethals – Environmental Service – 09 268 23 38 – maaike.breugelmans@gent.be
 Leen Van Zele – Health Service – 09 235 22 54 – leen.vanzele@gent.be

17. Contact data of the npo EVA

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