



VEGAN PARTNERS: A SPECIALIST COMMODITY?

Charlie McKenzie

*Finding your perfect match can be hard enough but if you're looking for someone who shares your ethics and lifestyle, it can be all but impossible. **Charlie McKenzie** thinks she's discovered the secret to finding a winner in the dating game.*

About four years ago I was unfortunate, or perhaps fortunate, enough to split with a long-term partner. After an acceptable period of grieving, a close friend suggested I try internet dating. My first reaction was to shy away from the thought: I wasn't *that* desperate, and anyway I'd all but given up on happy endings.

But the idea stayed with me and later, as I sat alone on my two-seater settee with my meal for one, the what-ifs began to trouble me. Torment turned to curiosity and, finally, I found myself glued to my PC happily window-shopping.

Sadly, many people never get past the stigma attached to the use of internet dating sites. Despite their growing popularity, there's still the idea that there must be something wrong if you need to use them.

Let's think about this logically. As a vegan I've taken an ethical decision that has led to many lifestyle choices. When I choose a product, I'm choosing with a specific set of criteria in mind. We don't question the extra time we spend making everyday choices but when we're presented with one of the biggest decisions we will ever make, what do we do? We leave it to chance! Am I the only one to find this a little odd? Changes in society are making finding a suitable partner increasingly difficult but for those of us with additional ethical considerations, it can be even harder.

Humour me for a moment, and let us view the perfect partner as a rare commodity, rather like the elusive melting vegan marshmallow or a versatile whole egg replacer. When searching for such items we could settle for what we find in our local area. We might not find exactly what we want, we might not find anything suitable but we settle nonetheless. This is one option. Alternatively, we could decide to proactively search for what we want to ensure a much better chance of finding it. Sounds reasonable? Well, cue the dating site. At the click of a button you'll be presented with scores of dishy dates and potential partners. You can take things at your own pace, just making friends or looking for a life-partner. The sites are also tailored to help you find someone you're genuinely compatible with through in-depth profiles, which give you a real sense of a person before you make contact.

So why not take the plunge and log on? You have nothing to lose and a lifetime of happiness to find. And I should know – four years on from my first click on an online dating site and I'm about to spend a romantic weekend away with a partner who is very special to me. Maybe I'll get that happy ending after all.

TOP TIPS TO HELP YOU FIND LOVE ONLINE

DON'T EXPECT INSTANT MIRACLES

You're not going to meet your perfect partner overnight. There's likely to be some heartache along the way but learn from it and don't give up!

BE UPFRONT

Be as honest as you can and let someone choose you for you. Would you want to be with anyone you couldn't be yourself around?

DON'T TAKE THINGS PERSONALLY

Initial contacts are usually made via email and the person receiving the email can choose whether or not to reply. People don't reply for many reasons; remember they don't know you so don't take it personally.

BE COURTEOUS

If someone emails you and, for whatever reason, you don't want to take it further, send a courteous decline to stop them waiting for your reply and to minimise any disappointment.

THE INTERNET HAS ITS LIMITS

See the dating sites as an introduction service. You will never know the whole person until you meet them face to face.

MEET AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

The more we don't know about a person the more we fill in with our own fantasies, to which real people can rarely measure up. Give yourselves a chance to get to know each other properly by meeting as soon as you feel ready.

BE SAFE

Meet in a public place and tell someone where you're going and who you're going with. Some people let embarrassment get in the way of their safety – it's just not worth the risk.

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF

First dates are scary. Take the pressure off by going somewhere that takes the focus away from you and your date. It's tempting to go somewhere quiet to talk but do this later, once you're more at ease with each other and the situation.

ENJOY YOURSELF!

Finding 'the one' is important to many people but don't let it become an obsession. Enjoy your time on dates. If you don't find the perfect partner you might find the perfect friend.



THE BEST SITES FOR MEETING FELLOW VEGANS

VMM

www.veggiematchmakers.com

This UK-based site has over 25 years' experience in helping people find happiness. VMM has brought thousands of like-minded people together and over the years members have reported back an array of heart-warming news, from finding new friendships to starting new families. VMM's professional site reflects their experience and many testimonials confirm their success. The website also has other useful features including an events diary, products page and notice board.

VEGGIE CONNECTIONS

www.VeggieConnection.com

One of my favourites, this site is well thought out with lots of tick box options to aid searching and has thousands of members.

VEGGIE DATE

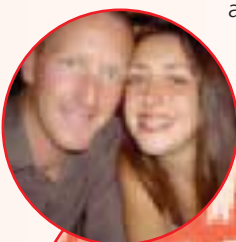
www.veggiedate.org

Another great and very popular site, which now has over 16,000 members from across the globe as well as great tick box options.

VEGGIE ROMANCE

www.veggieromance.com

Another of my favourites, this site is really easy to use. With approximately 2,000 members at present, Veggie Romance doesn't just concentrate on dating, but also has a popular forum.



MADDI & FIRE

We are both vegans who have had relationships with meat-eaters in the past and had both given up hope of ever meeting a partner who shared the same views and lifestyle.

We live in different cities 65 miles apart and have very different jobs and interests, so I cannot imagine how we would have ever met if not through VeggieConnection.com!
www.worldveganday.org



ROB & CLARE

'We met via the VMM introduction agency in 2003 and were married in June 2005.'

Clare: 'I became vegan because having been vegetarian for 10 years it was a natural progression into giving up all animal based foods and has become a total way of life.'

Rob: 'I became vegan because I do not believe that sentient animals should be killed or used to provide food and goods for human beings.'

www.worldveganday.org



Veggie Romance is giving readers of *The Vegan* a month's free premium membership. If you are new to the site, create a profile and then email Veggie Romance with your Vegan Society membership number and new user name, adding 'Vegan Society' to the subject line. Existing Veggie Romance members may also take advantage of this offer to upgrade their membership.

THE BEST OF THE REST

www.vegansingles.co.uk

www.veggielove.com

www.veganpassions.com

www.VeggieSingles4You.com

CONTACT CENTRE

There's no need to miss out if you're not online.

The Contact Centre is a traditional dating service with a difference. With no need to fill in any forms, it offers a much more personal service. After paying an initial one-off fee you can join as either a UK only or international member. You will then be sent many people's adverts to choose from.

Membership prices start at £14.95 and those who join within two weeks of receiving their initial correspondence from the Contact Centre will be entitled to a £5 discount.

Contact by writing to: BCM Cuddle, London WC1N 3XX