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Vegetarian Nutrition

a dietetic practice group of the

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Experts in Plant-Based Nutrition

Diversity

WE ARE SO EXCITED AND DELIGHTED to introduce the new Diversity and Inclusion section of the website. It is important that diversity and inclusion are practiced in every aspect of our life.

Sherene Chou, MS, RDN
Vegetarian Nutrition Diversity Liaison

Diwali – Festivals of Lights

This month celebrates the Hindu Festival of Diwali or Deepavali, which literally means 'Row of Lights' in Sanskrit. It is one of the most significant festivals in Indian culture. Diwali is celebrated not only in India, but also in southern Asia, and widely celebrated by Indians around the world by Hindus, Sikhs and Jains for a variety of reasons. Diwali is an official holiday in Fiji, Guyana, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Trinidad, Jamaica as well as India itself. Observed by more than a billion people across faiths, this five-day festival of lights brings prayer, feasts, fireworks and, for some, a new year. It celebrates new beginnings and signifies light over darkness.



Different parts of India celebrate the festival slightly differently, but there are some common themes. Instead of spring cleaning, In India the cleaning happens in preparation of Diwali. The whole house is cleaned, and traditional designs made with colored sand or rice flour called rangoli are done near the front door and around the house. At night, rows of lamps are lit around the houses. People shop for new clothes and jewelry. There are some religious rituals; the younger ones get blessings from the elders in the family and

gifts are exchanged. And of course, there is food! There is a special menu for each day of the festival, including a smorgasbord of sweets and savory items made only for this festival.

Historically, Diwali can be traced back to ancient India. It is most likely a festival of lights which began as an important harvest festival that stretches back thousands of years. Various legends and religious stories are associated with the origin of Diwali. Many of these stories are about the triumph of good over evil. In addition to the cultural significance and celebrations, Diwali also carries a deep spiritual meaning. Light symbolizes a higher power, goodness and knowledge – whereas darkness symbolizes evil, ignorance and illusion. The festival reminds us of the Divine Light that shines within us, removing the darkness of ignorance, and filling our life with peace and eternal joy.

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