



Tony's vegan guesthouse won awards for its inventive cooking

'I gave up cheese and lost a stone'

Tony Bishop-Weston, 48, lives in Croydon with his vegetarian wife Yvonne. He is the joint author of *The Complete Book of Vegan Cooking* (Lorenz, £16.99)

I grew up working in my father's butcher's shop and deli in Chiswick. When I decided to become a vegetarian at 16, you could say I was making an educated decision. But it wasn't until I was in my thirties and I moved to the Scottish Highlands that I started to get really serious about going meat-free. I opened a vegetarian guesthouse with my then wife and, although the locals loved to crack jokes about us mad bracken eaters, it was popular. Four years later we made the guesthouse completely vegan and I made the transition, too. I didn't eat many eggs but after cutting out cheese, I lost a stone and my acne problem disappeared overnight.

My mum used to cook all sorts of roasts, pâtés and salads from instinct and I began to apply that inventiveness to cooking for the guesthouse. Before long I was having all sorts of exotic fruits and vegetables, wild mushrooms and gourmet vegan cheeses delivered and creating meals that got us a name for fine vegan food. We won awards for best vegetarian hotel and guesthouse. My advice to anyone thinking of going vegan? Do it slowly. People give in to a bacon sandwich and give up, but you can cut out meat gradually to make it easier.

ULTIMATE MEAL Walnuts and mushrooms cooked up like a steak and kidney pudding, followed by vegan ice cream.

FAVOURITE RESTAURANT Tibits, central London (020 7758 4110; www.tibits.co.uk). The green bean and walnut salad and chocolate and coconut mousse are incredible.