Vegetarianism, veganism, organic; these three words are becoming more mainstream every day, yet many vegetarians still get the same question from skeptics: “Where do you get your protein?”

Facing the brunt of this skepticism are mothers who have chosen to raise their children as vegetarians, or on plant-based diets.

Krystyna Spanell is one such mother. She has been a vegetarian for five years, and she and her husband are now raising their 2.5-year-old daughter on a vegetarian diet.

“There’s a lot of stigma around being a vegetarian when you have kids,” Spanell says. “There is so much misinformation out there about raising kids vegetarian or vegan. To us there wasn’t any question because we’re informed and we know there are a lot of ways to get protein other than through meat.”

In the last few years Kamloops has embraced the plant-based eating movement with new restaurants opening up and choices being added to menus in existing restaurants.

Julie Bayman, owner of Pure Cuisine — the only raw and vegan restaurant in the city — opened her restaurant almost a year ago because she felt the community was asking for it.

“I think people are ready. I think they are really ready. People are sick of trying things that aren’t working so they are reaching out and trying to find healthier things to eat and this is where plant-based and raw/vegan eating come in,” Bayman says.

“There is so much misinformation out there about raising kids vegetarian or vegan.”
According to Bayman, whenever someone asks about protein or calcium in a vegetarian or vegan diet, it’s an opportunity to educate.

“When people get new information they start to open up to that and explore it. We spend a lot of our time [at Pure Cuisine] answering questions. We want people to come in and ask those questions,” she says.

Spanell’s daughter is still young enough that she doesn’t ask too many questions about what she’s eating, but one day she will.

“I think there will be a time when she starts to understand that she’s not getting the same things that the other kids are getting as far as food goes… I’m a little concerned about that,” she admits.

Krystal Williams felt the same anxiety while raising her children, ages five and seven, on a plant-based diet. Williams had been a vegetarian since childhood and was raising her kids as vegetarians up until a couple of years ago.

“We’ve been vegetarian for a long time, my seven-year-old daughter took to it and a couple of years ago she got really excited about eating raw food,” Williams says.

“Then, while we were eating raw, my daughter started talking about meat. So I started talking to farmers in the area. Now we do buy and eat meat but it is all local and organic, which involves planning ahead, and (it) can be expensive.”

Williams buys her chickens from a local farm, but she needs to know up front how many chickens she wants since they only butcher three times per year.

“It’s also cheaper to buy a quarter of a cow at a time, but that also means I’m spending $200 to $300 up front on meat,” she says.

A big issue for many people when it comes to eating more plant-based is the cost. Buying all your food local or organic doesn’t come cheap.

“We talk to people about getting creative and how you can do it on a budget,” Bayman says. “Maybe you can’t afford everything organic but if you’re doing almond milk instead of cow’s milk you’ve already made a better choice, so if you can’t afford the raw/organic almonds, who cares?”

Williams and Spanell both believe the higher cost is worth it for the health of their families.

“This is my health and my child, I would rather spend much more money on healthy foods than anything else,” Spanell says.

“I’m a single mom but I don’t compromise on food,” Williams says. “I think about the long term cost. The smaller dental bill down the road and the fact that my kids hardly ever get sick make it worth it.”

To keep it local, Williams plays games with her kids at the grocery store to get them thinking about where their food is coming from.

“Our rule is that we buy and eat things that only come from nearby. I really want to raise awareness about where food is coming from and what makes food healthy.”

Bayman explains that Pure Cuisine’s philosophy is to help people eat healthier, even if they choose to eat meat.

“We’re not here to preach. We’re here to say if you can make some healthy choices you’re going to feel a whole lot better,” she says. “It’s really important to us not to put labels on things like vegan, vegetarian or high raw. Do what you want to do.”

Williams admits that it can take a lot of effort to buy all of her families’ food local and organic.

“It’s definitely a struggle. I am constantly thinking about everything we buy,” she says. “I’m supporting what I want to see in the world and that’s important to me.”

### RECIPE

**PURE CUISINE VEGAN ICE CREAM PARFAIT**

Pictured on page 7.

Ice cream: Put two bananas, a pinch of crushed vanilla bean and a teaspoon of agave syrup into food processor until it becomes creamy.

Spoon into milkshake glass; add frozen berries and another layer of ice cream. Top with chopped, raw almonds.