



MAKE MONDAYS MEAT-FREE, SAY THE FAB THREE...

Sir Paul, Mary and Stella McCartney share their passion for meat-free living with Jon Bennett and talk about the importance of making the veggie message fun, relevant and most of all 'not preachy'...

Even though they know they'll come under fire, the McCartneys believe any criticism is worth promoting the benefits of vegetarianism.

That much is glaringly obvious when I meet Sir Paul and two of his daughters Stella and Mary to discuss their Meat Free Monday campaign, which aims to get people to give up eating meat one day a week.

'It's *not* about preaching', says fashion designer Stella firmly, addressing the criticism any savvy celebrity must know is coming their way when they throw their weight behind a campaign. 'It's not about ramming it down people's throats and dictating to people; it's about bringing it to their attention. We thought if we get involved then maybe more people will become aware of it and they can make their own decision if it suits their lifestyle or not.'

Sir Paul and Mary, a photographer, nod in agreement, acknowledging that they're going to get stick from some quarters for putting their head above parapet.

The harsh reality

It's understandable that some critics are cynical when it comes to campaigns like these. Food has replaced fur as the easy hobbyhorse of choice for the rich and famous, and we're right to be suspicious when the likes of Naomi Campbell campaigned for PETA in the 1990s and then a few years later happily paraded down a catwalk wearing animal pelts, or when those rich enough to have endless options lecture about global warming and ecological living, while having several homes and jetting between them.

But when I meet Paul (I've interviewed him a few times and he always introduces himself as Paul, no luvvie demand for Sir) and his daughters in a flat in West London to discuss the campaign, it's clear they understand there'll be some cynicism but just can't resist getting behind a scheme they feel is so obviously intrinsically *positive*.

'A report came out from the United Nations which said that if people ate less meat it would have a big impact on the environment,' Paul explains. 'Having read that I thought: 'they're not the Vegetarian Society. A group with no reason to push vegetarianism, saying how beneficial it would be for the environment, for people to cut down on meat consumption, I thought that was very important. The figures showed that livestock consumption was

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worse for the ozone layer than planes or cars, so I started to write letters asking people to get involved.'

The figures from the 2006 report, *Livestock's Long Shadow* are sobering. It says livestock are responsible for 18 per cent of the world's CO₂ emissions, while transport accounts for 13 per cent. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization has stated the livestock sector is 'one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global'.

So, why does rearing livestock cause such problems? Well one key reason is that livestock emit gasses. A lot. And the methane released by the estimated 56 billion animals that are raised and slaughtered each year is 23 times more powerful than carbon dioxide when it comes to causing global warming. Oh, and one cow can allegedly produce up to 500 litres of the stuff *per day*.

The manure, fertilisers and transport involved in rearing meat all release more greenhouse gases, while forests have to be cleared to house the livestock; one report stated that 70 per cent of the deforestation of the Amazon has been caused by the livestock industry. To compound matters, the world's livestock population is expected to double to 120 billion animals by 2050. Frightening figures indeed.

There is something memorably incongruous then about the moment when

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a former Beatle lightens the mood by saying he is braced for the inevitable fart jokes. 'One cow fart is fine, billions of them we're in trouble (laughs). Cow walks into a bar, (makes farting noise)...

'But it's about much more than that. It's about deforestation – that's one of the big things. A huge percentage of forests in the world are cut down for cattle rearing or to grow soya to provide animal feed. So it's got out of hand, that's the thing. With global warming and the climate, I think this is a way for people to do their bit to pull it back into line. That's why we got involved.'

Linda's legacy

The family's commitment to vegetarianism is clearly fundamental to their lives. Paul has talked in the past about how impressed he has been by Stella's determination not to use leather or fur, even when she was working for mainstream fashion labels such as Gucci who specialised in those products.

It also seems obvious that coming together as a family to unite behind this campaign is, in part, about carrying on the legacy of Linda McCartney. Linda's brand was a trailblazer for vegetarian food in the 1980s, raising the issue at a time when being veggie was seen by some as bizarre. While her death in 1998 at the age of 56 was primarily a tragedy for her family, it

also robbed vegetarianism and animal rights organisations of one of their most vocal supporters.

'It's kind of how it came about,' says Mary, who has worked closely on the recent re-launch of the Linda McCartney brand. 'She did her cookbooks and her food range because people told her 'I would become veggie or reduce my meat intake if I could cook like this'. That's why she wrote her [first] cookbook, so she could hand it to people as they'd leave.

'Her meals were designed so that you didn't feel you had a hole on your plate when you ate. The reasons for this [campaign] are the same reasons really that she started vegetarian cooking,' she adds.

Linda's recipes are a key part of the Meat Free Monday website but Stella, who is clearly passionate but also cautious of being misinterpreted, stresses this isn't about pushing veggie burgers.

'She was talking about this 20 years ago; she was really talking about the links between diet and the environment. It's really interesting that it's come about now, but it's not about our mum's brand. Of course we're very proud and we want to keep that and her memory alive but it's not about that. It's about trying to let people know about this movement, and to encourage people to take ownership of the way that they eat.'



Mary, Paul and Stella line up for the Meat Free Monday launch



The McCartneys line up with fellow supporters, including Yoko Ono, Moby, Sophie Ellis Bextor, Sam Taylor-Wood and Kelly Osbourne

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'The interesting thing is that the planet needs it now. In the past, people might say 'ooh I might do it, I might not', but now people know they want to do their bit'

They all stress repeatedly that the key to the success of this campaign is not telling people it's cruel to eat animals. While they acknowledge that they would love a world where no-one was a carnivore, the success of the campaign depends on making eating less meat positive rather than a punishment. 'We've got to make it fun' says Mary.

'Yes it's about the impact on the environment of the livestock industry, the water consumption and the energy used, but we've got to make it fun. It's about saying 'if you're hungry, and you want to eat, then you can eat good food and feel good.

'We're saying you can do that and be meat-free. You know macaroni cheese, loads of hot pots and rice dishes are completely veggie anyway. It's not about depressing people, it's about getting people excited and realising eating vegetarian food isn't complicated,' she continues.

'The thing is, with this campaign, people can carry on eating steaks if they want,' adds Stella. 'It's just a really interesting way to start looking at diet and its connection to the environment. It's something anyone can do and an easy thing anyone can start taking notice of.'

Going forward

Paul became vegetarian in 1975, when he and Linda were carving a roast and saw spring lambs jumping in the fields outside the window of their farmhouse. He's

experienced vegetarianism, becoming much more mainstream in the 35 years since but feels that Meat Free Monday appeals because it's about more than food ethics.

'I think the good thing is that these days people are interested in improving the environment – they're just looking to do their bit. For me, this campaign is important because it's an easy way you can do your bit. I think Monday is good because people have probably over-done it at the weekend. You know how it is, people go to the gym a bit more on a Monday so I think it's a good day for an interesting idea that people can get involved with.'

'The reality is a lot of people don't eat meat every day so this is just about being conscious of the fact that they're committed to it,' adds Stella. 'Just thinking about it and committing to it can have a knock-on effect. The fact that killing animals has more of an impact ecologically than all of the world's transport put together is huge.'

This raises an interesting dilemma for Paul as a touring musician. His shows see him go round the world, creating an inevitable carbon footprint as he and a cavalcade of trucks, planes and workers accompany him. He says he's interested in the work carried out by Radiohead, who have pioneered research into gauging just what impact their tours have environmentally and how best to offset these effects.

They commissioned a study in 1998 which indicated that 97 per cent of the carbon footprint caused by their arena concerts was caused by fans travelling to the event. In reaction they encouraged gig-goers to share cars or use public transport to get to their shows and announced they'd try to play shows in city-centre venues because of the improved transport links, while also sea-freighting their equipment where possible.

'We always have it at the back of our minds,' says Paul. Sometimes we might take 140 people on the road and it's like moving an army. They all eat veggie and we've been doing that for years, that's how we cater – it's something we've been interested in for years'.

Working out how to sustain the impact of a scheme like Meat Free Monday beyond launch day is the key for its long-term success. Campaign manager Claudia Tarry says they are thrilled by the progress they've made since they launched in June 2009 but stresses they are adopting a broad ranging strategy to try and sustain the momentum of the campaign.



Yoko Ono and Paul enjoy a hug and a chat in a break from posing for the photographers

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'It's a bit of a dream having Paul, Mary and Stella to work with when it comes to publicity,' she explains. 'I've worked in this field for 10 years and normally you have to bang the door down to get coverage, whereas the press want to talk to them. Our approach longer term is to speak to companies as well as individuals so that we can change things from the inside out.'



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She points to the partnerships they have created with Ocado, Hard Rock Café and Puma (the sportswear manufacturer has adopted Meat Free Monday in its canteens globally) as particularly encouraging examples of changing food cultures from the 'inside-out'.

'Ultimately we know people don't want to be nagged nowadays. Even the word campaign can feel loaded. It's about making the process feel as uplifting and achievable as possible – it should be about aspiration not admonishing people,' says Claudia.

'It's impossible for us to quantify just how many people have adopted Meat Free Monday as there's not a way of measuring it but we're really encouraged by the response. The website is busy, companies are interested and we've been approached by local councils, too, so we feel we've made real progress,' she adds.

Paul also spoke to world leaders when he called for 'Less Meat, Less Heat' at the European Parliament in Brussels last December, and they teamed up for a celeb-heavy benefit for the Old Vic theatre and Meat Free Monday at Battersea Power Station this June.

The final word goes to Paul, a man whose astonishingly fit appearance at the age of 68 is an advert for vegetarian living in itself. 'The interesting thing is that the planet needs it now. In the past, people might say 'ooh I might do it, I might not', but now people know they want to do their bit but they say 'I don't know how'. Well, this is a practical, easy way that people can do it. I think the time is right for this idea.'