

T.O.F.U.

T.O.F.U. MAGAZINE

there is an alternative | issue 9 | june 2015

AgeMatters

Young or old, what do vegans need
to find their roots and grow?



TeenVGN, JL Fields, and others tell their stories. Yes, there are recipes too.

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For the best experience, please view as a two-page spread.

Credits

Totally and Obviously Fucked Up (T.O.F.U.)
is currently based in Vancouver, BC. Yes, I moved again.

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About the Cover

My intention had been to shoot both a seed and a tree, but spring was nowhere to be seen when the shoot needed to happen.

Luckily, Devon Crosby had an idea, and a lovely new macro lens. So, a little green bulb was planted, and a cover was shot.

Over time, the needs of the plant will change, but if it's nurtured it will grow. Similarly, age plays a role in how veganism takes root, and so this issue brings focus to the fact that it should be considered, both in campaign and personal actions.

Contributors

Keira Edwards-Huolohan, Veronica Houk, Sarah Louise, Marieke Gruwel, Lisa Febre, Dan Hanley, JL Fields, Morgain Hughes, Lucy Byrne, Dianne Wennz, Sarah Bradshaw, Hadara Slok, Rhea Parsons, Jessica Sarter, Emily Wilkinson, and Dave Shishkoff

Heartfelt Thanks To

Devon Crosby, for getting his robots and, once again, his hands dirty.

Amanda Rogers, for juggling so many balls, plates, keyboards, cats, and pixels.

The advertisers, who continue to answer my emails, and, most importantly, say yes to being involved.

You, for taking the time to read all these words when you could be watching funny cat videos instead.

Dylan Powell, for bringing the idea of age and the need for activists to reach beyond their generation to me first at the Veg Food Fest in Toronto years ago.

From the Editor

Oh my god, I'm back again.

The focus of this issue may be about age, but as I think about the cover now, I realize that so many other things can be represented by the growth of a seed.

Even nine issues in, I still feel like T.O.F.U. has a lot of growing to do (and certainly a few wrinkles to work out). However, hitting the road during The Wild T.O.F.U. Tour showed me that the roots of the magazine run deeper than I know.

So far, one of the biggest examples of this happened at Pine Box Rock Shop when I met local musician/vegan Michael Harren. Upon shaking hands, he shared with me the fact that he realized we had met years before at Lula's Apothecary.

It was a chance meeting, albeit maybe not as unlikely as others since Lula's was a vegan ice cream shop and it was a warm day in NYC. However, if Michael had not been there at the same moment I was talking with the staff about T.O.F.U. and holding a few copies of issue three, the seed may not have been planted.

I left a few copies with Michael, who had a radio show/podcast at the time, and never really thought about it after that. Then, years later, that same guy played my first T.O.F.U. show in NYC.

There are plenty more examples of this

sort of thing that happened from Halifax to Vancouver and all down through the States over the month or so that I was on the road, and each one of them helped to show me that growth takes time and it's not always done in the most obvious ways.

Now, as I put the finishing touches on this issue and debate staying in Vancouver for a bit, I can't help but hope that the magazine has helped you grow in some way. Whether or not we've met in person, chatted online, or simply had these pages to connect us, perhaps something helped to give you a little push in the right direction.

If not, then maybe this issue will be the one to do just that. Otherwise, please get in touch to let me know what you would like to see covered!





FOCUS

A Gay Vegan Comes of Age

Dan Hanley

50.

Well almost.

There was a time when I didn't think I would make it even close to 50. In the late 80's and early 90's over 40,000 gay men a year were dying from complications due to HIV/AIDS. By the time I became vegan just before my 30th birthday in 1996 the HIV drug cocktail was starting to save lives and the rate of death was still high but decreasing every month. This was a very dark period, one filled with death and loss. And the number you just read was not a typo: 40,000+ a year were dying. These included my housemate, my best friend, several co-workers, neighbors, men I had dated, and close friends.

He planted the seed, and although it seemed a little harsh I knew it was coming from a place of love and respect not only for me but for animals too.

At 29, I got to know my first vegan. She worked for me as my assistant. Both her and her husband were vegan and I finally started to take a deeper look at my dinner plate. They invited me to all-vegan potlucks and I soon realized how delicious vegan food was. I remembered a Tibetan Buddhist monk telling me years earlier while having dinner with a group after a human rights protest that he was surprised that I was so compassionate but when it came to my dinner plate I dropped my compassion. Yep, he said it. It sure did impact me. He planted the seed, and although it seemed a little harsh I knew it was coming from a place of love and respect not only for me, but for animals too.

In January of 1996, after being vegetarian for two weeks, I went vegan. My hold out: Ben & Jerry's Cherry Garcia ice cream.

This was in Norfolk, VA. When I left the US Navy, I decided to stay there. Norfolk has come a long way, and having PETA headquartered there has helped the vegan food scene. But in 1996, there wasn't anything to brag about around vegan food. Portobello mushroom burger after Portobello mushroom burger. Fortunately, for me there was an amazing group of vegans that welcomed me to potlucks. I got to eat delicious vegan food, build community, and learn how to cook.

What a different world it was back then, not only in regards to being vegan, but in everything that affected my identity: my gender, my sexual orientation, my privilege and class, my idea of being a man, my idea of becoming a man, and my thinking around action, activism, and politics. When I became vegan, I had no idea that one day I would be 100% comfortable with being a gay man, that I would legally marry another man, and that my veganism would just be part of the man I would become.

I didn't go to my first vegan restaurant until 2000 while in San Francisco for work. Millennium. I sat there for two hours amazed. On my second trip to the city, I went back to Millennium with two of my dearest friends, that time for dessert.

By this time I was living in Denver, Colorado and had gotten to know many other vegans as well as animal rights activists. It was in Denver that my activism changed from HIV/AIDS and human rights to include animal rights.

No matter how long one has been vegan, times have changed. I can think of everything just in the last six months, year, two years. In the last several years companies like Gardein, EatPastry, Beyond Meat, and Daiya have completely changed what options a vegan has in the market. Kale is common. In the same time vegan cheese companies have popped up everywhere (to my delight!).

As an animal rights activist, I have also seen change in activism. Of course, in almost 20 years, a lot is going to change. One thing that is very clear to me is that the animal rights movement is fractured. We fight a lot. Whether local groups or national causes, I see it a lot and it disturbs me. The voice of the voiceless animals we are fighting for gets drowned out when activists fight amongst themselves and what a shame that is. Often I take a good look in the mirror and ask myself if I am honestly being the best, strongest, and most passionate voice I can be for the voiceless. We can't always be right. A little self-reflection never hurts.

Some days all I could do as an activist was hold the hand of someone in his or her last hours.

I think about this a lot and remember back to when so many people were dying. Groups all over the country banded together to take care of sick friends, to fight discrimination towards people with HIV/AIDS, and to demand the government at least acknowledge that there was a problem. Some days all I could do as an activist was hold the hand of someone in his or her last hours. I can't imagine how worse the situation would have been if all

of the groups fought amongst themselves. Sure there were disagreements, yet the focus seemed to always be on the fact that so many people were dying and how could we, together, support them.

I choose to reach out to all who want to fight for animal rights. The bottom line is that we as animal rights activists or we as vegans or we as human rights activists all have more in common than not. There is a bigger picture, one that is vastly more important than personal opinions of others who might not look or act as one wishes they would. Animals suffer incredible cruelty every day. We have the power to fight that.

My personal activism continues to evolve. I use the blog for much of my activism. I constantly am surprised by how much more I can learn if I open my mind to it. An example is an interaction I had on Twitter when another activist taught me that the way I was referring to people as "brothers and sisters" was not as inclusive as if I referred to those same people as "siblings". Her point was that the term I was using could be construed as binary, that not everyone chooses to check a male or female box. I was grateful for her comment and have been using the term siblings more often.

I have also become more active in fighting for transgender equality and against the abhorrent cycle of violence that is crushing my trans siblings. If I have my details correct, seven trans women have been murdered so far in 2015! Several others have taken their own lives.

This brings me to another point: one can

support a number of different causes and struggles, not just one particular group. By that, I mean that I can be a strong advocate for animals who are tortured and live their lives in fear and simultaneously be an ally for trans women of color. It is crucial for me to be true to myself in my activism which sometimes means that I ask activists in one circle why they don't include activists in another circle.

I will never accept bigotry in any of the communities I am part of.

The Gay Vegans blog has been huge for me to not only stay connected with other activists, but to support new activists and new vegans, to be part of discussions around politics, gender, privilege, and more, and to support those who might not feel connected with ideas and connections to making this world a better place for all living beings. Through the blog, I feel stronger than ever as an activist.

Throughout the past 20 years, my activism has ebbed and flowed. Some times I felt very close to the animal rights community and other times I felt far apart. Many times I have donated to national groups only to be put on some mailing list and then be asked for another donation before I was even thanked for the first donation. Yet to this day, Mike and I still donate to national groups as they are making things happen. I am particularly supportive of any national groups that fight for animals in laboratories.

There are so many amazing non-profits out there in regards to animal rights that I believe there is something for everyone, no matter what your particular passion is.

As a twenty-something activist, the world might seem bleak in regards to animal cruelty. I have to say that it is easy to start feeling that way. Yet in the short time I have been around, I have seen crazy changes. Just here in Denver, I was able to be a part of an amazing attempt to stop using dogs in physiology classes at our state medical school. It wasn't easy, and it took several years, but the labs stopped using dogs. Nationally, animals are no longer used in physiology classes in the vast majority of medical schools. Also, there are vegan options on college campuses. More companies don't test on animals than do use animals for testing. There are dozens, if not well over 100 vegan restaurants in the U.S. and Canada. And so many more people today consume non-dairy milk over cow's milk than just a few years ago.

My form of activism might not look like yours. It doesn't have to. That I am certain about. All activism requires is action. Effectiveness is pretty good too.

Change is happening. It doesn't happen in a vacuum. It can't happen on its own. Every day I try to do at least one thing that will support animals that are suffering. Or people who are demonized. Or oceans that can't take much more human destruction. My form of activism might not look like yours. It doesn't have to. That I am certain about. All activism requires is action. Effectiveness is pretty good too.

When I think of getting close to 50, I am reminded that in the last several years I have really begun to focus on my health. The first part of that is eating healthy. Yes, it is possible to eat unhealthy as a vegan. I



could personally give many examples. Yet these days Mike (my husband) and I spend more of our budget on fruits and vegetables and legumes than anything else. Even though there has never been a greater variety of processed foods for vegans, we have become quite comfortable with pears, kale, spinach, apples, mangoes, blackberries, blueberries, Swiss chard, etc. I also find myself loving to cook and bake more than ever. I don't know if that comes with age or just wanting to create more in the kitchen.

Another part of focusing on my health is exercise. I am finally getting to the gym three days a week. When I was 47, I trained for and finished my first half marathon. It wasn't easy. The training was amazing as I had never in my life ran that far (nor was

I interested in doing so) and training for a 13.1 mile run means one has to run a lot to train. The training was part of what I loved about the half marathon. I am currently training for my third. Running is not for everyone. Being physically active is a huge way for me to continue to stay healthy as I age. One can start whenever; it's never too late.

Then there is retirement. I am closer to the age I hope to retire than the age I began to work. I'm not sure what retirement looks like for me/us exactly. I know we want to live in the San Diego area when retired. I also know that we will want to be able to go out to the awesome vegan restaurants that will be everywhere by the time we retire. This means that we have to save for retirement. I barely hear about this in

the vegan and animal rights communities and I think it is so important. If you enjoy supporting a non-profit now, they will be in just as much need when you retire. We want to be able to continue to be philanthropic when we retire. We want to make sure that we have the basics and can travel once in a while.

So we save. Like exercise, I believe it is never too late to start planning and saving for retirement. Our community has many people in it who know about these things and can be helpful. If you are younger, all the better. Start now, even if it's just a little every paycheck. If you work for a company that does a company match in the 401K program, at least put as much into that for the match. There are definitely funds out there that will match your ethics; you just have to find them. Even if you just invest in your local credit union's certificate of deposits you will be in a better situation than if you do nothing.

Because of my blog I think of veganism as part of my identity more than it actually is. At this point in my life, it's just part of who I am naturally.

As a blogger, I am frequently asked for advice, especially by folks who are newly vegan, about living vegan and living as an activist. It's common to be asked in a way that starts with "*because you've been around so long*"! I love that! Here are a few of the suggestions that I have come up:

Find a vegan nutritionist online and follow them. We have a couple on our [blog site](#). When you become vegan, it's so important to make sure you're getting all of the right things that your body needs.

Brush and floss. Yes, it sounds silly. Yet when you have to get a crown and you would rather donate that money to a group fighting for the voiceless, you realize that brushing and flossing pays off.

Words can be hurtful. Go easy. If folks are asking for honest advice, give it to them, compassionately. Be kind. Be supportive.

Sticks and stones will hurt you but words won't. I say this because it's not true. Words can be hurtful. Go easy. If folks are asking for honest advice, give it to them, compassionately. Be kind. Be supportive. I see too often, especially with social media, where someone asks a question and they are pounced on.

Whatever your cause, you can be a voice for those you are supporting. For me it's animals, gay and lesbian and trans people around the world persecuted and even executed for being who they are, the homeless, and battered women. If I am an ally, I cannot be a jerk. I cannot be a judgmental prick who knows everything and calls anyone who disagrees with me a terrible name. That helps no one.

If you are in love and are fortunate to be in a relationship with that person, make sure they know that. I am fortunate to be married to my best friend, the love of my life and my good and perfect gift from God. No matter what I am working on as an activist, I make sure he gets love from me and that I am an active participant in our marriage.

Vote. On my blog I write about this often. Vote in every election and at every level. From city council to your local board

of education to your state capitol and beyond. Let those who represent you know who you are and what you believe. Build relationships with them. One day those you are an ally for will need their support.

Take care of yourself. The animals need you. Self-care is critical.

Don't take your life for granted. One day I was 29 and going vegan and the next I was 49 writing about being vegan for almost 20 years. Live your life. Live every day. Each day we have an opportunity to be a voice

for the voiceless and to make this world a better place for all living beings.

RECIPE

Jessi's Veggies Soup

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp. garlic
- 1 onion (diced)
- 2 - 3 carrots (chopped)
- 2 - 3 celery stalks (chopped)
- Canned tomatoes (drain very well and cut into halves)
- Vegetable broth
- Zucchini (julienned into spaghetti size noodles)
- 1 Tbsp Italian seasoning
- 2 Tbsps fresh rosemary
- 1 tsp onion powder
- Salt and pepper

Directions

1. Coat bottom of pot with olive oil and saute garlic. Add onions, carrots, and celery, and cook for 3-5 mins. Pour in 2 cups of vegetable broth. Let everything boil until carrots and celery are tender, but not too soft.
2. Add canned tomatoes and some more (raw) diced onions (these will add more flavor and crunch). Add Italian seasoning, dry rosemary, onion powder, salt, and pepper. Drop zucchini noodles in at the end so they don't get soft. Keep on heat for another minute or two - done!

Jessica Sarter

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100% FREE OF MEAT,
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ANIMAL BY - PRODUCTS,
FAULTY LOGIC, LOADED QUESTIONS,
OR RAISED EYEBROWS.

As a vegan, you've done the research, read the labels, and answered the silly questions about the emotional lives of carrots. You've dealt with incredulous raised eyebrows at family dinners when you explain (once again) why chicken isn't vegan. And you've probably found many products that seem vegan, but have animal-based components in there somewhere.

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10 REASONS EDMONTON WILL STEAL YOUR LITTLE VEGAN HEART

Sarah Louise

THEN FEED IT DELICIOUS TREATS....THEN GIVE IT RIGHT BACK TO YOU POLITELY AND SAY “SORRY FOR DOING THAT” BECAUSE WE’RE IN CANADA.

From past experiences, when sharing with folks that I hail from “Alberta,” there are a few ideas that immediately come up. Cowtown...oil city...pickup trucks... none of these being “thriving vegan and cultural mecca.” However, in recent years, Edmonton’s vegan food community has grown into something to be quite proud of. From handfuls of compassionately owned businesses, to a farm sanctuary, to its own darling vegan food truck, the vegan movement in Edmonton continues to gain momentum. So, before our little vegan friendly city totally takes over the world with radness, I am stoked to share with you ten rambly reasons why you should get yourselves right on over here for a proper visit!

1. Home of Canada’s Original Vegetarian Grocery Store

Launched in 1991, [Earth’s General Store](#) has been Canada’s longest running vegetarian food store, right here in Edmonton! Their original Whyte Ave location remains a flagship for those wishing to grip their hands on the best vegan cult favourites, local goods, and organic produce our city has to offer. Michael recently opened a

second location last year that does carry minimal meat products, but also boasts a full vegetarian deli!

2. Veg-Friendly Bars and Music Venues! Plural!

The days of shoving nothing but french fries that may or may not have been fried in the same oil as chicken wings moments before are so over! Edmonton has several options for a vegan friendly night on the town. [The Mercury Room](#) is a music venue that also happens to boast an entirely vegan menu. Vegan chef duo Jade and Rylan bring their A-game to deliver top notch eats such as rainbow tarts, charcuterie boards, and a late night snack menu!

Another new addition to the vegan bar scene is [Arcadia](#) off 124th Street, that offers a full vegan menu, always with something wild going on, from pop culture trivia to stand up comedy!

Yet another reliable watering hole to stuff your face south of the river is [The Buckingham](#). Get your fix of cheap beer, deep fried pickles, and veggie burgers here! These folks have recently collaborated with Sailin’ On to transform their menu

Pizza at Arcadia



entirely vegan. Which brings us to our next item..

3. We Have a Vegan Food Truck!

Food truck season is now easily my favourite time of year these days, because it means tracking down the long hairs of [Sailin' On!](#) Find them to grip your hands on a coconut bacon BLT, seitan Rueben, Irish Fries, and other amazing fare. Mike and Garrett started out slingin' vegan corn dogs on the porch, and have grown to become an award-winning favourite of vegans and omnivores alike, going into their third season.

4. Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth

Who says vegans have to miss out on treats?! Edmonton has some of the best there is to offer. Thought you would never eat a doughnut again?! [Frickin' Delights](#) has you covered! Visit them at Old Strathcona Farmer's Market to get your cake donut fill! Another local doughnut Artisan is [Moonshine](#), who can also be found around city farmer's markets! While you're at it, you're guaranteed to stumble upon [Bloom Cookies](#), which can be found at [Farrow Sandwiches](#), [Remedy](#), Hexagon Board Game Cafe, and Cavern! Another vegan treat slinger on the scene



Sandwiches from Farrow



Blue Rose's Coconut Key Lime Cupcakes



Frickin Delights' Donuts



Hot Chocolate at Remedy

is [Blue Rose Vegan](#), offering up cupcakes at Remedy and [The Tea Girl](#) (where they also carry Blue Rose lunch specials), and veganizing other classics via the [Vegan Snack Attack](#) and farmer's markets!

5. Visit Adorbz Rescued Animals at F.A.R.R.M (Farm Animal Rescue and Rehoming Movement)!

Based just an hour outside of Edmonton in Wetaskawin, AB, is [F.A.R.R.M](#)- a local non-profit dedicated to providing a loving home for rescued, surrendered, and abused farm animals. In a province known for its reliance on the farming industry, it is incredible to see such hard working individuals making a difference for the lives of farm animals, who often fall through the cracks of traditional rescues. F.A.R.R.M accepts visits, and I recommend setting aside an afternoon to volunteer, which is also a great excuse to meet some of their lively residents- from turkeys and chickens to potbelly pigs and horses!

6. Chinatown Adventures!

One of my favourite neighbourhoods to kick it definitely has to be Edmonton's Chinatown! While only a few blocks of downtown, Chinatown is a vegan mecca for those looking to grab a decent bite to eat. My personal favourite would have to be the [Veggie Garden](#)! Run by the most adorable family, I visit on a weekly to semi-weekly basis to get my fill of Chinese and Vietnamese noms- cilantro cakes, tom yum soup, and all the gluten-filled mock meats one could possibly ask for! Another great option in Chinatown for Chinese and Indonesian food is [Padmanadi](#)- try their

curry chicken and roti canai! A great stop for groceries in the area is 99 Supermarket, who stock tofu prepared anyway you could possibly imagine, as well as vegan chow mein noodles and other Asian cooking staples for your vegan kitchen!

Don't fret if you're looking for similar fare south of the river- however! [Loma House](#) is a southside hidden gem- they even offer dim sum, and a great selection of veggie-friendly frozen goods! For a top notch bowl of soup and Vietnamese tea, the Buddha Pho at [Friends and Neighbours](#) on Whyte is highly recommended!

7. Designated Vegan Nights and Buffets for Dayyyyysss!

Tuesdays are Narayanni's vegan buffet nights, where one can fill up with all the Indian food they could possibly ever want for just \$15! Lagano Skies, a stone's throw away, also hosts an Ethiopian vegetarian buffet on the last Tuesday of each month. Another amazing Ethiopian stop is Aabsynnia- they have vegan buffet nights on Wednesday and Friday evenings. Get your mediterranean fix at [Co Co Di's](#) on Thursdays, where they have a designated vegan price fixe menu. Padmanadi is also famous for their epic monthly buffets, posted regularly on their website- usually on Fridays!

8. Brunch Village!

K- excuse the Portlandia reference, but seriously. There are many options for quality brunch in Edmonton. The Mercury Room puts on an amazing brunch service on Saturday mornings. Swing by for a soft pretzel tofu benedict, and maybe even pick

up the biweekly VEGAN SNACK ATTACK, a collaboration between these folks and Blue Rose Baking Co. Padmanadi's is also a great place to visit on weekend mornings- especially for their vegan ham and cheese omelette. [Clever Rabbit](#) is an adorable little vegetarian spot on 124 Street, and while awaiting brunch, I highly suggest lurking next door, to fawn over their [WHARF rescues](#). [Noorish](#), in Garneau, also does brunch on weekends. They even have a yoga studio downstairs, if some post-

festivals and farmer's markets. We have many farmer's markets happening during this time that are incredibly vegan-friendly. At [124 Grand Market](#), every Thursday from mid-May to mid-October, you will find Sailin' On Food Truck, Truffula Modern Delicacies (vegan cashew cheese- seriously!), Blue Rose Baking Co., Moonshine Doughnuts, and so much local produce! In addition to these vegan-friendly businesses at this little gem of a market, you will also discover some of Edmonton's best local

Buffet Night at Abyssynia



Dim Sum at Loma House

brunch yoga is your jam!

Craving a tofu scramble but have some omnivore pals with you? Try [Blue Plate Diner](#), [Friends and Neighbours](#), or [Mill Creek Cafe](#), popular spots to grab brunch who also accommodate vegans!

9. Farmer's Markets & Festivals

May through October is when Edmonton truly comes alive, with all of its fantastic

artists and artisans. Other markets worth exploring include [City Market](#) on 104th where Bloom Cookies and Moonshine can be found amongst hundreds of other vendors, and of course [Old Strathcona](#) for produce, Frickin' Delights, and some vegan bagels from Hendricksons.

[Taste of Edmonton](#) is also a ten day long food festival, which will also be featuring Meatless Monday on July 20, 2015.



10. An Active Vegans and Vegetarians Society

For the past twenty-six years, the volunteer run [VVVoA](#) has served those interested in adopting and/or maintaining a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle. You will see this group out and about hosting many veg-friendly events, such as their annual Vegtoberfest, Worldwide Vegan Bakesale, and this year, Meatless Monday at Taste of Edmonton. They also put out an epically thorough [veg dining guide](#) and work with local veg-friendly businesses to provide discounts for VVoA members. There are many more vegan-friendly spots than I have even

touched on, so check out the diner's guide for a comprehensive list!

There you have it friends- ten reasons (and reasons within those reasons because rambles) to visit the City of Champions! Who knew that there was more to Edmonton than that really big shopping mall, and snow from October through May?! I firmly believe that there is no better time to be vegan anywhere, than right now, and especially look forward to watching Edmonton's vegan movement continue to grow and thrive in the coming years! Hopefully, some of you will come on through and join me for brunch!

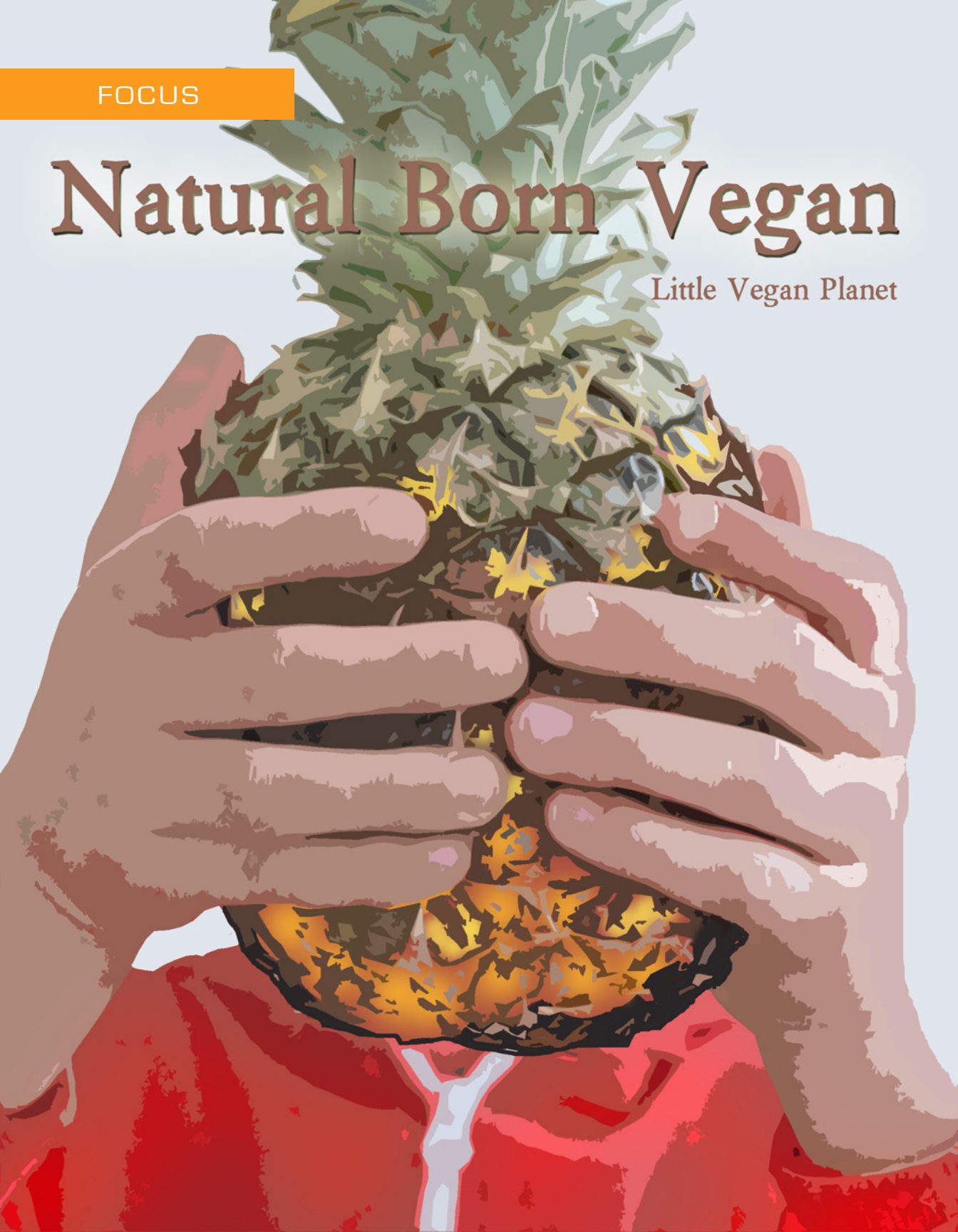


Veggie Garden's Tom Yum

FOCUS

Natural Born Vegan

Little Vegan Planet



When we are children, we often rebel against our parent's choices. When we become parents, we justify those choices. When is it the right time to let your children decide for themselves? From the moment when they are babies, we force our choices on our children: the red cute outfit which you like so much but your toddler hates, the swimming lessons which you take your son to so he learns how to behave in the water, the time when they go to bed, even what and when they eat. We often don't realise we do those things due to our routine and because it suits us. We stop them from doing what they want to do. *"Don't put your hands in your mouth! Don't eat your sister! Don't run like a loon!"* Don't, don't, don't ... So how about raising vegan children? When do we let them decide? How do we convince them it is the right and only choice? How do we convince them it's their choice?

My son will be 7 in a few weeks. He is a vibrant, intelligent young man. I try to raise him to be full of empathy, kind, and open minded. I want him to be the best he can be, and I try to guide him the way I think is best. And for now, he lets me. Because he is only young. But when he is older, I don't think I will have the same amount of influence in his life as I have now.

We have not always been vegan. When my daughter arrived, I quickly realised she was rather intolerant to eggs and dairy, add meat to the equation and you have a perfect born vegan. Being a vegetarian for years, it was an easy transition for me, as I was never a fan of eggs or milk. My meat eating son? Not so much. When I could have justified my daughter's diet due to

her allergies, I had no excuses to justify stopping my son from eating meat, dairy, and eggs. Of course, my reasons were pure and simple. I wanted him to be healthy and happy. I wanted him to eat fresh, organic produce. The ambition was great, but the reality kicked in fast: raising vegan children is not easy.

He became withdrawn, he had no friends, no one would invite him to a birthday party, he was a sad little boy. And it broke my heart. Was it because I made him vegan?

Especially in a society like ours. Being judged wherever I went, told what a horrible mother I was and that I was making my children sick. People had this idea in their heads that I was keeping my children in cages feeding them lettuce once in a while. But I was determined to stay vegan and to raise vegan children. Children who would be the future, the saviours of our planet, the inventors of a better tomorrow. Children who would be loving every living creature, who would resent violence and war and who would appreciate nature, peace, and tranquility. The problems started tumbling down fast. My ambition was big and I soon realised I may have taken on too much to handle. My son started having troubles at school. I ended up homeschooling him, waiting for a place in another school. He became withdrawn, he had no friends, no one would invite him to a birthday party, he was a sad little boy. And it broke my heart. Was it because I made him vegan? Maybe, maybe not. He started asking why I wanted him to be the weirdo. Why I wouldn't let



him eat what other children were eating, why he wasn't like everyone else. He was rebellious, naughty, and seriously unhappy. I made this drastic change to his life, without any of his consent.

It's hard explaining your reasons to a little child, who just wants to be accepted. Showing him videos or articles was not an option, he was too young and too sensitive.

My parents never talked to me about any of their problems, they were the authorities in our household and they have never shown their children they had weaknesses. But I wanted to raise my children in a different way, I wanted them to be able to show their emotions and to share them with others. So I did what not many have done: I admitted making a mistake. I told my little son how sorry I was for not asking how he felt about the diet change, I told him that I did it for us as a family, for our health, for our planet, and for our furry friends. He

was absolutely horrified that the chicken humans eat was an actual dead chicken. It was hard for him to wrap his young mind around it. How come people had to kill animals?

It's a vital part of our lives and it is absolutely amazing seeing my kids making their own choices and taking charge in so many important aspects of life.

We made a list of things he missed most and we also made a list of substitutes. His top choice was ice cream! After some research, he absolutely fell in love with lemon sorbet. We also decided that he will have a say in our diet and, if there is anything he wants to eat, we will talk about it and then decide. Since then, we plan our meals together. The children always help me cook. We go to the market together to pick our fruit and veg. It's a vital part of our lives and it is absolutely amazing seeing my kids making their own choices

and taking charge in so many important aspects of life.

My son started his new school full of confidence, he wrote a letter to his classmates, saying why he is the way he is, and that vegan doesn't mean he is weird or different. Here is a little piece of his letter:

"My name is Toby. I'm 6 years old, I have a sister and a cat. His name is Biscuit. My family is vegan. What is vegan? Vegan means we do not eat meat, eggs or milk. We eat lots of fruit and we eat beans. I like being vegan and it makes me happy as I want to save the planet and the animals."

His teacher invited me in to talk to the children about our diet. Some of the parents weren't happy as their kids started to ask to become vegan!

I am so proud of my little man, he came a long way, he is a bit older now, he has put so much hard work into his journey to veganism. He is a little ambassador and he is proud to be vegan.

If anything, taking my children through the vegan journey has taught me that no one is too old or too young to improve his/hers life. There is always a light at the end of our tunnel. When we are the influence on the younger generation, we need to make sure our children are free to make their own choices. Let them choose to be vegans, for the right reasons, not because we want them to be. Our children will change the world, and they will change it for the better.

RECIPE

Firecracker Tofu

Ingredients

- 1 pack of extra firm tofu
- 1 Jalapeño (sliced)
- 1/4 cup Soy sauce
- 1/8 cup Murin
- 1/8 cup Sriracha
- 1/8 cup rice vinegar

Directions

1. Cut tofu in slices 1 inch thick, set down on a thick, clean towel. Place a cutting board on top with several heavy books on it to press the tofu.
2. After 1 hour, marinate the tofu. Bake at 425 for 15-20 min or until golden. Add Jalapeño for the last few minutes. Let cool and cut into triangular shape.

Hadara Slok

Everything is Connected

Keira Edwards-Huolohan



Veganism Opens the Door

I joined the “animal rights movement” at age 19 after doing lots of self-guided research. I isolated myself from other vegans because I thought that I had to come to this conclusion by myself in order for it to be considered ‘valid’ by non-vegans; that I wasn’t doing this to be ‘cool’ or ‘fit in’ (especially because the vegans that I knew at the time were the local tattooist, the piercer, and a rad ‘alternative’ woman). I especially didn’t want anyone to think that I was doing it for ‘emotional’ reasons. This was because I was read as a woman and emotions are generally derided as being ‘silly’ reasons for a lifestyle change. Of course, it still was not something that people accepted. I’ve now been vegan 5 years and people still think that I’m going to be deficient in protein and that I’m being ruled by illogical reasoning.

Veganism opened a door for me. Once I realised that there was all this suffering going on that I had previously been unaware of, it was like turning the lights on after being in the dark. I couldn’t ignore this any more. From there, I started to see so much more. I realised that we were destroying the planet because we could, because we were not being raised to do otherwise, because capitalist interests demanded it. I started to listen to people when they talked about feminism; I realised that feminism mattered and was about so much more than women wanting to be equal to men. I noticed how we throw away food while people starve. I subsisted off Centrelink payments (which are a welfare payment and are about 50% of the poverty line in Australia) while the media said I was lazy because no one would hire me (there simply were not enough jobs).

After that, I started thinking about gender

and what it meant, what it really was, what it meant to me. I started to read about the concept of 'genderqueer' and realised that finally, I had a label for how I felt. At the same time I was starting to study Sociology at university, where I was learning a great deal about globalisation, youth culture, community enterprises and more. My real education happened on tumblr though. There I started to learn about privileges, started listening to women of colour (I'm white and the majority of my friends are too), and started to realise that there was a lot more going on in the world that I was in the dark about.

Here are some of the tumblr blogs that I read and follow that have helped me to learn. There were a lot more, but a lot have been worn down by the toxicity of anonymous hate.

<http://black-australia.tumblr.com/> - a blog by and for Indigenous Australians

<http://bidyke.tumblr.com/> - a blog run by Shiri Eisner, author of "Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution"

<http://indigenous-rising.tumblr.com/> - a blog by and for Indigenous people

Since then I've added books, comics, blogs, facebook pages, documentaries, music, and journal articles to my educational arsenal. I share these with others in an attempt to get all of us growing and thinking, and some

are mentioned on [my website](#). It reminds me of the "consciousness raising" groups that bell hooks talks about in "*Feminism is for Everybody*".

Joining the Pieces

It was only when I started my Honours thesis in 2013 that I started to piece together how all of these things are related. It started with women. Women were the main force behind the animal rights and welfare movements. They were the ones who organised, rescued, informed, and kept the momentum going. But most of the famous vegans and animal rights advocates all seemed to be men (e.g. Peter Singer, Gary Francione, Gary Yourofsky). While women were the main force of the movement, it was women who were being used in advertisements; being shamed for being fat, for not being able to provide their children with fresh vegetables, covered in bruises and chains (e.g. PETA). Sex workers have also dealt with unfair and illogical comparisons between their work and the exploitation of non-humans. Maintaining these sorts of hierarchies does not help the movement to end animal cruelty and use, it just makes the movement complicit in the oppression of women and the normalisation of violence.

Along with all of this, while a gender difference between men and women

had been looked at before, I realised that no one had even thought to ask about genderqueer and other non-binary genders. It was male/female and that was it for these studies. I felt erased. It was strange to me, too, that sexuality and non-binary genders had not been researched because my little community was full of people who were not cis (identify as the gender they were assigned at birth) or hetero. Is this because people in the LGBTIQAP+ community experience at least some oppression some of the time and this makes them more open to considering other forms of oppression? I don't know, but I feel like this could be the answer. Quite a few people I interviewed were from within the LGBTIQAP+ community and had experienced discrimination from family, friends, and the wider community. This may have made them (and myself and

friends) more open to animal rights. This is something that animal rights activists need to be aware of when they campaign; that there are people with a variety of genders and sexualities present in the movement.

The idea that oppressed groups are more open to animal rights seems to gel with some of the things that I read when I was studying for my thesis. There was some evidence that suggested those who are poor are more likely to give their time or money to help others than those who are rich, for example. As I talked to vegans living in poverty, I realised that we (the animal rights community) have a much larger task at hand; we can't just focus on animal rights, we need to focus on creating a world without violence.

Looking at violence made me realise that violence is everywhere. We destroy the



earth (in Australia, the Great Barrier Reef is threatened by large corporate interests), pollute lower-income communities (which tend to be filled with people of colour, making this a racialised violence), keep food and shelter from those who need it, fight each other for survival via job hunts (while the government threatens to take away welfare payments that help job seekers), displace and intervene in Indigenous communities (currently in Australia the government is forcibly closing and relocating communities, delisting heritage sites, and siding with huge mining companies against Indigenous Australians), push climate change further to the point where species are at risk of extinction, shame those whose class stops them from accessing organic healthy foods, jail people or send them back to their oppressors for daring to try to come to Australia (our asylum seeker policy is disgusting and literally kills people), ignore disabled people, and lots more. How can we promote the end of violence against non-human animals, but refuse to extend this to the human animal?

[Content warning: this paragraph mentions suicide and self harm.]

This experience has not only been life-changing but life-affirming; I almost killed myself when I was 19. I also drank heavily, restricted my food intake, engaged in self-harm, and was depressed. I'm better now. Not fixed, but better. Veganism led me towards an ethic of self-care, of non-violence to myself. How could I love non-human animals and care about them, but not turn that inward? I am still within this time of my life. I have so much growing to

do and I'm not sure if it will ever end. I'm 25 now, but I feel like I only started really being awake to the world around me 6 years ago.

Into the Future

I relished my ability to do an Honours thesis. It's not something that many people get to do; spend a year writing about something they're interested in or care about. And with how things are headed in Australia, with the looming threat of privatisation of higher education, it's something that even less people will be able to access in the future. Luckily, tertiary education is not the be-all and end-all of education. We have other tools. One of the biggest of these tools is listening to each other. Reading about other peoples' experiences. Trusting that they know more about their experience than you do. Taking a step back and doing this has been such a big part of my personal growth.

It's through all of these experiences, books, talks, movies, blogs, debates, videos, tweets, and more that I have realised that there is no way that veganism is just about animal rights. It cannot be just about animal rights. For us to achieve a world that values life (and I mean that in a pro-choice kinda way), we need to be intersectional in our approach. We need to think about the consequences. We need to include everyone.



TeenVGN is a social network and support group that began as a casual website set-up in March 2013 by Laura and Kylie. It is a place for vegetarians and vegans, ages twelve to nineteen, to reach out and connect with other compassionate youth. In the early stages, TeenVGN was meant to be somewhat like Facebook: teens would be able to create a profile, write on each other's walls, start group forums, and share pictures with one another. Shortly after the website was set up, teen vegetarians and vegans from across the world began to sign-up. Soon after, TeenVGN started attending vegan festivals across Europe, including Bristol Vegfest, and were getting their name out into the vegan community. In just two short years, TeenVGN grew into an incredibly successful not-for-profit organization and won Vegfest UK's Best Vegan Blogger in 2014. What started as a mere website, TeenVGN now includes a plant-based food bank and will host their first VGN Summer Camp in 2015. I was fortunate enough to be able to ask the team at TeenVGN some questions about their organization and the exciting things they have planned!

Where did the idea for TeenVGN come from? What motivated you to get this going despite everything else happening in your lives?

Kylie was working for an animal rights charity at the time, and I (Laura) had just left work due to being diagnosed with Crohn's Disease. I had previously worked as a Youth Worker and studied P.E. at University. We were both vegan and decided to put our passions together to create a support group for teen vegetarians and vegans. As we knew there were no other groups like it and that young people had never had a space to call their own before now.

What age were you when you went vegan and how did veganism come into your lives?

We were both around 21 when we became vegan. Kylie went vegan as part of a challenge and never turned back. I had a friend who was vegan (who is now a part of the TeenVGN team), and she sort of "dared" me to try it. So I did and the rest is history!

Why was setting up a place for teen vegetarians and vegans important to you? What are some of the issues teen vegans face that might not be a problem with vegans from other age groups?

It was important to us because we knew that there was no other place purely, 100% for young people. A lot of great organizations have a section of their website dedicated to young people, but we wanted to be the first group who was doing everything we could to encourage our next generation. It's difficult for younger vegans because at the ages between 11-19 they are maybe starting high school, meeting new friends, new temptations. Peer pressure is hard to deal with when you are figuring out who you are, you are more vulnerable at that age, especially if you're the only vegan at your school. It's so hard and we wanted to reach out to those young people to show them that they are doing something beautiful and that they aren't alone.

Was TeenVGN an instant success or were there challenges in the early stages of its formation?

We were very surprised with how well people took what we were doing, there was so much support for us from the beginning. At the very beginning, we did have some nasty words spewed to us about how it would never work without having a big name attached to us, going out alone was the wrong way to go about it etc. But we brushed it off and it gave us more

motivation to make it work. And here we are! The support we've had from friends, family, and the vegan community is amazing, and we're really beginning to create a strong identity for TeenVGN. The kids who signed up when we first started are now too old to be on the website but we constantly get messages from them about how they want to volunteer for TeenVGN. We've even had postcards from members who we helped through some struggles and are now living out their lives being active for the animals and the vegan lifestyle. That is so rewarding.

Where has TeenVGN taken you over the past couple years?

Physically? We have done a few UK tours over the last two years from Cardiff, to London to Newcastle and Brighton, Bournemouth to Liverpool. We have yet to visit Scotland, but we plan to make that one of our next destinations. In our first year, we also went to France and did a 100 mile skiing fundraiser for TeenVGN which was amazing fun! We really hope to take what we do worldwide, connecting like minded young people and hosting meet ups and camps around the globe!

Did you have a moment that sticks out for you when you realized that what you are doing has made a positive impact in the lives of teen vegans and vegetarians?

I think the moment for us was when we got a specific postcard in the mail. One young lady who joined our site had problems at home, her parents weren't supportive of her wanting to go vegetarian, they would put meat on her plate at every meal and refuse to give her money to buy her own food. We spoke to her a lot during that time. Then almost a year later we received a postcard from her saying that she had moved to Berlin for University and that she was so grateful to us for supporting her and being there for her when she was having a hard time. She

is now vegan and the most amazing part is that her mother has now gone vegan too. We were super excited for that, it gave us the warmest feeling in our hearts to know that we'd made a difference.

TeenVGN has obviously had a positive impact on the teens who use it. How has running the organization changed your lives?

Personally, I've (Laura) learnt things that I never expected I would learn: graphic design, social media marketing, etc. Kylie is just amazing at everything to do with dealing with web customers and networking with businesses and companies who are interested in supporting us. She's very professional and I really wouldn't be able to do all this without her, she's like the backbone of TeenVGN. I guess it has changed our lives in the skills that we have learnt, and also in the friends that we have made. Our vegan community is amazing, there are so many wonderful people who share our vision and the way we approach veganism in society. Yeah, I think making the most wonderful friends has been a highlight.

From my understanding, TeenVGN was never meant to be a campaigning group. Could you elaborate on this? What are the goals for the organization? Have they changed since TeenVGN's formation?

TeenVGN never was a campaigning group nor will it ever be a direct campaigning group. We set up TeenVGN as a support and resource group for youngsters, to meet like minded people, to be encouraged by each other, and to generate creative ideas of how to become activists. We want to give them the correct information and drive to become activists through our website, blogs, and Summer Camp. But personally, both myself and Kylie wouldn't even know where to start with direct campaigning. We never want to be seen as a group that conflicts or steps

on the toes of others who are already doing such amazing things. We want to compliment and support them by using their resources and encouraging our members to join them.

Is it important for you to balance fun with doing positive things, such as the food bank effort?

It's definitely important for us to portray the fun and happy reasons to go vegan. Which is why you'll never really see any graphic images on our pages, that's not really how we want to go about things. We want to show people how fun and easy it is to be vegan and try to be the best and positive kind of people we can be. As for our food bank, it is a little more serious than what we usually do, but Anna, our other team member, came up with the idea of collecting plant-based food for people who are living in poverty so that they can experience vegan foods that they may never have tried before. I suppose it's a subtle way of getting people to try vegan foods without being "in your face" about it. We also partly decided to do the food bank, to be role models to our young members, to show them that they can just as easily do something for their community or for people less fortunate as it is still a form of activism. We try to teach compassion in any way that we can and we hope that our members and young followers will do the same.

You have taken a different approach to promoting the vegetarian and vegan lifestyle than many other veg organizations. Why do you think a more cheerful approach works?

There are a lot of images and campaigns that show the horrible issues with animal welfare and for some that is how they will see what's going on and change their lifestyle. We are just trying to go at it from a different angle because I think that if someone doesn't like seeing those images, they can just hide it from their feeds

and never have to look at it again, it's not like they show those images in the media. So we are going at it from an angle of "look how amazing a vegan lifestyle can be, delicious foods, healthy bodies, a community of wonderful people, look how easy it is to be vegan!" We like to see ourselves as vegan mainstream activists! We want veganism to be known in mainstream shops, cafes, media, and we want them all to know that there is a calling for it. We're all for independent and local shopping, but we're also for showing Starbucks, Costa, etc. that their efforts to bring soya milk into the equation is much appreciated and loved. After all, if we don't drink there, they won't see a demand for it and they'll stop doing it... Now that's not the direction that we want to go in is it? Veganism in mainstream is getting somewhere, people are starting to see what a wonderful life it can be. They learn about the compassion and cruelty-free side of it as they go along. Though, I'm not saying that there's a problem with explaining cruelty in meat and dairy industries to people, I do think they should be educated too, but with caution as we don't want to push people away.

This summer will prove to be a very exciting and busy time for TeenVGN with the summer camp. Where did the idea for a vegan summer camp come from? For those lucky enough to attend, what are they in store for?

I (Laura) went to camp as a teen and I loved it! We were trying to figure out the next step for TeenVGN when I came up with the idea for Summer Camp. It was a no brainer really. There are so many people doing their own events and meet ups that it just didn't feel right for us to do the same, we wanted to do something different, something that would catch people's attention. So the idea for the UK's first ever 100% vegan summer camp for teens came up. Our campers are going to be in for a real treat this year, we

have demos and workshops, campaigns talks on how to become better activists, movie nights, quiz nights, The Hunger Games (Camp Edition), wildlife walks, lots of free time around the campfire, yoga, and so much more!

Are you considering continuing TeenVGN as you grow older? Has it changed your plans for what you want to do in your lives?

We have discussed this many times, both myself and Kylie will continue as the faces of TeenVGN for a few years, and then we plan to pass on the role to someone else. We want to keep TeenVGN fresh and modern, so someone younger who shares our passion for TeenVGN will eventually be the face. I think both myself and Kylie will continue behind the scenes, maybe with the website and managing Summer Camp in years to come, but we definitely don't plan on being the faces of it forever. I personally think that it can be bad for an organization/group. We understand the fact that our views and ideas may not be current and cool forever so it's only fair that we pass it on to someone who knows better. We've never been about associating TeenVGN's achievement with our own faces anyway. TeenVGN is made up of hundreds of wonderful kids and thousands of supporters and followers who are making it all happen. It's a group achievement.

Are there any other vegan organizations that you would like to see team up with TeenVGN in the future?

We'd love to team up with the Vegan Lifestyle Association, which is a new organization here in the UK. They are current, up and coming and have some fantastic visions and dreams for veganism which we totally share. Also, we'd love to do more with certain campaigning groups like Sea Shepherd and League Against Cruel Sports, maybe even some organizations like Guardians of the Voiceless who are doing

amazing hands on work for strays and needy animals in India.

You have been able to create a safe and comfortable setting for teens to share stories and ideas and access support. What are your recommendations for other organizations that are looking to create a similar environment for teens?

It needs to be monitored 24/7, there need to be strict rules and regulations visible around the website/page. For example, our website doesn't tolerate any bullying or bad/offensive language and, along with us checking the website constantly, we have a request in place that each member reports something as soon as they notice it. And that seems to work pretty well. We've even got a few "supervisors" on the website, who were some of the first members of the website that have now turned 20 and they also keep an eye on the website and report any spam or bad behaviour. It's great to have their support.

What advice would you give to other organizations that are trying to get youth involved?

Just remember that a lot of them are vulnerable and are trying to find their identities in the world. Be supportive, try to see things through their eyes or think about how you would have dealt with a situation when you were their age. Ask them what they want to see within your organization, ask them how they would like to get involved. Giving them responsibilities lets them know that their being there is important to you.

Would you consider helping other teens start a similar group in their area? Do you think that this model could work in other places?

I think this would be an amazing idea! We're

all for Veg Clubs in schools and communities and we'd be so happy to support and help these groups in any way that we could, even if it's by coming to do talks or giving them ideas on how to fundraise to get started. Our belief is that these young people are our only hope for a compassionate future, so training them to do things like this would be exactly what we started TeenVGN to do. Support, educate and connect.

In just two years, TeenVGN has seen quite a lot of success. What would you like to see happen in the future?

In the future, we'd love to see our Summer Camp grow. We have some amazing dreams and aspirations for that which we'd love to see come to reality. We're thinking "Parent Trap" (the movie) style Summer Camps all around the country maybe eventually reaching other parts of the world. We also would love to expand our apparel and merchandise on our web shop. We'd also really like to see our Supporter Scheme bulk out a bit, for just £5 a year you can become a Supporter of TeenVGN. These funds are vital for us to continue doing what we are doing and

also to enable us to start up other projects and plans that we have in the pipeline. 100% of our time, funds and efforts go into our projects for young people, to enable them to become more aware of what's out there to do better and also to connect them with others because we believe that as a group connected, we can do some amazing things for the animals. We could change this world for the better.

Of course every new teen vegetarian or vegan has different struggles depending on their situation. Do you have one piece of advice that you could provide to any new veggie teens that are reading this?

Be compassionate. In every situation whether it is to do with animals or humans, be compassionate and understanding. Try not to take an aggressive approach towards people, lead by example. You'll be surprised about how people change because they are seeing the good in you. Adults and parents will be shocked by your loving and kind attitude towards life. Be kind and compassionate.

As someone who became vegetarian as the age of twelve and then vegan at the age of fourteen, I was extremely happy to hear that a space has been made for compassionate teens to find support. As Laura stated, before TeenVGN there was no space that was solely for teen vegetarians and vegans. Being a teenager is hard enough and adding a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle to everything else can be stressful and hard, especially if you are going it alone. I was the only vegan in my high school and the only other vegans I knew in my city were adults, and my struggles were often very different to theirs. I regularly felt like I was fighting an impossible battle with no one on my side. I know for a fact that I could have benefited from conversations with other vegan teens, something that TeenVGN now provides our compassionate youth today. If you are a vegetarian or vegan teen looking for support or looking to be part of a community that shares similar values, consider becoming a member at www.teenvgn.com. If you are not a teen, you should still check out their website for blogs, reviews, recipes, and more!

FOCUS

Back To School

Lucy Byrne



As a vegan adult, I am often challenged on my views. I'm routinely questioned; *"but what about their growth?"*, *"what not even chicken!?"*, *"what do you feed them?"*, or told *"You're so brave!"*, *"But they need calcium!"*, *"I'd never force my views on my children"* by adults who are often trying desperately not to look overtly panicked or shocked. Sometimes you can almost see them wondering if they should alert social services while they're also attempting to change the subject or find an excuse to run for the hills.

As a vegan parent, I'm used to the various reactions when a party or school trip requires me to drop the V bomb, but what is it like when you're 7 or 4?

My name is Lucy, I'm 31. I have two daughters, Leela, who is 7, and Breanna, who is 4. They have been vegan for nearly 3 years. I'd love to say they were vegan from birth, but alas it's not so. However, their transition to all things vegan means I have some insight into two different infant worlds. The commonly accepted world of "normality" and what is often seen as a skewed alternative, veganism. As a vegan parent, I'm used to the various reactions when a party or school trip requires me to drop the V bomb, but what is it like when you're 7 or 4?

My children are often challenged by adults, and I honestly think some adults don't even realise the position their putting them in. What can seem like an innocent question to an adult can be very daunting to a child. Especially with someone looming over them, someone they are supposed to respect and ultimately learn from. My

children have been offered meat by other family members; they've had to defend veganism on a number of occasions and they've been asked to tell adults why they are vegan.

Luckily, my kids are now pretty confident in these situations. Over time, they have asked me many questions and reached their own conclusions; I am always honest with them about it and will give them age appropriate answers. It can be tricky though since young children have no sense of time or scale. So to say *"56 billion farmed animals die each year for people to eat"* would go over their heads but if you said *"a mummy cow makes milk for a baby cow- not for humans"*, they get that and, let's face it, it makes perfect sense. Another phrase the children use is *"we like animals alive, we don't eat them, we have plenty of other things to eat"*. It's so basic, but it's honest and it's language that anyone can understand.

Overall, children don't need to be scared to a conclusion, they don't need shock tactics. Children haven't been worn down by the world and they genuinely want to be compassionate. Give a child a rabbit and an apple and see which they eat and which they play with.

These days when Leela is asked by an adult why she is vegan she says *"because it's better for the animals, it's better for me and it's better for the world and I'd like to grow up on a healthy planet with a future."* I have to say the look on people's faces after that statement really is something.

Now, you may assume I've coached her on that, I haven't, those are her words

not mine. She has learnt about the environment, animals, and health by asking many people many questions and that is her conclusion, in her own words.

Breanna went on a three day hunger strike at school when she first started because she couldn't stand the strong smell of cooked meat.

When Leela first started school, she asked a teacher to write a letter home because some parents were giving their children 'pig sandwiches'. Along with this, Breanna went on a three day hunger strike at school when she first started because she couldn't stand the strong smell of cooked meat. So we had a choice, to either segregate her at lunch time, making her a sort of vegan leper, or talk to her about it. Now, the fact that she will face this in this decidedly non-vegan world is something she has come to grips with. I reminded her that when we go to restaurants, other people sometimes eat meat *"but they're not next to me"* I remember her saying. Leela chimed in with *"But Bre, if they can see all the yummy vegan things you're eating maybe they'll want to try them too!"* which put a very positive spin on the conversation.

At 4, Breanna has managed to spark many vegan conversations with her friends over lunch and has reported back that some children are very interested and some are now making different sandwich choices! Is it fair that she has to concede? Maybe not, is life fair? No.

I remember telling one of the teachers I was going to inform the school of Leela being vegan and this teacher turned to me

and very sternly said *"is that her choice or yours? They won't let you change it back if she changes her mind y'know!"* and it made me angry. Angry at the judgement and angry at the pre-conceived idea that this was a whim and not something to be taken seriously. Sometimes, the girls come across this too, adults will offer them meat or something containing dairy and say things like *"it's only a little bit, it won't hurt"*. So far, the girls have always politely declined such offers.

School trips are also another sticky subject. When the whole class is excited about going to a farm or aquarium what do you do? I always give the girls the option, I don't tell them they cannot go, we talk about it. Leela visited an aquarium last year because she didn't want to be left out, but came home and said she never wanted to go again saying *"it seemed wrong mummy, all these amazing fish in tanks. And turtles and sharks and the man even said in the sea they travel really far. But they can't go far in a tank, indoors with people looking at them all day."* That was what she took from that trip, that was her conclusion and she learnt that herself by experiencing that place. As vegan children, they are looking at the world through different eyes to their non-vegan peers and that was never so clear until after that trip.

These days we meet with other vegan families regularly which provides support for both parents and children alike. We've just started to organise activities for vegan children too. Recently, we did a sponsored scoot/bike ride in a local park to raise money for a vegan run animal sanctuary. Along with this, Leela has a pen-pal in

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America who is the same age as her and is also vegan. We spend time together at home making vegan food and when we go away for weekends as a family, we explore vegan cafes or animal sanctuaries. These things I find help the children feel connected and being around vegan friends is always a nice, relaxed way to spend time.

We're lucky that we have a vegan run animal sanctuary not too far away from where we live, so from time to time we get to see animals in more natural surroundings. However, the children also see the damage of animal industries. For example, the sanctuary has many birds that have been debeaked, ducks with their wings clipped, and horses thrown out by riding schools because they are no longer

suitable for riding. More recently, the sanctuary now has baby lambs who were orphaned and, luckily, rescued. We also see pigs with tremendous personalities and cows playing and jumping, traits that they otherwise would not be able to display. Seeing those things first hand has made for some great, insightful conversations with my children.

Overall, we talk openly about being vegan. So, I thought I'd ask them a few questions about it, particularly when it comes to being 'the vegan kid' at school, and this is what they had to say:

Leela (age 7) excitedly sits down ready to be interviewed, Bre (age 4) sits next to her sister and looks at me with curiosity.

So, how long have you been vegan?

Bre: “Since always really, I never ever ate meat.”
(That’s true, she always refused!)

Leela: “Nearly 3 years now, I think.”

Do you like being vegan?

In unison: “YES!”

What is the best thing about being vegan?

Bre: “Not eating animals, I don’t know why anyone would want to eat an animal when there are other things to eat.”

Leela: “The best thing is feeling so happy, that nothing died to feed or clothe me or anything else. It makes me feel nice.”

What’s the worst thing?

Leela: “Not being allowed peanut butter sandwiches at school.” (Due to other children with allergies.)

Bre: “Other people eating animals, I don’t like that, the smell of meat isn’t nice at lunch time. I have to try and ignore it.”

So, what is it like being vegan at school?

Leela: “It feels good, there is another vegan girl in my class, which is nice. When my friends ask questions, I can tell them what I know and I feel good about it, it’s positive mostly. Sometimes people say silly things, but that’s ok because I’m 7 and so are they!”

Do your friends ask about being vegan?

Leela: “Sometimes, they say ‘why are you vegan?’ and I say ‘because it’s good for me, the planet, and the animals’. Or they say ‘you need meat to be healthy’ and I say ‘well I’m healthy and I don’t eat it!’”

Bre (*turns to Leela*): “And plants are so healthy and they fight diseases!”

So, they seem more interested in health rather than animals or the planet?

Leela: “They never ask about the planet, I don’t think they make the connection. They sometimes ask about the animals, but mostly they think you have to have meat or dairy to be healthy.”

Bre: “Yeah, even my teacher said that when we did healthy eating at school.”

What did you think about that?

Bre: “I just said to her ‘animal things (products) aren’t healthy.’”

What did she say about that?

Bre: “Nothing.” (This was mentioned in Breanna’s school report, and I spoke with her teacher about it. Since then, the school has been more open to the idea of veganism.)

Bre then adds: “We don’t need to eat animals. I don’t understand why people do.”

Leela: “It’s most annoying when adults don’t understand, they should know better. One of my teachers said we should eat meat because we have sharp teeth!”

What did you say?

Leela: “Nothing at the time but now I know hippos and gorillas have huge pointy teeth and they eat plants!”

How do you feel when you see animals in fields or when you’ve seen animals in tanks or cages?

Bre: “It’s sad, they want to be free with their friends. Why would they want to be in a cage and have people looking at them? It’s horrible. I’d like to see all the animals, but only free. No animal wants to be locked up!”

Leela: “Or killed. That’s why it’s so good being vegan, because I know that I’m happy and healthy and nothing died or was hurt to make

me happy or healthy. So I see animals and I feel happy when they're free, like if I see a cat in the street doing its own thing, I feel happy for that cat. Or when we go to the retreat (vegan run animal sanctuary in the UK) I feel so happy seeing all those free happy animals roaming around. I feel good about that, I don't want to eat them! I know I don't need to eat them, so why would I? I know people do and I hope that gradually people will understand that they don't need to and that seeing a pig running around and being playful is much nicer than seeing one dead on a table. AND I love vegan food, there is so much to choose from, I love lentil shepherd's pie the best and spinach lasagne and.."

Bre: "I like vegan cheesy toast and vegan sausages and cakes!"

So if you could say anything to the world about being vegan what would it be?

Bre: "I like being vegan, it makes me feel good. I love animals. I feel happy around them."

Leela: "If you want to live a happy, compassionate life, just go vegan. It's easy, you can do it anytime, just go for it, it's just great!"

I couldn't have put that better myself!



Seed & Almond Breakfast Granola

Ingredients

1 cup pepitas
1 cup sunflower seeds
1 cup chia seeds
1 cup slivered almonds
1 cup buckwheat
1 cup flax seeds
1 cup hemp seeds (optional)
1 cup of sesame seeds
2 Tbps of melted coconut oil
1 Tbsp of pink salt
1 Tbsp of coconut sugar
Sprinkle of spices, ground ginger, cinnamon,
nutmeg, all spice, cloves, or pumpkin pie
spice, to taste.

Directions

1. In a bowl mix the seeds and almonds with the coconut oil and sprinkle with ground ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, all spice, cloves, coconut sugar, or pumpkin pie spice, to taste.
2. Spread mixture on a large baking tray covered with baking paper.
3. Cook in a 180 degrees Celsius heated oven for 5 minutes or until nicely golden brown, checking and turning until desired roast. Be careful not to burn as there's a fine line between roasted to perfection and burnt.
4. Whilst cooking, mix & turn over the seeds to get an even roasting.

Sarah Bradshaw



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Mama Stays Meaty

Or Why Baby Boomers Hate

Brussels Sprouts

by Lisa Febre



I barely remember a life outside of being vegetarian or vegan. I went vegetarian when I was 16 after a research project on animal testing. Though it was difficult for me to maintain a vegetarian lifestyle in high school, once I left for college I was able to start cooking for myself, and things became much easier. Animal rights was the reason I went vegetarian, and it was the only reason I went vegan at 33. Learning about the horrors of the dairy industry, specifically the treatment and abuse of male calves, made it easy to give up that precious cheese that everyone proclaims they just can't live without. But not everyone feels this way, and it seems that the group of individuals who either are outright opposed (or at the very least find it difficult to adopt a more plant-based diet) are those in the 50 and over age group. Why is this?

But why is it so easy to convert a young adult when it seems nearly impossible to talk to an older one (50 and older) about the same issues?

Just by observation, it seems as if younger adults (16-30 years old) are more likely to go vegan. Talk to a person during his/her early adulthood, and you may plant a seed that grows into veganism. It's wonderful and inspiring! But why is it so easy to convert a young adult when it seems nearly impossible to talk to an older one (50 and older) about the same issues? Is there something that we, as *preachy vegans*, can do better to initiate the older generation into the vegan cult?

I decided to ask one dozen friends and family members, ages 50 and older, a set of

questions regarding how the "Go Vegan!" message can be reshaped to fit their demographic. Questions about organic food, social structure, medical benefits, and family history were added to my list of queries. What I have garnered has made it clear that there is much to be learned from our elders, and definitely much they want to learn from younger vegans.

The most obvious answer to the question "*Why does the 'Go Vegan' message seem to fall on deaf ears when those ears are over 50?*" was repeated over and over by my respondents: "*you can't teach an old dog new tricks*". People are set in their ways, and the more years that pass, the stronger those ways are reinforced. I believe it may be possible to hit on one topic, one detail, one small point that may make that old dog sit up and think, "*I never knew...*" You have to know your audience, and I think the fewer people you bring the vegan message to at a given time, the better your chance is to touch them in some way. A blanket "*Go Vegan!*" post on your Facebook newsfeed with a picture of a sow in a gestation crate is more likely to scare off the vast majority of bacon lovers; a conversation with your mother about how you think cutting dairy may help her arthritis, and encouraging her to google the subject is likely to be more successful. Will she cut dairy? Possibly. Maybe the point isn't to push an *all-or-nothing* approach on our older family and friends but to encourage small changes that have a direct benefit *for* them.

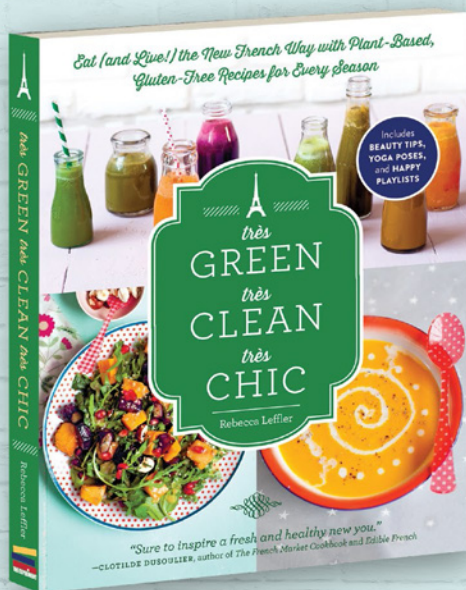
This leads me to the most important point of this research – the feeling that the word "vegan" represents an all-or-nothing way of living. People who are not vegan see

this as a challenge to their right to eat what they want. They surmise there are implied rules to being vegan, that you can't cut just eggs or pork, but you've got to eliminate *everything*. That is really scary to most people. The word itself holds a lot of power, as many of us know who deal with criticism from friends and family, and my test subjects were very resistant to calling anything they ate "vegan" much less labeling themselves as such. This could be the biggest wrong turn in the vegan message. Instead of making people feel as if they have to give up *everything*, and call themselves "vegan", maybe it would be better to encourage them to give up (or cut back?) on just a few things. Who knows where that kind of thinking will lead.

I found that all of the respondents were

interested in the idea of *Meatless Monday* menus and advertising. It certainly encourages them to cut back on meat without having to give it up completely. Most people are resistant to the cold turkey approach. And rightly so. When I hear someone say, "*I couldn't possibly give up ice cream!*" I imagine how awful I would feel if someone told me I had to give up chocolate right away, citing reasons I didn't fully understand or care about. Instead of trying to convince them to give up something they clearly have an emotional attachment to, why not suggest they first give up something they don't like much or eat as often? Moderation may suit us all better – people don't need meat at every single meal, just as I certainly don't need a half-pound of chocolate every afternoon. Introducing the idea of *Meatless Mondays*

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is a kinder, gentler approach. It sends the message that you don't have to be vegan; you can just try it one day a week and see if you like it.

Coming from my friend Melinda, who responded quite elaborately to my questions, was the news that she and her family have been enjoying a meatless meal at least once a week for a few years now. Everyone feels better, and it gives her a chance to try some new recipes. On top of that, she estimates that 95 percent of her groceries are organic. She places eating organic higher on her priority list than the once-a-week meatless meal. In fact, I discovered many respondents were more open to trying organic produce and chemical-free meats. It seems obvious people are much more concerned about the antibiotics, growth hormones, and pesticides because these are tangible concerns for everyone living in our society. Organic foods allow them to feel some control over these chemicals, though those who responded that they do not buy organic claimed the reason was concern regarding the actual labeling process and the integrity of organic verification.

Many of my respondents told me they would not discuss any dietary questions with their doctor. It wasn't their doctor's business was a common mantra.

What kind of influence can those in the medical field wield over their patients – even when it comes to what to eat, what not to eat? The 60 and older portion of my interviewees are of the age when they are starting to have some chronic health concerns, which means they are seeing

their doctors more often than they used to. Many of my respondents told me they would not discuss any dietary questions with their doctor. It wasn't their doctor's business was a common mantra. One person said: *"Sometimes their advice is based on their own personal opinions without bothering to do any in-depth research on any social issues or concerns surrounding healthy eating."*

The one factor that surprised me the most was the pushback regarding the health benefits that would result from cutting animal products from one's diet. I don't expect any of my respondents to read "The China Study", or subscribe to PCRM's updates, but it seems relatively easy to get information on the internet regarding the positive effects of cutting red meat, in particular, on blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and cholesterol. Almost every single respondent told me this wasn't true, and even if their doctors told them this was so, they wouldn't believe their physicians. This is very interesting to me. Why the resistance to this particular fact? It may be important to note that most did not continue answering any more of the questions in the "medical" category after my query regarding whether they would discuss their diets with their doctors.

Another overwhelming opinion all the respondents expressed was that they don't care at all what people think about the things they do. Perhaps they consider themselves shielded from criticism – by age and the inherent respect that's given to them once they reach a certain age – and carry on as they see fit, but many teenagers and young adults might be bothered by

ridicule once they are outed as vegan. People may not feel so bold to laugh at a 60-year-old who cuts out meat, while a 20-year-old vegan is fair game. It's this aspect of the conversation that reinforces my theory that it is the word "vegan" that brings the negative comments and attention. The Baby Boomers are a group not easily swayed or affected by criticism. They would be more likely to respond to a medical event that touches them personally, and make changes when they reach that conclusion on their own.

What kinds of dietary habits did the Great Depression children grow up with that they couldn't shake once they became parents themselves?

Family history played a huge part in the perception of what being vegan means to my interviewees. For the older respondents (65 and older), their parents were children during The Great Depression. With that came a lack of proper diet. A few people pointed out there was a belief that meat and butter were outward signs of Middle Class comfort. How did that affect the way they raised their own children in the Post-WWII world? What kinds of dietary habits did the Great Depression children grow up with that they couldn't shake once they became parents themselves? "*Eat everything on your plate!*" was something that every single respondent said their parents had told them on a regular basis. Not being able to get up from the table until you eat everything – no matter whether you like that food – was common practice, it seems. I remember being told this often during my childhood in the 1970s. Once,

at the age of five, I was required to eat a smelt (fish) before being excused from the table. I not only gagged and cried in front of everyone, but to this day I remember the incident vividly. This made me swear I would never make my own son eat anything he didn't like - animal or vegetable.

Quite a few people told me stories of the backyard slaughter of lambs, chickens, and ducks, and the lingering sadness they still feel about those experiences. My mother remembers live chickens hanging over the tub in the basement washroom awaiting slaughter. My father tells stories of a neighbor who brought over a live chicken every few weeks, and how my grandmother was so uneasy about having to handle tending to the task at hand on her own that she would cook the meat until it was dry leather. I often wondered where her disgust toward chicken came from. One of my mother's younger sisters, MaryAnn, recalls coming home from school one spring day to find a lamb in the backyard. It became her pet, and she played with it. When Easter Sunday came around, the lamb was gone. The children were told it "*ran away*". In her naiveté, the next year she tied the next lamb's knots tighter, hoping to prevent it from running away again. She tells me now that the sadness has haunted her her whole life, and she has not eaten lamb since then.

The inclusion of meat at meals for many of these families (from my grandparents' Post-Depression childhood, to my parents' Post-WWII childhood) meant an actual connection with the animals. They would slaughter the beasts, prepare and cook them, and eat them, which

meant meat came at a higher cost than monetary concerns: the energy and time put into preparation, and for some, like my grandmother, overcoming the fear and disgust at the process. To not finish everything on your plate was an insult not just to the animal, but to the parent who had to toil to bring that meal to the table. Could there be some residual guilt among the Baby Boomers? If you don't eat meat, you're somehow disrespecting someone – a parent – who went to all the trouble to make you this meal?

Sadly, most of the stories submitted to me involved a vegetable being the thing that held a child at the table, and that very same vegetable is something – to this day – they won't eat.

I find it interesting that vegetables came across as a punishment during my respondents' childhood. Brussels sprouts were at the center of the controversy. If the dog wouldn't eat them, "*there must be something very wrong with them!*" offered Melinda. Children have very sensitive palates. They have "new" tastebuds that amplify all flavors. Thus, I'm never surprised when a child chooses a hotdog over broccoli. However, if the broccoli is turned into a punishment ("*No desert until your broccoli is gone!*"), then the likelihood of that child, now an adult, eating broccoli diminishes. Sadly, most of the stories submitted to me involved a vegetable being the thing that held a child at the table, and that very same vegetable is something – to this day – they won't eat.

Finally, I have a better understanding

of the genesis of the familiar dinner table question: "*You're just going to eat vegetables...?*" If vegetables are the thing you have to suffer through to get to the good stuff, who in their right mind would choose to eat only them? Who would choose to give up pork chops and cheese and all the delicious comfort food they enjoy for a plate full of punishment and sacrifice?

I couldn't be more thrilled to have received the responses from my friends and family. The question wasn't "*Why aren't you vegan?*" but "*Why aren't you vegan?*" If the message can be tailored to fit this demographic better we'd see a lot more vegan Boomers. My own tune is going to change with my friends and family. Less "vegan" food, and more meatless and animal-free meals. Judging by the stories I've heard, I've got a better shot at encouraging someone to stop eating the animal they were so saddened to see slaughtered as a child. And maybe, just maybe, I can convince my dear friend Melinda that Brussels sprouts are actually quite delicious. I just have to find the right recipe to share with her.



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From left to right: my grandfather, grandmother, and my mother. The rest are all her brothers and sisters, with the exception of the one sister taking the photograph. Notice the TWO turkeys on the table and very little of anything else?

Both my grandmother & grandfather were excellent cooks - my grandmother made most of the traditional Italian meals while my grandfather handled the more Sicilian, which meant he cooked the meats & fishes, while grandma made the pastas and cheeses.

My aunt, second from the right (kind of hiding her face behind the front sister), was the one who provided the lamb story and many really amazing answers to these questions. Her daughter, my cousin, is also vegan, and has been encouraging her mom to cut dairy to help her rheumatoid arthritis and various other inflammatory diseases.

Asparagus and Tomato Tart with Cashew Ricotta

Ingredients

2 cup raw cashews, soaked in water for two hours or more
2 Tbsps lemon juice
2 Tbsps nutritional yeast
1/4 tsp sea salt
6 Tbsps water
10 sheets of 13"x18" fillo dough, thawed according to the package
1/4 cup + 1 tsp olive oil, divided
1 bunch asparagus (about 3/4 lb)
1 large tomato, thinly sliced
Salt and pepper to taste
Zest from one lemon
5 or 6 fresh basil leaves, chopped

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. To make the cashew ricotta, process the raw cashews, lemon juice, nutritional yeast, sea salt, and water in a food processor until fluffy and ricotta-like. Set aside.
3. To make the crust, line a baking sheet with a piece of parchment paper. Lay down one sheet of fillo dough on top of it. Keep the rest of the fillo sheets covered with a clean, wet kitchen towel to avoid drying out. Quickly brush the sheet with a thin layer of olive oil using a pastry brush. Layer another sheet on top of it, and brush that one with a thin layer of olive oil. Continue this step until all of the sheets are layers and brushed with oil. Then, gently roll the edges of the dough in towards the center to form the crust's rim. Brush with a small amount of olive oil to help keep it in place.
4. Carefully spread the cashew ricotta over the crust. Then, layer the tomato slices to top of the ricotta.
5. Trim the tough ends off the asparagus. Gently toss with the remaining olive oil. Layer on top of the tomatoes. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
6. Bake for 20 – 25 minutes, until the crust is golden brown. Sprinkle the cooked tart with lemon zest and chopped fresh basil leaves. Slice and enjoy!

Dianne Wenz

Starting VeganStart

Dave Shishkoff



Are you familiar with Wiarton Willie? That's what I ask when people inquire where I'm from. I grew up in Wiarton, Ontario. It's a town with a population of 1,500 and it is three hours north of Toronto. Wiarton Willie is an albino groundhog, kept in captivity, who 'predicts' spring weather. It's a ridiculous notion, but it's how the town is known.

This small town is where at least one person went vegan in 1990. I was 14 years old, and had read some books like *Diet for a New America* and *Fit For Life*, and my family had been exploring vegetarianism a bit. We ate tofu every now and then, and soy milk was in the fridge. There were actually veggie burgers and dogs available in a weird little shop, but that was the

extent of 'vegan' goods. I was also scared of cancer - my dad had died a couple years earlier from a brain tumour at the age of 46. A dominant message in these books was that diet was a primary factor under our control that could help prevent cancer. So, avoiding animal products wasn't such a foreign notion to me, despite my young age.

Soup Man

It was my first day of high school, which was in 'the city' (also known as Owen Sound). My friends (a few others from Wiarton, who also attended West Hill Secondary School in Owen Sound) went across the street to the Harvey's or Wendy's (I forget what was there), and we were in line ordering our

burgers. Something in my head clicked, and I just got the fries. I decided then that I was not going to eat animal products any more, and became a strict vegetarian. At the time, I didn't know the word 'vegan', which I don't think was mentioned much in the books I'd been reading. High school wasn't going to be challenging enough for a quirky, different-thinking oddball like myself, and so this decision 'enhanced' my experience in the redneck, hockey-jock high school.

Being a strict vegetarian wasn't activism for me initially. It was just something I was doing for my health. My tofu dogs were made fun of, even though they looked and tasted pretty much the same as what everyone else ate. I would sometimes bring a cup-o-soup for lunch, and was branded 'Soup Man'. In hindsight, it's symptomatic of just how ignorant (or possibly threatened) my peers were. It wasn't even an uncommon food... although less-so once the name got around. (Tip for vegans in high school: call someone 'Burger Man', maybe everyone else will stop eating burgers.)

Halfway through grade 12, some vegan friends who were a few years older had moved to Victoria, British Columbia, and it sounded divine! Mild weather, no snow, and the Pacific ocean right there! I had a small inheritance from my dad, and moved out west. Previous to this, I had already

moved to my grandmother's a year earlier, to get away from an abusive step-father, who was ironically a popular teacher at the 'other' high school.

The "Animals" Guy

It was January 1994, and Victoria felt like more of a fit for me. It was easier to find like-minded people, and I was no longer harassed for being 'me' at the high school. There were lots more vegan options at the grocery stores, and even a vegan restaurant called Green Cuisine, which is still there today and very much unchanged. ;)

By 1996, I was a bike courier and had started getting more active in the community, attending the vegetarian association potlucks and reading a bit more. A vegan friend was hired by IFAW to run an office to target the new Fisheries Minister David Anderson. The seal hunt had started up again - in the 80s it was relatively non-existent, the number of seals killed annually were in the 10,000 range. The government had increased the allowable numbers to around 400,000 seals (where it remains today. Thankfully interest is waning, and the actual number of seals killed has been in the 50,000 range the last few years, and, at the writing of this, the number is nearly 28,000 seals killed.)

This is where I got really involved. I spent my spare time at the office volunteering,

doing whatever needed doing - from stuffing envelopes to drafting a web page for the CATCSH campaign (over dial-up!) or dressing up as the seal for protests. Some of the activism was pretty fun and inventive for the time - we COVERED the city with posters describing the revived seal hunt, and the phone number listed 'for more info' was David Anderson's office.

I'd also given up being a bike courier (even in clear-skied Victoria, there's still a lot of exhaust in the downtown core). Along with this, I also worked at a London Drugs, where I was known as the 'animals' guy. One day, a staffer from the photo department came to me crying, telling me she'd just developed photos of some guy who'd been visiting South America and shot a leopard, armadillo, and other animals. I asked if she could get me extra copies, and looked into the legalities of trophy hunting (while ignoring the legalities of my workplace). Let's just say the law was not on my side in either case... It was apparently legal for him to hunt and kill these animals, and it was not appropriate for me to know his name, address, and have copies of these photos. And that was the end of London Drugs for me.

Finding a Profession

Luckily, I'd been building my own skills as a web developer, and, thanks to a friend in Peterborough, was able to host websites as well as design them, which started my new career. I sought out local environmental organizations and businesses, and lent a hand to the likes of Sarah Kramer (anyone remember her forum?), Green Cuisine, and, later in the mid-2000's, ran the Vega

website. (Remember the blue and orange site?)

Self-employment was for me. I was also recording and performing music at the time (even wrote some vegan songs, you might enjoy '[Dairy Trucks](#)') so this gave me the time I needed to follow my passions. I was a professional volunteer - my work was to support my ambitions which were to volunteer.

After the IFAW campaign faded, I got involved with the local groups CETA (Citizens for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and VIVA (the Vancouver Island Vegetarian Association). In CETA we protested the local rodeo, horse carriages, fur shops, and McDonald's, and tabled at local events. VIVA was more of a social group, organizing potlucks and publishing a newsletter. EarthSave was really taking off at this point, in the late 90's, and so a group of us founded an EarthSave Victoria chapter. We didn't do protests, but did more info tables at weekly markets and organized an 'Eco Living Fair' featuring local orgs and businesses in the growing green sphere.

Swimming With the Fishes

In 2000, after we survived Y2K, PETA called, and was doing a tour of the West Coast for their fishing campaign, and needed someone to dress up as 'Elfish', their mascot fish slightly inspired by Elvis. We'd start in Victoria, head over to Vancouver, then go down the coast in the US with a few stops between Seattle and Portland. Even then, I had some misgivings about PETA, but wasn't about to challenge the biggest animal rights group in the world. Overall,



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it sounded interesting, so I got involved.

It was actually a pretty fun trip, and the last thing I expected happened by the end of it: the campaigner and I kind of fell for each other. After she went back to PETA HQ in Norfolk we kept in touch, emailing several times a day and occasionally talking on the phone. It turned out she was headed back to the West Coast in November for a court hearing - she'd pied Ms Nevada (or someone like that) in the face for an animal rights protest. It was a perfect time to meet back up, and so we planned a couple weeks hanging out in California and Nevada, and then I'd fly back to Norfolk with her and check out PETA for a week before returning home.

The first part was great, but the PETA office was a bit odd. We were in the campaigns

office, and I volunteered during the days there as well. It was mostly friendly, but not what I was used to, or expecting. You got tough quick. There was also a competitive element - no one ever left when the clock hit 5pm...it was almost a competition to see who'd stay in latest. Which was fine with me, I was doing vegan volunteer work, and she seemed happy doing it as well.

The week went by really quick, and near the end she started crying...telling me she didn't want me to leave. I was still a bit blissed out, it was a hugely different experience from my own world, so I wanted to stay as well. We talked about it, and figured out how I could stay, and made arrangements.

I managed to stay until May 2001. I was quite unhappy, and missed a lot of the

elements from Victoria (one standout, strangely, was Silver Hills bread. I liked the idea of sprouted bread, but the only option in Norfolk was Ezekiel's, which was like slightly moist cardboard).

I also didn't like PETA. I interned the majority of my time there (December through May), doing a number of tasks. One bigger aspect I was involved in was helping organize people across the US and Canada to put on Murder King protests (this was their big campaign at the time). I also started asking questions. One time we went to hand out second-hand fur coats to homeless people. The coats were marked, with a shaved band around the arm, so they wouldn't be resold. This irked me on a few levels. First, there was a level of poor-shaming. Part of the goal was that wealthier people wearing fur would see homeless people wearing fur, and want to stop wearing it. Along with that, staff would also insult people they see wearing fur, using phrases like 'two-bit whore'. I believe this was eventually frowned upon, but barely. What's worse, was that PETA was championing statements like 'Fur is Not a Fabric', but it was okay for people to wear it? I asked PETA's PR person, who told me flat out "*it's just a slogan*".

There was lots more. There was the sexism of course. At the time, PETA was supporting a shocking position from philosopher Peter Singer where he had published an essay defending bestiality. Perhaps the worst was the converted freezer where they kill thousands of pets each year. I saw perfectly healthy kittens and puppies go in, to have their lives taken by the world's biggest animal rights organization.

We knew it wasn't going to work out, she was dedicated to PETA, and I couldn't tow the company line any more. We rented a truck, and headed back north to Toronto, where a friend generously offered to let me stay and get my feet back under me. It took a while, the breakup was really hard for me. Despite all my misgivings with PETA, I still had strong feelings for her.

Building an ARK

In Toronto, I got involved with ARK II, one of the active groups there (and who still is!) I also was invited to move into the 'Vegan House' - a shared house that was entirely vegan - how cool was that? I didn't do a ton of activism as I was collecting myself and figuring out my next step. I was finding Toronto wasn't really great for me. I was working as a landscaper when 9/11 happened. We went to her parents to watch the news. I decided in October I'd move back to Victoria, and returned to my sunny city. It was nice to reconnect with longtime friends, although it hadn't even been a year, I felt like it had been much longer than that.

It took me some time to get my feet under me again - I continued with my web design business, had given up recording, and got back into activism. It was incredibly disappointing for me to see that both CETA and EarthSave Victoria had folded in my absence. VIVA was still kicking, and so I aligned myself with this group, and started an ARK II West Coast chapter.

Things got busy really quick. VIVA memberships grew rapidly, and I was organizing a very popular monthly potluck series with featured speakers and raffles.



My activism picked up as well, and in addition to helping start a vegan club at the University, we rolled out campaigns with ARK II, and a big focus was on one started by a friend, which focused on Famous Players, and getting them to sever ties with a fur business in Vancouver. We protested out on their busy corner a few times every week for a few years, and eventually they caved.

Going in Circles

I'd also gotten back into cycling - before becoming a bike courier, I was an avid mountain biker. In 2003, a long-time mountain biking friend insisted I try out the local velodrome (the big concrete oval you see in the Olympics for cycling) and I was hooked instantly. I started racing the weekly league, and wanting to get better,

started training as well (which led to me riding/training/racing 5 days and 12-15hrs per week!)

Of course, it spread across many areas of cycling, and I raced track, road, TTs, mountain, and cyclocross. In 2007, I started the Victoria chapter of OrganicAthlete, an organization who promotes veganism and organic values through sport, with a heavy focus on cycling. Now, my cycling was vegan too, and my bike kit even had 'GO VEGAN!' on it! It's always been a small club, and while not focused on results, we have done pretty well over the years, with several of us winning or finishing near the top of several local racing leagues. We've also organized numerous events, and my involvement in the velodrome association meant that events were vegan too. For example, we would sell vegan pizza at our

big events. Thanks to things like this, the Victoria cycling scene is very aware that veganism isn't a hindrance to bike racing.

Around this time I was really starting to think critically about various groups and philosophers. There was a lot of hypocrisy and inconsistency in the movement. Like PETA with its sexism, giving out furs, and killing pets. Peter Singer and his crazy Utilitarian ideas. Gary Francione made some good sense, but then also went off the deep end in several areas, like his criticism of 'single-issue campaigns', which would include any activism singling out an issue, like banning fur, horse-drawn carriages or circuses. I suppose campaigns protecting children are also 'single issue', and perhaps feminism is 'sexist' as well..?

None of these groups or individuals represented the conclusions I had come to...so I didn't bother aligning with any of them, and instead did my own thing. Well, until 2006, when I was invited to work for a rather obscure group. We'll call them OAF. OAF actually had some interesting

ideas, and there were really good thinkers involved in their work. Unfortunately, as I learned a few years in, there were also major failings when it came to management and treatment of staff. They're based in the US on the east coast, and I was working from my home in Victoria, so was spared a lot of the drama...but while they brought some great ideas to the table on animal rights issues, these OAFs were a nightmare to work for, with unreasonable expectations and an attitude of ownership on staff (which usually resulted in people leaving or being fired after a few months or years). It came to a head in March 2014, when I was fired. No real reason was given. After nearly 8 years of dedication, I was given the boot, and 2 weeks of severance pay.

There is currently an open case with the BC Employment Standards Branch pursuing OAF for my mistreatment; they've already ruled in my favour, OAF's appeal was rejected as well.

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Part of a Complete Breakfast

Since March 2014, it's taken me a while to get back on my feet. I organized our 3rd Annual Victoria Vegan Fest on Canada Day, which was another hit! The next day, I moved to Vancouver to be with my sweetie. We'd been going back and forth between Victoria and Vancouver for a year, and decided we needed to settle, and since she's actually working in Vancouver, that makes more sense. I've been reluctant to get too involved locally, especially since our long-term plan is to return to Victoria. But this actually provided the opportunity to try something different. Instead of a local campaign, I decided in December to give one of my ideas an international reach, and that's where VeganStart.org comes in.

One issue we face as vegan activists is telling people 'how' to go vegan. There are many great reasons 'why', but once that's accepted, no groups really offer ways to ease into it (which research shows is more successful for long-term vegans. Typically, those who fall off the wagon also go vegan overnight. But not always, as I'm evidence!) It goes from Meatless Monday to 7-Day Vegan Kickstart programs...that's quite a jump! And those fully vegan kickstart programs are probably intimidating to a lot of people.

It's more common to encourage people to switch by eliminating animal products, usually meat first, then eggs and dairy. But this isn't practicing veganism, it's still practicing being a slightly different omnivore. I want people eating vegan, and so that's our focus - and we narrow it down to breakfast. Switch to vegan breakfasts

every day. It's the easiest meal to convert or veganize, and it gets people thinking vegan. And this will influence the rest of their day - if they put soy in their coffee with breakfast, chances are they will later in the day. This makes it significantly easier to veganize the rest of their meals as well, when they're ready to commit to more.

I'm in the unique position of wanting people to finish my program as quickly as possible! After doing vegan breakfasts, the 7 or 30 Day Vegan Kickstart programs, which may have been daunting to many, will seem easier.

The goal is to provide literature to activists, and our website is already full of helpful info for people who are looking to start going vegan. We're active on social media, sharing interesting stories, news, recipes, and tips, and we also love organizing giveaways, and usually have some kind of contest on the go.

It'll be fun to see where VeganStart goes - it's already growing pretty quickly, and we're enjoying a lot of support and positive feedback. And it all started with a kid in Warton, Ontario who decided to go vegan at a fast food restaurant.

Editor's Note: Just as this issue was going to press, Dave found himself involved in an exciting new vegan venture called Vegan Supply. It's a new online vegan shop based on the West Coast of Canada, offering many products and brands that are hard to access in the country, and much more! Check out VeganSupply.ca for more info.

Growing Up Vegan

Veronica Houk



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As a child, two passions of mine were evident to almost everyone who met me: the English language, in the form of garrulous conversation, and food. I consumed both voraciously. I was five years old the day I felt both betrayed me. I was enjoying a plate of my favorite item at Grand Dragon Buffet: roast beef. As I was chewing on a slice, my mother asked me to “*pass some cow*”. I laughed at her whimsy. How ridiculous to imagine a cow sitting on the table! What cow? Realizing my misunderstanding, my mother explained, “*Beef means cow. You’re eating cow.*”

I immediately broke into tears. Why hadn’t anyone told me that I was putting a dead animal into my mouth? Why were my

parents laughing? I thought of the grazing cows I saw on farms in upstate New York and in the picture books I loved. How did that huge, black and white animal turn into a tiny sliver of pink-gray meat on my plate, and why did people want to eat that?

This moment represents the child-like intuition that I think resides in every one of us when we think killing animals to feed ourselves is wrong. Luiz Antonio, a three-year-old offered octopus gnocchi by his mother, became a YouTube sensation when he expressed shock and moral disdain at eating animals. Not all of us has a vivid moment of realization that eating animals is weird like Luiz or I did, but for everyone who grows up eating meat,

society teaches us that eating animals is normal, natural, or even necessary. I don't think this underlying innocence ever goes away; rather, we bury our misgivings—in food and the English language (e.g., animal carcass is “*meat*” and calf stomach and coagulated milk becomes “*cheese*”).

When kids and young adults who grow up in omnivorous environments question the ethics of eating meat, their thinking is simultaneously refined and mature as well as intuitive. I think children and young adults ought to feel awfully proud for seeing past the normalization of immoral conventions. You are engaging in the same question, “*What should we eat?*”, that Socrates, Plato, Einstein, and Gandhi did; kudos on trusting your gut.

Unfortunately, parents, friends, and teachers often “teach” kids out of these questions. My parents laughed at my innocence while I cried about my plate of roast cow, and I continued to eat meat despite my guilt. When I was ten, I saw a pig carcass hanging in an open-air market in China and went vegetarian for the first time. My success was short-lived as friends waved McDonald's in front of my face and chicken cutlets showed up on my plate for dinner every night. Luckily, we humans are resilient, and after three attempts at going vegetarian, I plunged into a vegan diet at age fourteen.

A Learning Opportunity

Young people who decide to go vegan in a non-vegan environment usually have to grow up a little faster than other kids. They might have to offer to help shop with their parents to find cheap vegetarian options, cook their own meals, or present their parents with dietary research. This is a fantastic opportunity for children. If you're in this situation, tell your parents that learning the practical skills of food budgeting, cooking, and nutrition, in addition to the thinking about the impact of your lifestyle, has infinitely more benefits than disadvantages. Let them know how much you appreciate their support of your new moral convictions. I also recommend encouraging your family to see your new diet and lifestyle as an opportunity for new bonding experiences, like grocery shopping and cooking. If your loved ones think your new diet is unhealthy, my favorite response is to smile and say, “*Why don't we find ways to improve all of our diets, like eating more vegetables?*” Positivity goes a long way, and when your family sees how easy your diet change is and how happy it makes you, their respect and acceptance, if not support, should follow.

While meal planning with your family might be the first hurdle to jump, social challenges might be more prevalent. Boys

and girls likely face different obstacles from their friends. As a girl, my peers used to equate my choice of veganism to an extreme health diet. Boys at my high school pushed the macho agenda—the most popular student club at school was called the *Men Eating Animals Together* (M.E.A.T.) Club. Once, these boys sent me a bowl of ground beef at the dining hall. I can only imagine what they would have done to a football player who suddenly became vegan. My best advice is to speak to your friends about why you do not eat animals and ask them why they do—if they are defensive or aggressive, then agree to disagree and change the subject. I was surprised by how many of my peers were responsive after I engaged with them, though; even if they showed no inclination of changing their own diets, they probably walked away respecting my choice.

Make Connections

One of the most important ways to support your vegan diet long-term is through finding vegan communities, locally and/

or online. If your school does not have a vegan or vegetarian club, then start one. Not only will you find new veg*n classmates and teachers who can share advice and concerns with you, but you will also have a strong foundation for creating change at school, like adding to or improving vegan options in your cafeteria. Cafeteria meal planners always want to know that many students feel the need for menu change, so work with your vegan club members to gather signatures and recipe ideas. Peta2, PETA's branch dedicated to kids and teens, has some great resources for helping veganize your cafeteria. When I was in high school, organizations like the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) also responded to my emails about helping create nutritional guidelines with my school dining hall for plant-based options; and, after working with my dining hall to create menus that fit these guidelines, we won PCRM's Golden Carrot Award in 2013! Working toward awards like the Golden Carrot, which gives your school a grant to serve more, healthy vegan options, can be a



great incentive (or carrot) for your dining hall staff to work with you to change their menus. I also recommend volunteering at your local animal shelter or finding work at a vegetarian café or juice bar. These new activities connect you to new friends with the same passions as you and will support your animal rights advocacy or vegan diet goals.

There is no shortage of online communities either. Following vegan cooking or animal rights blogs, and maybe even starting your own and reading publications like T.O.F.U. and [VegNews](#) are easy ways to find others out there who share your same values, concerns, and struggles. These sites provide not only resources and practical tips, but also emotional support. Additionally, [HappyCow](#) is a fantastic online resource that lists vegan and vegetarian restaurants around the world—you can easily contribute by posting reviews and adding restaurant listings related to your local vegan community. Resources like [Vegan Freak](#) by Bob and Jenna Torres and the film [Vegucated](#) provide practical tips on transitioning into vegan diets. If you are a more experienced vegan, reading books like *Eating Animals* by Jonathan Safran Foer, *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer, and *The Animal Activist's Handbook* by Matt Ball matured my ideological backgrounds to help support my convictions, or intuition, about not eating meat, and they also helped me engage in conversations about why I was confident in my choice to live vegan. Which leads to my next important point: give something back by pitching articles to the aforementioned sources, and other outlets like your school newspaper or your own magazine. You are the expert on your

vegan experiences, and trust me, people within and outside the vegan community want to hear your voices: when I wrote "[The Peace Plate](#)" for my school's paper, students I had never met emailed me with grateful comments and feedback.

I also strove to keep my transition fun by learning to cook and slowly replacing my closet and make-up with cruelty-free products. I bought myself a couple cookbooks—*Veganomicon* by Isa Chandra Moskowitz is my vegan Bible—and spent a lot of time in the kitchen. Subscriptions to monthly delivery services like [VeganCuts](#) can also help keep your transition exciting with vegan snacks and beauty products, and sharing your snacks with your non-vegan friends too to help them understand that your new diet is not a sacrifice. But even if you do not want a monthly subscription, they can help you identify vegan brands for all parts of your lifestyle.

Not Just a Phase

I am very grateful that I went vegan when I was fourteen, but of course I wish I had the strength to do it sooner. Youth is the best time to go vegan—we are more open-minded and flexible about our daily habits as well as our moral convictions when we are young, and we have the opportunity to save more animals than people who become vegan later in life. Moreover, the longer we show commitment to a lifestyle, the less people will attempt to change it but will rather accept it as an integral part of who we are. When I was fourteen, I thought going vegan might end up as part of my teenage girl phase. But today, I am vegan just as much as I am Veronica.

Tofu Piccata

This is probably my most special recipe. I know I shouldn't have a favorite amongst all my "children" but my Tofu Piccata recipe solidified my belief that maybe, I could actually write a cookbook.

Ingredients

- 1 block of extra-firm tofu, drained
- Kosher salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup chickpea flour
- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- 1/4 cup dry vegan white wine
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 Tbsps fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp capers, drained
- 2 Tbsps vegan butter
- 6 or 7 Fresh lemon slices
- Fresh parsley for garnish, chopped

Directions

1. Cut the tofu into 8 slices. Put the chickpea flour on a plate. Season it with salt and pepper. Coat both sides of the tofu slices with the flour.
2. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté the tofu slices until they are browned and a bit crisp on both sides. Transfer the tofu to a warm platter and set aside.
3. Add the wine to the pan, then add the minced garlic. Cook until the garlic is slightly browned and the wine is mostly evaporated.
4. Add the broth, lemon juice, and the capers to the pan. Return the tofu to the pan and let them cook in the liquid for about a minute on each side.
5. Add the butter and the lemon slices to the pan to complete the sauce. When the butter melts, pour the sauce over the tofu. Garnish with the chopped fresh parsley and lemon slices. Serve over pasta or with any side dish.

Rhea Parsons

FOCUS

Seeking Other Vegan "Grandparents"

JL Fields



At the age of 47, I walked away from a 25-year career to become a professional vegan. At around the same time, I decided to embrace my gray hair and the growing size of my body, which seemed in sharp contrast to the vegan messaging - disease-proof, ageless, skinny - that surrounded me.

It all started when I became an old lady blogger.

I come from one of the first generations in the U.S. to boldly do something our parents feared the most: job hop. My father worked for the same company for thirty years - the whole retire with a gift and a pension scenario. When I entered college, and then graduate school, I suspected the same would be in store for me but I didn't realize that the world was changing and that soon it would be commonplace to change jobs every few years - to seek bigger and better. More. To one day, perhaps, do something in which we weren't even trained to do.

After graduate school, skilled to work as a higher education administrator, I was a bit disillusioned at my first full-time position. So I quit my job. Unsure of what to do with my degree I decided the world of social work made the most sense. I found myself working at a gay and lesbian community center - where I stayed for six years. Suddenly the white, straight girl from the rural Midwest was hanging out with teenagers of color - gay, lesbian, bi, straight, queer, trans, and label-less - and becoming their voice with the Chicago public schools, police department, and social service agencies. I wasn't trained for this. But I loved it.

This completely unorthodox shift in career launched a series of new jobs and slants to my profession, from running a rape crisis center to an international foundation to end violence against women to a literary arts organization to, wait for it, back in higher education, though this time as a seasoned fundraiser.

In the midst of all the professional changes, there were big changes personally, too. Lots of dating and, ultimately, marriage. Moving from a small town to a big city and then a bigger one and, ultimately, back west to a smallish city. Morphing from meat-eating, smoking, couch potato to a vegetarian, marathon runner, and triathlete.

And then I went vegan - the year I turned 45.

I was referred to as “grandma” as one of our guests left and I realized that this was my new vegan community: so young, so not reflective of me.

I attended my first vegan-focused conference about a year after making the big change. My conference roommate was 26 years old - which seemed to me to be about the median-age of attendees (though my memory should not be trusted). She and I had a party one night in our room, in which I kicked everyone out at 10 p.m. so I could go to sleep. I was referred to as “grandma” as one of our guests left and I realized that this was my new vegan community: so young, so not reflective of me.

This is where I struggled at first - and perhaps a little, still. Very visible, “popular”

vegans seem to rock the hard bodies, youthful glows, and well, are actually pretty young. My writing seemed to resonate with older vegans - make big changes at any age, body- and self-love right now - and I felt pretty invisible within the cool crowd.

But that was my first vegan year. Over time, my vegan community changed - or rather I found subsets of the community - and I have learned that though people often view vegans as young, tattooed hipsters (and some of that is true and, by the way, I have tattoos, too), most of the vegans I run into are 40, 50, 60, and 70 years old. Many claim the label "vegan" and have been animal rights activists for years. Others have had the shit scared out of them by their doctor and are eating plant-based as a result - and cling to the term "plant strong" and eschew anything remotely close to the ethics. But most fall somewhere in between.

I also found other vegan bloggers and writers representing the spectrum of age, one in particular was an ethical vegan, author, registered dietitian, and nutritionist. After meeting, Ginny Messina (who, by the way, I met at the first vegan conference) invited me to write a book with her. That writing process catapulted my desire to radically shift my career.

Rather than try to write and appeal to a younger audience to be accepted, I just keep my head down and write and coach about what I know.

Three years later - the year I'm turning 50 - in a world full of youthful expectations and worth often estimated by looks and size, I

not only continue to write about being an older vegan, career-changer with a round body, it's become the focus of the work I do with clients. Rather than try to write and appeal to a younger audience to be accepted, I just keep my head down and write and coach about what I know.

In a seemingly youthful movement, I have successfully carved out a career that satisfies my ethical mission - as have countless other "older" vegans - allowing me to help others make big changes at an age and proving that compassion is possible at any stage of life.

Silly robot,
you'll never grow that way!

