

How We Became Vegan

June Linnea Cordasci's Story

If someone had told me a little over three years ago that my husband, Paul, and I would become vegans, I wouldn't have believed them. First of all, we didn't even know what a vegan was. We'd heard of vegetarians and I had even tried it for about a year--but a vegan? Yet as we all know, life can throw us a curve that can send us down an entirely different path. Our new journey started by my being diagnosed with breast cancer on March 28 of 2008. Two weeks later, I had surgery. Because of a very skilled, caring surgeon and loving, supportive family and friends, I came through the procedure remarkably well.

During my recovery, Paul did a lot of research on the internet and read copious articles on cancer recovery. Through a friend, he heard about the Cancer Project's Food for Life Nutrition and Cooking Classes held at Providence Cancer Center. Paul and I immediately signed up and started attending the classes on May 4th of 2008. What fun we had and what a delicious feast Delisa prepared that first class. We were hooked!

At first it was challenging to shop, cook and eat in a totally different way. But I remember Delisa saying, "Your taste buds have a three-week memory." The easiest way to retrain them is to jump right into this new way of eating. That's just what we did. We became vegans the very next day after that first class. We purged our pantry, refrigerator and freezer of all animal products--wow, now we had room for more fruits and veggies!

I feel very fortunate that Paul was also eager to embrace this new lifestyle. Every week we tried the new recipes that Delisa demonstrated in

class. Paul had a great attitude even when some of them didn't turn out quite perfect. When Delisa gave us the recipe for pita bread and explained how they puff up in the oven, he was so enthusiastic that he immediately made them at home and he has become the pita bread master. We looked forward to the classes every week and we didn't miss one--they were just too much fun! Charlie and Delisa make such a great team with a combination of their knowledge, humor, and kindness. Where else can you see a film, watch a food preparation demonstration and get to eat delicious food in one evening for a very nominal cost?!

I have taken the Food for Life Cooking Classes three times (once with Paul, once with my niece and once with a friend.) Also, Paul and I took two one-day classes...one on breast cancer and one on prostate cancer. Every time we take a class we learn new, invaluable information that we can use in our daily lives and food preparation. Like how to make "cheese" and veggeroni...yum! And how you can make an awesome fruit smoothie and add kale for extra nutrition...you'd never know the kale was in there...but your body will thank you!

For anyone embracing this wonderful lifestyle...I applaud you--you have made a very wise choice--both for you and the environment. It won't be easy at first, but it gets easier as you go. Now it's a snap and we cannot imagine EVER eating any other way again! Things that have helped us is continuing to take classes; watching informative films, read-ing all the literature we can (great books are



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"*The China Study*", "*Diet for a New America*", "*Eat to Live*", and "*Skinny Bitch*" and there are many, many more); and attending the monthly potlucks. The potlucks are such fun: we have made great friends, we eat awesome foods (all plant based), we've learned new recipes and there is always an informative program or film. Also, we attend the Vegetarian Society film nights once a month.

There are side effects to being vegan--and they are all good, both for you and for the planet. My cholesterol has dropped and so has my weight. Paul and I will be celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary this November and we can both wear our wedding clothes! And for the cancer that started all this...after the surgery, and 6 weeks of radiation treatments (with absolutely no side effects) I am healthier than I have ever been. We both have more energy and are having more fun doing the things we love to do. Cooking and gardening have become my two most favorite hobbies!

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We started our journey to veganism because of my cancer. But along the way we learned that eating this way can also help us to avert other devastating illnesses, such as heart disease and diabetes. We also learned what a toll factory farms place on our environment, the unnecessary suffering of the animals, and how our society could feed everyone in the world if we used our land wisely and embraced a plant-based diet.

Now, even if we were to find out that eating our old way (the SAD way or Standard American Diet) was healthy, because of what we have learned about the unnecessary cruelty to the animals and the pressure it places on our planet's resources, we could never go back to eating that way. What started out as a journey for my health has become a life-long journey for the health of our planet and a conscious effort to help stop the suffering of the helpless animals who walk this earth with us.

This may sound crazy, but getting cancer was actually a good thing. It was truly a defining moment in our lives--a wake-up call! It gave Paul and me the opportunity to change our lives for the better!

back to... [Newsletter](#) [Vegan Stories](#)