

We Just Wanted to Do Something Fun Together

Vegan Story: Cable Starlings and Teri Wooten

I had no intention of becoming vegan. My wife, Teri, and I just wanted to do something fun together and some friends said this cooking class was fun. It was! But it has turned out to be much more than that for us.

I have a lot of cancer in my family. My father died of cancer, and he also had open heart surgery before that. But I never put the dots together until after the first session of our [Food for Life class](#) on February 23, 2011. In that class we watched a powerful video that described the effects of our diet on our health, especially cancer risks. This really opened my eyes, and it was great having Teri there with me, learning the same things.

During that same class, Delisa prepared some food that we both found delicious. My attitude going into the class was, "If meat isn't on the menu, it isn't a meal; it's a snack!" But that night we said to each other, "This is really good! We could do this." So we began choosing vegetables, fruits, and beans as our primary foods after that first class.

After our third class, we made a conscious decision that we were going to commit to a plant-based diet. It has been so much fun! Not just the classes, but all of it. We've enjoyed shopping together, cooking together, and of course, eating this healthy food together. In addition to being good for us physically, it has also been good for our marriage!

One thing that makes this work for us is that we do a lot of preparation on the weekends. We shop, do a lot of chopping together, and prepare one big recipe that we can then eat through-out the

week. We make some staples, like Cheesy-Beany Spread and Nutty Spread so that during the week, it is really easy to make something healthy in a hurry. On the weekends, we also cook beans from scratch and cut up fruit and freeze it to use in smoothies the rest of the week. We find we are cooking and eating at home much more, rather than eating out, and we're having a lot of fun.

I've lost 16 pounds already, and have gone from a size 38 waist to a 34. Fortunately, I still had some slacks in my closet from my slimmer days. Teri has lost weight too, and looks just great! Besides losing weight, my blood pressure has come way down. It was about 180/95 and now it's about 120/60. I had tried blood pressure pills before but they made me sick, so my doctor suggested I try to get it down with lifestyle. I had tried exercising more, but hadn't had much success. But when I changed to a plant-based diet, my blood pressure just plummeted!

In addition to what I learned in class, I also read The [China Study](#), by T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D. I learned so much about the effects our diet has on many different aspects of our health. It made me think about the residents in my assisted living home, most of whom are overweight or obese, have diabetes and other chronic diseases, and are on all sorts of medications. In addition to their physical problems, these residents also have chronic mental illness. I began wondering what might happen if

they began eating a healthy, plant-based diet instead of the unhealthy Standard American Diet. I'm determined to find out!



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I'm in the process of seeking funding to do a controlled study with the sixty residents in my facility. It's easy to predict that those on the plant-based diet will lose weight and be able to reduce or eliminate many of their medications for diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol. But what will we discover about the effects of this diet on behavior and mental health? Wouldn't it be something if we find significant improvements there also?

Teri and I certainly met our goal of doing

something fun together. In fact, we might even take a vacation sometime to a place that offers cooking classes! But we have gained so much more than we could ever have imagined. We're much healthier, have more energy, enjoy our food more, and enjoy each other more. We won't ever go back. In addition, the residents in my assisted living home will benefit and possibly, someday, others struggling with chronic mental illness will benefit from what we've learned.