

# ***I Love the Simplicity of It!***

Doug Osvath's Vegan Story

I love to cook. I grew up in an Italian/Irish neighborhood where food was an important part of every social occasion and I had thought for a long time how I'd like to take an extensive cooking class to learn the secrets of cooking. Fortunately, I never did that before I found the [Food for Life Classes](#). If I had, I would have learned to make all sorts of unhealthy foods that I'm now choosing not to eat.

I had a long, slow preparation for my ultimate decision to eat a plant-based diet. For years I've had friends who were vegan and found their food delicious. One vegan friend loaned me a book explaining how animal agriculture causes so much animal suffering and environmental degradation, and this information made an impact on me. But not knowing how to implement a vegan diet, I continued to eat the Standard American Diet. Then, about a year ago, another friend who had previously taken the Cancer Project Food for Life Class loaned me her cookbook from class. I started experimenting with recipes and found they were actually simple to prepare and tasty. But when I returned her book, I went back to my old eating habits. Finally, many months later in June of 2010, I attended the Food for Life Diabetes Class and immediately adopted a plant-based diet. I learned enough about the important health consequences of the Standard American Diet and the benefits of a plant-based diet to make that choice after just one class session. This first class provided the missing pieces of a larger puzzle that



helped me to immediately see the big picture. During the seven weeks of the class, I also learned what I needed to be successful with adopting a plant-based diet.

Some things I learned in class were surprising. First, it was actually very simple. Just eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. Avoid processed foods. Eat when you're hungry. Eat as much as you want. Don't count calories, points, or make it complicated in other ways. Just focus on what you eat, not how much you eat. I love the simplicity of it.

Another pleasant surprise was how my taste buds changed. It's like my tongue and palate have been cleansed. I can now taste the true flavors and sweetness in the food and enjoy and appreciate their natural goodness.

Grocery shopping is simpler. I just go down 3 aisles now!

I love how much easier clean-up is. No greasy pans and splatters, and no gummy cheese sticking to the plate.

I've become more creative and adventuresome in my cooking. There is so much more variety in a plant-based diet than one that centers around meat. Just think how many more kinds of fruits and vegetables there are than kinds of meat!

And of course, I feel so much better than I did before changing my diet. I didn't have any real health problems before, except for being overweight. I'd gained 60 pounds in the last 4 years after an injury made me suspend many of my previous physical activities. I kept thinking that when I increased my activity

level again, I'd lose that weight, but it didn't happen. It's a lot harder to go hiking or mountain biking when you're hauling an extra 60 pounds with you! I've lost 20 of those pounds in the 2 months since I started the vegan diet, and I'm already enjoying getting the load off. I'm looking forward to getting down to my ideal weight -- while eating as much as I want of these healthy, filling, low-fat foods.

I did struggle for a couple of weeks after changing my diet. My body was detoxing and during the second week on the new diet, I had terrible cravings for sweets and soda, which I had given up. The third week I felt sick -- dizzy and light-headed. Then that all cleared up and I felt better than I had in a long, long time. I had more energy, started going to the gym again, was more

clear-headed and my motivation was back. It's wonderful! I would never want to give this up or backslide and then have to go through that difficult two weeks again to clean out my system.

Having been a police officer in New York I have seen a lot of unfortunate circumstances. My experiences have motivated me to narrow my focus on helping others while performing positive actions that make the world a better place. I know that choosing a plant-based diet helps make the world better by reducing animal cruelty and environmental degradation in addition to giving me the strength and energy to live up to my potential. I'm just one more person who is waking up and choosing not to contribute to these problems with my diet. It may not seem like much, but every little bit helps.