

Our Metamorphosis

Ryan Erwin and Mavis Kurtz -- Vegan Story

Mavis and I both work in health related fields. I'm an RN in the emergency room and she's a microbiologist in the hospital. We've seen enough sick people to know that we don't want to follow in their footsteps. We've also realized you don't have to have diabetes; you don't have to be obese. But we didn't really become proactive about preventing poor health until we took the [Food for Life classes](#) in August and September, 2010.

Mavis, who had wanted to be vegetarian for the past couple of years, learned about the Food for Life classes from a co-worker who had taken them previously. Mavis wanted to take the classes to learn some new recipes, and she wanted me to go with her, so I did. I ate meat until I started the class.

We switched to a vegan diet after our very first class. What we learned that night made perfect sense. We had already replaced cow milk with soy milk and had started cutting back on meat, so we knew this was the direction we wanted to go. We were excited! What we learned played into our world view.

We decided not to go halfway; we cleaned out our freezer and pantry and replaced everything with healthy plant-based foods. At first I was a little reluctant to get rid of all the unhealthy foods we had previously bought because of the money. But Mavis said, "So are we just going to slowly titrate off these things? What does our health mean to us? Are we going to let our bodies be a garbage disposal?"

Our overnight switch to a vegan diet and a vegan kitchen also affected Mavis' sister, who lives

with us. Amazingly, she was willing to make this switch with us and has enjoyed the benefits (along with Mavis) of losing weight.



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Once we made the decision, it was incredibly simple. Delisa laid it all out for us in class: "Here's where I shop -- here's what I do." Without the class we would have been grasping at straws. As we learned how to cook different foods in a different way (without oil) we worked as a team -- I tried a lot of the recipes Delisa demonstrated in class and Mavis experimented with different recipes. Even though Mavis loved cheese, she doesn't miss it with Cheesy Sauce and Cheesy-Beany Spread to replace it. I've learned I don't need meat substitutes any-more. I enjoy the taste of plant-based foods.

I remember, as a kid, thinking it was strange for people to drink milk from a cow, but when I questioned it, I never got a good answer. So I found it extremely gratifying to hear Delisa say the same thing in class. Imagine a human adult suckling on a cow!

Mavis grew up on a farm in the Midwest that sold their animals to feedlots. That's just what they did and she didn't question it. I had always eaten meat and had never given any thought to the animals. Now I do. At first, we made the switch to a plant-based diet purely for health reasons. But the longer we do this, the stronger we feel about cruelty to animals.

During our metamorphosis to being vegans, Mavis read two books: [Skinny Bitch](#) and [The China Study](#). [Skinny Bitch](#) made a huge impact on her. It talked about so many different reasons to eat a plant-based diet besides health, including the animals and the environment. [The China Study](#) presented an intelligent compilation of research, reinforcing the importance of a lower

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protein diet and helping us formulate answers to questions such as, "Where do you get your protein?" Adding this information to what we learned in class has made our switch to a plant-based diet an easy choice.

One highlight of our new lifestyle was a wonderful vegan Thanksgiving dinner with some friends in Talkeetna who, with their 2 young children, have also become vegan. We all helped prepare the food and we felt so happy! We got full, but didn't feel weighed down.

There are so many good things about our new lifestyle. We love not having to worry about deadly bacteria on our cutting boards now and not having to

clean up grease in the kitchen. We cook more now because we don't eat out much. We can do better at home -- twice the veggies and half the fat!

We love this lifestyle and we can't imagine ever going back to the way we used to eat.

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about what we eat and how we live, and Mavis says she thinks about health more holistically than she used to. She has started cutting back on caffeine and alcohol, is doing more meditation and getting massages. We love this lifestyle and we can't imagine ever going back to the way we used to eat.