

## Why I Went Vegan

I love animals and plants and fungi and other life forms. I can't think of anything that captivates me more than contemplating the miraculous intelligences and abilities of the earth's vast array of living beings, in all their different forms: animals, plants, insects, fungi, bacteria and micro-organisms. The interconnected fabric of life is astounding to think about, not only inter-relationships among different life forms, but also the microscopic cellular relationships within each organism.

Several years ago, I transitioned to a vegan lifestyle after having read some disturbing outreach materials about how animals are treated in our agriculture system, and then visiting a local dairy farm and seeing for myself young calves being separated from their mothers. To witness a baby mammal being separated from his or her lactating mother is a traumatic experience, and I couldn't help being repulsed by the idea that young babies had to be separated from their mothers to satisfy my acquired tastes. For all mammals, the strong bond between mother and child is the same, regardless of whether one is human or non-human. It is a hideous thing to do to any mammal, separating mother from child. For me, the witnessing of that poignant suffering was all it took. A strong compassion for animals, and an equally strong revulsion to harm them. Luckily, my husband felt the same way, and went vegan for the same reason. We have never looked back, and feel at peace with our choice.

For many years prior to that connection point, something inside me had niggled whenever I pulled a piece of meat (aquatic or land), or carton of eggs, or slab of cheese or container of yogurt from the supermarket shelf and put it into my shopping cart. I never fully understood the processes behind getting these things to the grocer. Friendly commercials in the television or magazines or even carton packaging always painted a rosy albeit vague picture of these animals' "idyllic" lives. Reading vegan outreach materials helped awaken my understanding that the commercial world markets sunny images in order to sell products.

When we first went vegan, we knew very few meaningful facts about nutrition, having been brainwashed since children that protein comes from meat, dairy, and eggs, and that calcium comes from dairy. It took a lot of reading and viewing health videos to bring myself to an understanding that what our public institutions have been delivering about nutrition is, in fact, misleading about health, and is really intended to further the profits of a gargantuan conglomeration of food and medical industries.

Part of what I experienced in reading about the food industry, paralleled my feelings about the forest industry in which I was previously employed in the capacity of creating and developing support systems for monitoring and enforcing provincial government reforestation policies. I witnessed directly how aggressive lobbyists could successfully shape government policy and legislation in order to further their business interests. From that personal experience, it was very easy to see a parallel force operating within the food and medical industries.

The other thing that I witnessed in my forest policy work was the extent to which other life forms lost any relevance for their own rights. Public policy was created to commodify and commercialise life forms. This created an ongoing inner conflict for myself, as some of the things in which I participated in my professional work did not resonate with my deep values and love for other life forms. Having ended my career in forestry has led to more inner peace, and a more modest lifestyle. Helping others to facilitate a transition to a vegan way of life, is something that resonates harmoniously with my values.

People go vegan for all kinds of reasons. Sometimes for personal health or the environment. I've met some people who have said that they "tried going vegan for health, but did not feel well", and so switched back to omnivorous diet. This is unfortunate. We have been cultured into "instant gratification", and if the gratification for improved health is not experienced almost at once, the connection with one's values is abandoned all too easily. It took us a long while of researching nutrition to become confident with the nutritional aspect, and longer still for my own body to undergo a healing process from years of the consequences of a very rich omnivorous diet since childhood. And, I still have a way to go. Nothing is instant. Nowadays it is easy to find nutritional information, especially with regard to whole food plant nourishment. Thousands of delicious recipes are posted on the internet and in cookbooks. Some prominent medical doctors in the United States (and elsewhere) are working hard to bring this information, free of charge, to the public via the internet. Lack of nutrition information is no longer a barrier given the extraordinary efforts of these individuals.

That brings me to compassion. I have never met a person who has abandoned a vegan lifestyle who chose this path for compassion towards animals. This, by far, is the strongest reason that anyone can have for embracing this lifestyle. To try and minimize suffering to others through one's lifestyle is the most rewarding and powerful thing anyone can do to turn one's life around. When I stopped thinking about my own selfish interests, and started to think about others, outside of myself, who were being impacted by my omnivorous lifestyle, my whole life changed, my lenses on how I perceived everything around me changed. Going vegan for this reason was life altering for me, and taking the extra mile to learn about nutrition just made the transition all the easier.

I created my web site in an effort to help others on this journey. Not only in terms of compiling information that will help others appreciate the astonishing array of life on our beautiful planet, and the incredible intelligence inherent in all the life forms, whether they be animals, plants, fungi, bacteria, but also information that helps people arrive at a comfort level that a whole-foods plant diet is profoundly health-promoting and peace giving.

My web site is simple and low budget. I have no fancy software programs to create my web pages, as I don't have means to pay for these things. And, rather than place ads on my web site (as a way of generating revenue to support my web site), I prefer a commercial-free forum so that no one needs to feel distracted while navigating my web pages. I hand-code the main pages myself, and because hand-coding is time consumptive, I have created PDF pages for my resources. This helps me make ongoing updates efficiently.

My thanks to you for visiting my web site. I hope that you can benefit by exploring the resources I have compiled, and that you will find something there that can inspire your life.