



My Experience Going Vegetarian, Then Vegan

By Patrick McGilvray
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I love food.

I love to talk about it, shop for it, make it, and I really love to eat it. This did not always make for a very healthy lifestyle, but I've made significant changes over the years. I became active, lost weight, and moved to a vegan diet.

Since becoming a vegetarian in 2009, I've had many discussions about the love of food, nutrition, and diet. Some endurance athletes I know say they could never be vegetarians because they "need the protein." Others say they are mostly vegetarian but could never give up their beloved dairy.

In 2011, I went on a vegan diet. In just a few months after eliminating dairy from my diet, I could already see and feel the positive impact. I sleep great, have more energy, and no longer feel sluggish or bloated. I have never felt better in my life.

After taking this additional step, I noticed my discussions about my diet shifted in tone. Most people I talked to "get" vegetarianism. We could all benefit from giving up meat, they say, but why would anyone give up *all* animal products? No eggs? No milk? No cheese? No way!

Although I personally felt much better eliminating all animal products from my diet, watching *Forks Over Knives* in November 2011 provided me with the means to better articulate the benefits of a plant-based lifestyle.

I see now with clarity *why* eating a plant-based diet is the best option for my overall health and wellness. I understand now how eliminating meat and dairy doesn't just make me *feel* better, it can prevent and even reverse afflictions like heart disease and diabetes. I don't know about you, but my idea of good health does not involve pills, stents, or bypasses.

I am a marathon runner and a triathlete. I work out 6-8 times per week and get all the nutrients I need (including protein) from a plant-based diet. Some world-class vegan athletes like ultra-marathoner Scott Jurek, Ironman Brendan Brazier, and Ultraman Rich Roll agree. These guys are at the top of their games and they're doing it without eating animal-based foods.

My passion for food remains firmly intact, but now I get to create nutritious, great-tasting meals every day without worrying about the unhealthy consequences.

[Editor's Update 2015: Catch up with Patrick at The Vegan Road]