

Why I'm Vegan and My Journey to Veganism

by Janice Green on July 01, 2019



I get asked a lot about veganism, but I've never really shared my vegan story. It's really not that crazy, but I thought that writing it all out might be interesting, or inspiring for some individuals (if not, that's okay too). In order to really tell my story, I have to go back a long time.

When I was a kid my family wasn't well off by any means. Most of my life my mother was a single mom and I had 5 siblings. There wasn't a lot of money for food in our home, and what food we did get was either processed, or refined carbs—mostly given to us from the local food-bank. My diet growing up consisted of mainly noodles, cheese, some frozen

vegetables, and bread. Lots and lots of refined or processed foods, like a lot of 90's babies. Oh, and your classic fruits like apples, bananas and oranges were in large supply in our home (cheap!).



Things are a lot different now—here's a small portion of all the plants we eat in a week.

When I was a pre-teen I developed an interest in vegetables, I'd never been big on meat (ask anyone in my family or friends who have known me all my life, they'll tell you about my tears as I was forced to eat ground beef—yuck!). I was, however, big on cheese. I loved ice-cream and cheese as much as the next kid, but increasingly I found myself interested in the different types of vegetables you could buy at the store. My mom began to foster this interest by taking me with her to go shopping and buying a “mystery vegetable” or “mystery fruit”—we bought things like starfruit, or squashes sometimes, and I really enjoyed learning about each one we bought.

Fast forward to my teen years, I was spending a lot of time at friends homes where they made tons of salads using fresh ingredients. And so, my dream of being vegan was born. I

had heard about veganism from one of my good friend's parents, who was trying out raw veganism (which was all the rage circa 2010-2011). I went with them to a vegan potluck at Rawthentic (but really I think it was in some random basement area behind Rawthentic...) in Courtenay and was even more sold on the whole thing. The food had been delicious. The people were vibrant and healthy, and further, they were happy! However, I was still a teenager at this point, and for most of my teen years I actually worked at McDonald's. After graduation, I ended up moving to Germany to work as an Au Pair—while I was there I thought a lot about veganism and tried to focus my diet on plant-based foods. Once again, though, at this time I didn't know really how to be a vegan—heck, I didn't even know how to properly feed myself on an omnivore diet. I came back to Canada, still thinking strongly about veganism; but it would be a long time before I finally made the switch for good.



A cute cow in Mcleod Ganj, India.

I don't believe in restricting yourself on diets, or for any reason, and this principle was what kept me eating minimal amounts of dairy for so long. Finally, I actually made the

switch after a trip to Greece. At this time I was sick, unknown to me, with SIBO (small intestine bacterial overgrowth)—more on that in another post - and the food I ate in Greece, so laden with dairy and animal products only served to make me sicker and sicker. According to most studies, a whopping 65% of the population on earth are actually lactose intolerant. I was bloated. Uncomfortable. Exhausted. Emotional. I felt horrible. Of course, SIBO was part of that picture for me, which I likely developed after several bouts of travel induced gastrointestinal illnesses (I quite literally had a travel bug—ha). Interestingly, of those with IBS or IBD (which I did not have), between 65-80% actually have SIBO as their underlying cause of digestive discomfort, but may never be diagnosed as currently most medical doctors do not recognize the role of SIBO in gut health/dysbiosis.

I digress - even before this trip, we had been making a conscious effort to reduce our intake of dairy, and had honestly only been eating it when we were out at events or other social gatherings. We had gone full vegetarian on our trip through India & SEA in 2017 and never looked back (for me this was the last time I would "go vegetarian" after nearly 20 years of bouncing in and out of vegetarianism). I don't even remember the last time I ate meat, and I clearly do not miss it. I also don't remember the last time I ate dairy. All I really know is that I came home from our honeymoon in October of 2018 as a vegan - before this, even though I resonated strongly with all of the reasons I am vegan now, I mainly did not label myself as a vegan because I was still eating trace amounts of animal products. It took Dan a bit longer to finally make the switch (I'll let him tell his own story, though).

There is so much more I could say about my journey to veganism, but I think the most prominent thing that I can express, and many vegans will echo this sentiment, is that **my only regret is not doing it sooner**. It's not having the resources or education to make the switch sooner. As a child, teen, and young adult. There are so many things I wish I had known. Do I think veganism works for everyone? Probably not. Do I think we should all be working to reduce our intake of animal products and byproducts? Absolutely. If not for your health, then do it for the environment or the animals. Just pick a reason (if you even need one..).

Okay, now that you know my story, you're likely dying to know why I'm vegan. Well, I don't really have a simple answer. Everyday my philosophy is evolving, I'm learning more and more, and I'm growing ever more passionate about this lifestyle.

In order of personal significance, my main reasons, and the most common reasons are:

1. Health.

For as long as I can remember I have had some degree of anxiety about health - and anxiety in general, a low hum that has permeated most of my years on this planet. On a well balanced vegan diet I know that I am doing everything I can to attend to my present and future mental, physical and spiritual wellness. Yes—spiritual.



It's still possible to be radiantly healthy and eat good vegan food while traveling—like these vegan rice wraps from Pai, Thailand.

The energetics of eating the flesh of an animal who suffered, and who's life was brutally taken surely affects us deeply on an energetic level. There are so many resources out

there that you can turn to if you want to know more about how animal products affect our bodies, even in small amounts; and in turn, how a plant-based diet has the power to heal our bodies, prevent, and even reverse dis-ease.

2. The animals.

Surprisingly, after living a life of not really caring about what happened to the animals behind the products I would buy in store I began to tune in to the cruelty, and the inhumane treatment that these animals suffer. I, like many others never really knew what happened to the animals that ended up on my plate, never knew the suffering that dairy cows endure, and the absolute cruelty of the industry.



Some local cows just chillin' in the middle of the road, near the scenic Hải Vân Pass in Vietnam.

There is no blame here; most in our society have been trained over time to block out this unpleasant reality, and to not question the origins of the food they eat. Of course, I know

not all farms are cruel - but I do believe there is no humane way to kill someone/a being who does not want to die. Now, I cry at the thought of an animal suffering to become food when there are other alternatives that are healthier for humans and for the planet - options that cause no harm to these beautiful beings.

3. The environment.

Okay, I put this as number three, but really, the animals and the environment are one in my mind. We are all connected here on this planet, and I believe that Mother Earth deserves the utmost respect. Did I always believe this so passionately? Nope. Like most 90's babies I grew up thinking that my environmental efforts started and stopped with reduce, reuse, and recycle. We know now that is far from the truth.



A lot of places we've travelled to have a significant trash problem. We don't always capture this side on camera.

Without education and awareness from a young age, it's difficult for us to see the environmental degradation and devastation that factory farming and other practise used to support the animal agriculture industry cause. For the sake of this, I really do not just

mean in Canada. I'm talking world wide, because I'm a citizen of the world—not just this small island that I'm currently sitting on. Health is universal—for humans and for our planet. There is no human health without planetary health.

The information is everywhere. The science is backing this up. Change is here and now. We are all part of this movement.

I could not imagine living my life any other way. I'm so grateful everyday for the abundance and health that veganism has brought into my life. I am constantly inspired by other vegans - by activists, doctors, chefs, business owners, scientists, and more - who are helping to shape a plant-based future, a greener world, and a world with far less suffering. My beliefs are strong, but I know we are ultimately all on this journey together. I'm excited to continue this conversation with those who are open and receptive. Thank you so much for reading about **my** journey to veganism. Remember, above all, be kind.



Dan with a friendly goat.

If you have any questions or comments, or would like to see studies, resources or any material that has inspired me along my journey please do not hesitate to reach out. I'm happy to chat!