



# Exploring a Plant-Based (Veg/Vegan) Lifestyle

Host:

Jennifer Bitner

Guest Expert:

Monica La Vella

Owner of Veggie Fest  
Hamilton



# Switching It Up!

Monica, vegan mom of 2 boys, homeschooler and owner of Veggie Fest Hamilton, has always been a huge animal lover, but also enjoyed eating meat. "In 2011, my son wouldn't eat meat, and thought to myself how is this kid going to get protein? We decided as a family to go vegetarian for 30 days to test it out and try new recipes! We watched a few documentaries, read a few books, and always thought all the animals that we ate came from the beautiful farms seen on the country side! I learned about factory farms, and from there I knew I couldn't go back. I had to change for the animals!"

For Monica, the few couple months were tough, "a few times I'd wonder how I would manage without certain animal products like bacon, and would splurged on even the tiniest piece of it! However, over time it became much easier to leave the routine of eating animals. My husband was flexible with meat consumption as an Italian, and ate vegetarian when we were home and sometimes meat options when out. About 2 years later, my son was having reactions to dairy with rashes all over his skin. Your skin is your largest organ, so if you notice any type of eczema, acne, psoriasis or rashes, it is your body telling you there is something that it's sensitive to. Don't ignore that sign and address that root cause. The first thing we removed was dairy, which was so hard as I LOVED cream cheese, sour cream and ice cream - but eventually I needed to remove it because I was learning so much as to how it affects our body's, and eventually pulled eggs too!

Jennifer: after going vegan, how did this impact your emotional health?

Monica: I noticed a clear shift in energy, having more mental clarity and vitality! If we think about vibration and energy: leafy greens, ripe fruit, these are all packed with vibrance and life-force! When looking at animals that have been tortured, abused, slaughtered and cooked - the fight or flight responses they experience end up being the very things we consume.

Yet often, so many think the shift of going to vegetarian or vegan is too healthy, when in fact there are unhealthy vegans! Oreos for example are accidentally vegan! When transiting, if you're used to eating those types of things, continue and let that help you temporarily as you begin to switch things around! There are so many things available to help people transition such as faux chicken nuggets, almond milk based ice-cream, nut cheeses, lentil based sausages, etc!



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Jennifer: can you name some of the myths surrounding the lifestyle of a vegetarian/vegan?

Monica:

- many think being vegan is extreme, yet there are huge issues with meat eaters having to have their chest cut open and their heart pulled apart so they can have all the plaque and cholesterol removed, and a vein taken from their leg to fix it. THAT is extreme!
- some believe going vegetarian or vegan is hard! Just take it really slow. Learn a couple new recipes a week and give yourself a process of 6 months to change!
- everyone thinks vegans are weak, yet the worlds strongest man is vegan! Cows, gorillas, giraffes, and horses do not eat meat yet look at their muscle.
- cows milk! We need it! The reason why we don't need cows milk is the same reason why we don't drink dogs milk, rats milk, monkeys milk. We are the only species that drinks milk from other species!
- where do you get your protein from? In this society, we get WAY more than we should. It is EASY to get protein, and it is ever cheap!! Quinoa lentils, nuts/seeds, greens, and more.

Jennifer: for those who've been thinking about going vegetarian or vegan, what are the first couple steps to explore?

Monica: start with quick alternative recipes - Gardein products from any grocery store, pasta, stir-frys. When it comes to kids, my boys love this recipe almost daily: in a bowl add 1 scoop of chocolate vega powder, 2 tbsp each of chia seeds and hemp seeds, handful of frozen blueberries and stir in any nut milk. Mish Mash cereal - they LOVE IT!! Or make oatmeal, simple! Smoothies!

if you want to learn a bit about more going plant-based and want a place to find more info, Monica owns and runs the Hamilton Veggie Fest! Find it on May 5th at the Ancaster Fairgrounds, from 10:00am - 6:00pm! JAM packed with exhibitors and tons of food!!! This is so gamechaging for those wanting to get started! Even full on meat eaters arriving, and leaving wanting to go vegetarian or vegan. It starts with you!