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About the creator: Heidi is a blogger at HeidiNaturally.com. Her passion is to be an encouragement to moms and she publishes healthy living tips, free recipes, free printables, ideas for moms, and tips for living a healthy life as a family.

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VEGAN LIVING FOR BEGINNERS

Vegan Living - A Healthy Beginning

What Is Vegan Living?

Why Eat Vegan? What Are the Benefits to Your Health?

Why Eat Vegan? What Are the Benefits to the Environment?

What Can You Eat? Learning about the Many Amazing Food Options

What Can You Expect When You Go Vegan?

The Pros and Cons of Going Vegan Cold Turkey

How to Go Vegan One Meal at a Time

Supplements? Are They a Necessary Part of Being Vegan?

How to Handle Dining Out and Talking about Vegan Living with Friends

Are You Ready to Embrace Vegan Living?

What Is Vegan Living?

There are many different approaches to eating. Some people eat anything and everything. Others don't eat meat or they eat meat once a week. Others avoid meat and animal products all together. They embrace a vegan lifestyle.

A vegan is someone who does not eat any animal products. That means they don't eat meat. They also don't eat eggs or dairy. No butter, no cheese, and no milk. Most vegans also don't eat honey. Many vegans avoid meat for a number of reasons including but not limited to:

- **Health concerns** - there are statistics connecting animal products to disease.
- **Moral beliefs** - many vegans have beliefs connected to not using animals for human gain. That means that they also don't wear leather or use any products tested on animals.
- **Environmental concerns** - farming animals and animal products is believed by many to be detrimental to the environment.

We'll look at these reasons more closely in a bit. First, let's take a closer look at some statistics about being vegan and what the lifestyle involves.

Veganism is growing in popularity. There are now one million vegans in America. It's increased, along with vegetarianism, quite significantly over the past few years. Almost 70 percent of vegans are women. Almost half of people who are vegans started their new lifestyle because they saw a movie like [Forks Over Knives](#) or read a book about the benefits of veganism or the downside of eating meat.

And many vegans gradually transitioned to the lifestyle. For example, many people become vegan by default. Their spouse or partner is vegan and they eventually become vegan themselves.

Some experience a health scare, like a heart attack, and decide that being vegan is the path to better health and a longer life.

So, what does it mean to be vegan?

Vegans live a normal lifestyle. People often imagine that the vegan diet is quite restrictive. It's not. It can take a little while to become accustomed to being a vegan; however, it's not difficult. And many people live energetic, happy, and healthy lives as vegans. In fact you may know of some of these vegans:

- Ellen DeGeneres
- Alec Baldwin
- Usher
- Rosie O'Donnell
- Bill Clinton
- Beyoncé
- Alicia Silverstone

And many more. As mentioned, the vegan lifestyle is gaining in popularity. In fact, you may be like many who are considering a vegan diet to improve your health. Let's look at the health benefits next.

Why Eat Vegan? What Are the Benefits to Your Health?

The vegan diet is known for improving the health and wellbeing of those who are on it. But what exactly are the health benefits? Why is it better to eat vegetables and exclude meat and animal products? Let's take a look at some of the reasons why a vegan lifestyle is healthier.

Reduced Saturated Fats

Dairy products and meats contain a large amount of saturated fats. Saturated fat has been connected to increased risk of cardiovascular disease, including heart attack and stroke.

Increased Fiber

A diet high in fiber from vegetables, fruits, and whole grains leads to a healthier digestive system and helps prevent colon cancer.

Increased Antioxidants

Antioxidants are nutrients found in fruits and vegetables. They protect your body against the damage of free radicals and many researchers also believe that antioxidants help protect your body against forming some types of cancer.

More Powerful Phytochemicals

Plant-based foods provide phytochemicals. These are elements in plants that can prevent cancer. They boost protective enzymes in your body and work with antioxidants to fight disease and the damage of free radicals.

Fight Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes

A vegan diet can help you control your blood sugar levels and insulin resistance. In fact, a vegan diet can reverse Type 2 diabetes in many cases. Additionally, **it's a super-easy way to lose weight and maintain that weight loss.**

Live Longer and Feel Better

Several studies have shown that people who follow a vegan diet live an average of three to six years longer. They have more energy and mental clarity too. And many vegan dieters believe they've never looked better. Hair and skin become healthier than ever before.

As you can see, there are numerous health benefits to a vegan diet. However, that's not the only reason that people choose to go vegan. There are also a number of environmental issues to consider. Let's look at the benefits of going vegan and its impact on the environment.

Why Eat Vegan? What Are the Benefits to the Environment?

Many people transition to a vegan lifestyle because it improves their health. You may be considering the same lifestyle change. You might be an omnivore right now or you may be a vegetarian who is exploring the next step.

The difference between being vegan and vegetarian is generally eggs and dairy. Many vegetarians do eat eggs and dairy products. Vegan dieters do not. One of the reasons they avoid eggs and dairy is because of the impact on the environment. Let's look at some of the benefits the environment receives when you go vegan.

Land and Water Resources

You might be surprised to learn that animals raised for food consume vast amounts of water. In fact, according to water studies conducted in California, to produce a single pound of beef requires 2400 gallons of water. A pound of wheat flour only requires 180 gallons of water - and it goes a lot further than a pound of beef.

80 percent of the agriculture land in the United States is used to raise animals for food and grow grain to feed them. This water is diverted from natural resources like the Colorado River which no longer reaches the ocean. It dries up hundreds of miles before it gets there because so much of it is now diverted for agriculture which is primarily for livestock.

Polluted Air and Water

In addition to consuming vast amounts of land and water in the United States and around the world, industrialized farming pollutes both the air and the water. Runoff from animal waste pollutes the rivers, lakes, and oceans. Chemicals from the pesticides, insecticides and herbicides required for large-scale farming run into our water supply too.

Livestock, cows in particular, are responsible for more than half of the greenhouse gas emissions, which are responsible in part for global warming.

And we haven't even talked about the dust and airborne chemicals that are released into the air during farming practices. If you're thinking about going vegan then there are benefits beyond improving your health. You are also making a great contribution to the environment. It's a win/win. And ultimately you're also saving the lives of many animals.

One thing that frightens many people when they consider going vegan is their food options. It can feel like there's nothing to eat. However, the truth is that vegans have amazing food options. Let's talk about that next.

What Can You Eat? Learning about the Many Amazing Food Options

One of the biggest concerns of people considering a vegan lifestyle is that they will have limited food options. There's the belief that the only thing you'll be able to eat are salads. The truth is that a vegan diet can be rich, varied, and totally delicious. There are entire cookbooks, really large cookbooks, based on a vegan diet. Let's take a look at what you can eat.

Grains

Grains are one area where you won't feel deprived. You can eat any grain and keep in mind that grains are often the foundation of many meals. For example:

- **Pasta** - From pasta primavera to Thai noodle dishes, a vegan diet can be rich in [grain-based pastas](#) including pasta made from wheat, rice, buckwheat, and corn.
- **Rice** - Stir fry, curry, and Cajun dishes like jambalaya are all rice based. And if you're thinking that jambalaya isn't an option, it is. You can add tofu and vegan sausage and enjoy a fantastic vegan jambalaya.
- **Quinoa** - Loaded with protein, fiber and minerals, [quinoa](#) is so versatile you can eat it for breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- **Wheat berries** - They're the whole grain that is typically ground down to make wheat flour. [Wheat berries](#) are delicious and nutritious. They can be used in breakfast cereals, salads, soups and even pudding.
- **Barley** - Eat it as a side dish instead of rice, add it to soup or turn it into a soup. [Organic barley](#) has many health benefits.

- **Oats** - [Organic rolled oats](#) can be used in so many different ways you simply can't not use it. It's great for breakfasts, granola, and energy bars.

Beans

Beans are a staple of a vegan diet. They provide a good source of vitamins, minerals, and protein. They're quite versatile and filling. You can enjoy [organic beans](#) like:

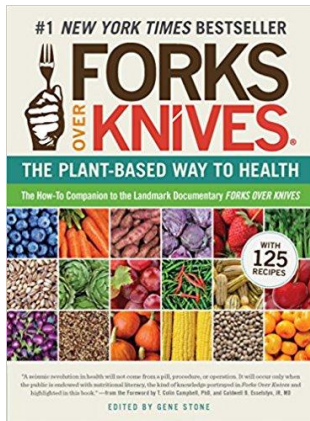
- Soybeans
- Black beans
- Chickpeas
- Navy beans
- Pinto beans
- And many more

And of course there are unlimited fruits and vegetables to enjoy. There are probably dozens of fruits and vegetables that you've never tried. Have you had a purple potato? What about jicama? Have you tried a cherimoya? Add one new fruit or veggie to your weekly shopping list and enjoy nature's bounty.

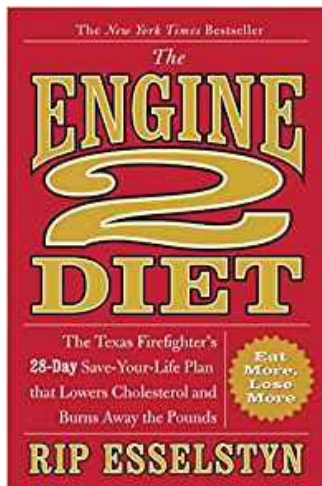
Just about any traditional meat-based dish can be made vegan and many dishes are simply wonderful without any meat at all. With a bit of imagination there's **no reason why you should feel deprived on a vegan diet.** There are too many amazing foods and recipes. So, let's talk about what you can expect when you go vegan.

My Favorite Resources:

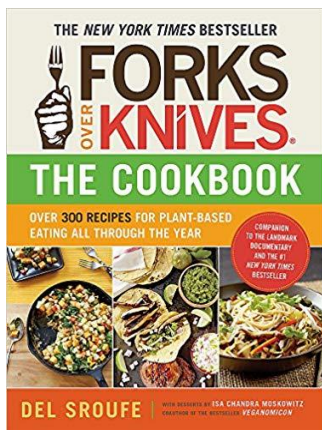
I have found that these books have helped me the most in embracing the vegan lifestyle so I thought I would share them with you.



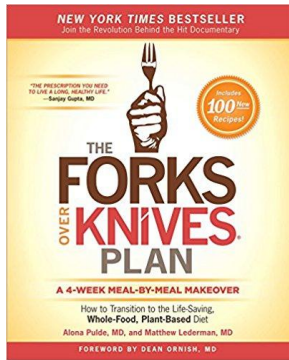
[Forks Over Knives](#) – This is the best book I have found that explains the plant-based diet in the best way. You understand why you want to do it and they give you lots of recipes to get started. It is based on the movie [Forks Over Knives](#) that you HAVE to watch!



[The Engine 2 Diet](#) – This book was written by the son of one of the doctors who created the Forks Over Knives plan. He implemented the diet with the men in his firefighting crew and all of them had amazing results. His recipes are my favorites so far of all the books I have used. The subtitle of this one is “The Texas Firefighter’s 28-Day Save-Your-Life Plan that Lowers Cholesterol and Burns Away the Pounds”.

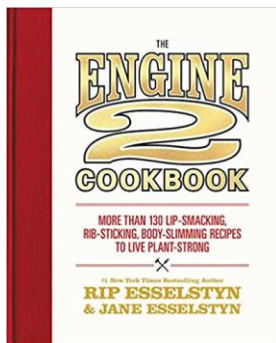


[Forks Over Knives Cookbook](#) – This is another good book to add to your library for even more recipes.

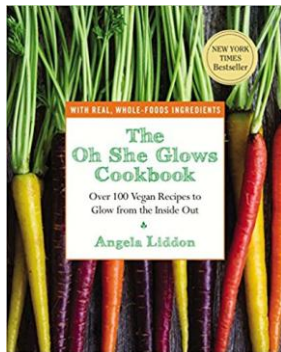


[The Forks Over Knives Plan](#) – This book contains recipes but also gives a 4-week plan that helps you ease into the plant-based life.

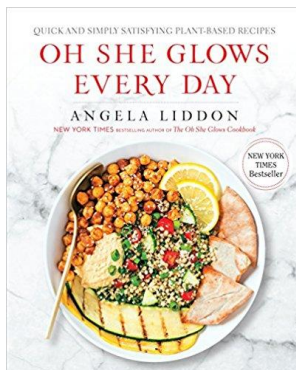
These books are on my list to get:



[The Engine 2 Cookbook](#) – I'm looking forward to more great recipes from the firefighter son of the original Forks Over Knives series.



[Oh She Glows Cookbook](#) - This one was recommended by my daughter and it is next on my list. She says the recipes are really good.



[Oh She Glows Every Day](#) – Another recommendation by my daughter that I'm going to be using next.

What Can You Expect When You Go Vegan?

Transitioning to a new diet or lifestyle can be a bit frightening. You don't know what to expect. And if you've tried lifestyle changes or diets before then you know that sometimes the changes can be significant. We'll discuss how to approach the vegan lifestyle and diet in a bit. First, let's talk about the potential changes and what you can expect.

Withdrawal

Any time you begin cutting sugar, starchy carbohydrates, and caffeine out of a diet or lifestyle, you can expect a few withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms can range from mild irritability and fatigue to headaches and mood swings.

Of course the degree of the withdrawal symptoms can depend on your current diet and how you transition to a vegan diet. If you go cold turkey then you may experience more symptoms than if you ease into it.

However, many people have no withdrawal symptoms at all because they don't really cut out any sugar, starchy carbs, or caffeine out of their diet. A bagel, a muffin, and candy can all easily be vegan. And there are many unhealthy vegans.

Imagine if you ate muffins for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. You're vegan. You're not eating meat or animal products. However, you're also not getting the health benefits of a vegan diet. **If you plan on adopting a vegan lifestyle, make sure that you're eating healthy foods, not junk.**

Cravings

Many people wonder if they'll crave meat. If you find that you're craving meat then you're likely dealing with a deficiency. You can be deficient in protein, iron, or vitamin B12. These elements are all essential for your health and wellbeing.

Cravings are usually your body sending you a signal that it needs something. In the case of a meat craving you can resolve it by getting protein, iron and vitamin B12 into your diet. If the cravings don't go away, consider seeing your doctor.

Energy Levels

You might expect that you wouldn't have as much energy when you transition to a vegan diet. In fact, the opposite is true. Most people find that they not only have more energy during the day, they also feel happier. There's actually an acid that's found in meat that can have neurological effects on the brain. Stop eating meat and those effects go away. You feel happier, lighter, and ready to take on the world.

The vegan lifestyle isn't without some challenges. However, when you approach it carefully and with knowledge about what your goals are and what you need to fuel your body, going vegan may be the best thing you've ever done for yourself.

Next, let's tackle the topic of going vegan cold turkey, or cold tofurky as you might say.

The Pros and Cons of Going Vegan Cold Turkey

There are basically two ways that you can approach a vegan diet and lifestyle. You can flip the switch and decide that from now on you're going to be vegan - also known as going cold turkey. Or you can transition into a vegan way of living.

Many people choose to go cold turkey. As mentioned earlier, a large number of people decide to become vegan because they saw a movie or read a book. Generally, when something motivates you to make such a big change, you're convinced. You don't want to dip your toes in the water so to speak; you're ready to dive right in. With vegan living, there are some pros and cons to this approach.

The Downside of Going 100 Percent Vegan Overnight

The biggest downside to going vegan without easing into it is that it requires a complete shift in your approach to food. If you're not prepared for this shift, simple things like snacks and meals with friends can become a challenge.

For example, today you're omnivorous and tomorrow you're vegan and your boss invites you to a lunch meeting. You think, not a problem. I'll just have a salad. After a day of salads, because you weren't really prepared for anything else, you're starving, grumpy, and tired of salads.

Being vegan requires food forethought. You need to know how to get complete proteins. You need to make sure that you're not just eating salads and bread. Going vegan overnight can throw you into a bit of mental shock.

The other potential downside, and this happens often, is you may feel deprived. There are likely several animal-based foods that you really enjoy - macaroni and cheese, for example. Suddenly you can no longer have them. This deprivation can make you fall off the wagon and cave in to your cravings.

The Pros of Going 100 Percent Vegan Overnight

It's fast. You don't need to think about it - you've made the decision and now you're vegan. Sometimes it's easier to be successful if you can capitalize on the excitement and the momentum you have.

Additionally, when you make the switch quickly you don't have to go through months of explaining to friends and family that you're transitioning to vegan. You simply are vegan and it's easier to manage the inevitable conversations you're going to have.

If you're an all-or-nothing type person or you really need structure and accountability, then going completely vegan is probably right for you. There's no wiggle room and you can't be wishy-washy about whether you're vegan today or not. You just are.

Of course, going completely vegan right away isn't right for everyone. Many people prefer a slower approach. Let's take a look at how to manage that process next.

How to Go Vegan One Meal at a Time

Transitioning to a vegan lifestyle is often the recommended approach. This is primarily because eliminating animal products from your life is usually more difficult than you imagine. For example, think about the things you ate today.

Did you have butter or anything with butter in it? What about dairy? Was there milk or cheese in anything you ate today? What about eggs? Milk and eggs are a common ingredient in something as simple as bread or pasta.

When you gradually transition to a vegan lifestyle you can slowly adapt to animal-free foods. Now, one complaint about transitioning to vegan is that it's too unstructured. There's no accountability. The one-meal-at-a-time approach helps answer that challenge.

Breakfast First

With the one-meal-at-a-time approach to vegan living, you will first begin eating a vegan breakfast. You'll get rid of all animal products, including dairy and eggs, at this one meal. Do this for two weeks. Once you've mastered the vegan breakfast, you can add vegan lunch to your day. Some ideas for a vegan breakfast include smoothies, vegan muffins or waffles, and oatmeal.

A Vegan Lunch

After you've mastered the vegan breakfast and you've become accustomed to reading labels and planning your first meal of the day, you can tackle the vegan lunch. Keep in mind that you need protein at each meal. Beans and nuts both offer protein. Try to create lunch menu items that make you feel satisfied and full. This will prevent you from hitting the vending machine midday.

Snacks

After the vegan lunch has been mastered, and again give it about two weeks before you tackle another meal, you can add vegan snacks to your day. This is a bit easier because many people have vegan snacks anyway. You may have fruit or a snack mix to quiet midday hunger.

Dinner Is the Biggie

Dinner is traditionally a meat-heavy meal. You can approach this final meal of the day in one of two ways. You can tackle it just like you did breakfast and lunch. You can begin planning, preparing, and eating vegan dinners and become completely vegan at this point.

Or you can become vegan six dinners out of the week. You can leave one dinner each week for meat. Your approach to dinner depends on how you're feeling and your reasons for becoming vegan. If you're doing it for health purposes then one meat dish a week is fine. If you're doing it for moral reasons then you'll probably want to go completely vegan as soon as possible. Make the decision that's best for you.

Whether you transition to a vegan diet or you go cold turkey, it's important to understand why you're going vegan and what your goals are. Then you'll be in a better position to make the best choice and decisions. It'll also be easier to talk about your new lifestyle with others.

Before we talk about some of the challenges you're going to face - like conversations with friends and eating out, let's talk about supplementation.

Supplements? Are They a Necessary Part of Being Vegan?

Many people who are on a vegan diet supplement their diet. And chances are if you talk to your doctor about going vegan, they're going to recommend a few supplements. The truth is that you don't have to supplement your diet. But you probably will...

There are a few essential nutrients that you just cannot get from plants. The biggest example of this and the most important is vitamin B12. The only ways to get B12 in your diet are to eat meat and animal products, to supplement it, or to make sure that you consume it through enriched products.

For example, soy milk is often enriched with vitamin B12. Fortified energy bars, nutritional yeast, and food made from wheat gluten all contain B12.

There are other nutrients that are difficult to get on a vegan diet. They include calcium, iron, and protein. You have a choice. You can pay careful attention to your diet and the signals your body sends you, or you can supplement.

If You Choose to Manage without Supplements

Talk to your doctor about how much iron, protein, calcium and B12 you're supposed to get in a day. These numbers differ depending on your age, weight, gender, and overall health. Then track those numbers. For example, know how much protein you get at each meal and make sure it's enough.

Know your body. Become aware of the signs and signals your body sends you when you're low on essential nutrients. For example, fatigue or moodiness may be signs that you're low on protein or iron.

If You Choose to Supplement

Look for vegan supplements. For example, omega-3 fatty acid supplements often come from fish. However, you can get vegan

supplements with flaxseed oil. Also make sure that you're getting what you pay for and buy from a reputable source.

Whether you choose to supplement your diet or not is a personal choice. If you're going vegan for your health then it makes sense to ensure you're getting the nutrients that you need to stay healthy. Consider talking to your doctor about the best option.

Speaking about talking to your doctor, people are going to ask you questions about your new lifestyle and your choice.

How to Handle Dining Out and Talking about Vegan Living with Friends

You're going to get questions from your friends and family about your decision to be vegan. You're also going to face situations where those around you don't eat the same way and may not have any options that you can eat.

It's quite likely that you'll be at a party at some point where there's nothing around you that doesn't contain an animal product. So what do you do? The following tips will help you successfully navigate the non-vegan world.

1. Know Why You're Vegan

Whether you love animals or you need to improve your health, people are going to ask why. Have an answer for yourself so that you can be confident when you talk to others.

2. Keep Food with You

Always have a snack or a go to food that you can eat in a pinch. That way if you end up at a meat-only restaurant or a friend's house without any vegan options, you won't go hungry.

3. Learn the Best Places

There are some restaurants that you can count on to have vegan options. Learn those places. Write them down or store them on your phone. This way you're set when someone says, "Where should we have dinner?"

4. Don't Judge

Some people won't get it. They just won't. Others eat meat like they have never seen or heard of a vegetable. That's their choice, just like it's your choice to be vegan. You'll get more support if you support others in their choices.

5. Take a Deep Breath

You're going to hear some stupid and judgmental things. Again. Some people just won't understand. Take a deep breath and hold on to your convictions. You've decided to go vegan for a reason. Hold to it and don't let the opinions of others have an impact.

The longer you're vegan, the easier it will be. You'll learn what works for you, where to eat, and who you can count on to remember that you're vegan. It'll be easier to have those conversations about your choices and to have fair discussion with others about theirs.

Deciding to live a vegan lifestyle will change your life. It's not a decision to make lightly. So the question is, are you ready to embrace a vegan lifestyle?

Are You Ready to Embrace Vegan Living?

Before you start on the path to vegan living, there are a few questions to ask yourself. There are considerations to ponder and plans to make. Spend a little time answering these questions. You'll be glad you did.

#1 Can You Have an Open Mind about Your Vegan Path?

Sometimes when people are too rigid about their goals and plans, they can be disappointed. You can also feel overwhelmed or pressured to follow through. If you can have an open mind about your journey, you'll be able to ride out the rough times and relax a little. For example, if you make a mistake and have meat you'll be able to let it go, forgive yourself, and get back to your goals.

#2 Are You Ready to be a bit Type A?

Vegan living requires some meal planning, forethought, and shopping. You'll also have to prepare the meals. In addition to learning how to be more thoughtful about what you eat, you'll need to make sure you get enough protein, calcium, omega-3 fatty acids and Vitamin B12.

#3 Are You All In or Will You Transition to a Vegan Diet?

Decide how you think you want to approach vegan living. You can of course change your mind. Remember #1 about being open minded? However, it's always good to have a plan. Decide if you're going to be 100 percent vegan right away or give yourself time to acclimate.

#4 Are You Willing to Ask for Help?

Vegan living is a little easier when you have support. Support can come in the form of a friend, education about vegan cooking and living, and by talking to your doctor or a nutritionist. There's a lot to learn about yourself and about being vegan.

It's easier when you feel like you have people and resources to turn to.

#5 Do You Know Why?

You don't have to have a mission statement or a mantra to repeat every time someone asks you why you're vegan. However, it's good to have an understanding about why you want to be vegan. You don't have to explain it to anyone. This is purely for your own motivation and inspiration.

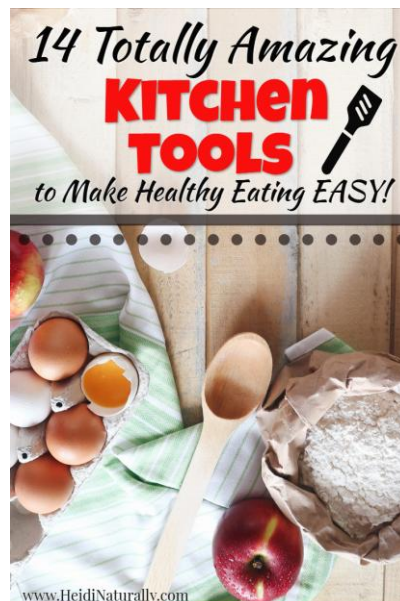
Watching the [Forks Over Knives movie](#) has really helped me stay motivated and on track with my goals. The movie is so compelling with many great studies and proof that the plant-based diet is the best for our bodies.

Vegan living is a rewarding lifestyle. You'll feel better, have more energy, look better and statistics say that you'll likely live longer too. It's better for your health, the environment, and for animals too.

I hope you have enjoyed this report. Check out the links below for more healthy living tips:



[Meatless Meals](#)



[Kitchen Tools](#)



[Tea Tree Recipes](#)

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for Your Lifestyle



[Best Body Cleanse](#)

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