

Daily Emerald: Why did you become vegan?

Lin Silvan/EVEN:

Ethics. Ethics alone. Why should any meal I chose to eat ever require taking the life of someone else? Someone whose life matters just as much to them as mine does to me? Someone whose heart beats in him just like yours or mine? Someone who would surely run away from us if given the chance? In a modern world-a-plenty with so very many alternatives, how could I ever justify such unfairness? We can't always make perfect decisions, but what we can do is make the most compassionate decision as possible at any given time.

I grew up on your typical SAD (Standard American Diet), like most folks, eating meat, dairy, eggs, and fish. I never really questioned it because it was after all the way I was raised and, when I looked around, it seemed to be what everyone else was doing. So it must be right, right?

In this world we tend to find comfort in being with the majority, but we forget to inquire if it is---for all concerned---the best way to live! Meat is not only not healthy and not necessary, it is downright detrimental. **Clearly detrimental for all concerned--- for you and for the non-human animal whose life is sacrificed and for the Earth!** Eating meat is a lose-lose-lose.

I went veg late in life (41), but it's never too late and it's never too early. I found a great book by Dr. John McDougall and after reading it in wide-eyes amazement, my life was forever changed. For the better!

Inspired, I then read John Robbins' *Diet for a New America* and my path was set. Carved in stone. Those books took a veg diet and, for me, turned it into a veg *lifestyle*. Then I heard lectures by Dr. Neal Barnard (PCRM), Dr. Joel Fuhrman, and H. Jay Dinshah (American Vegan Society President) and I knew there would be absolutely no turning back for me.

Twenty years later my only regret is that I didn't have that lightbulb moment much earlier in my life. If only I had inquired earlier instead of assuming the status quo was the way to go.

Daily Emerald: Why does EVEN sponsor a vegan thanksgiving?

LS: Serving as a vegan resource, it is one of the many things that EVEN does to fulfill its Mission Statement "to inform, educate and encourage" those interested in the benefits of a healthful, vegan lifestyle.

All life on this planet is interconnected; we cannot live arrogantly assuming we are the center and we are all that matters, and expect the world and its people to flourish. **When we recognize that it is impossible for a meal to be "peaceful" that began and ended with violence (slaughter), when we learn that true compassion turns love into love-in-action, then we might have peace on earth.** Not to mention that meat-eating is not sustainable! While everyone is chattering away about being green and living sustainably, how many conveniently turn a blind eye and overlook the fact that eliminating, or at least reducing, our animal products consumption, is the *#1 effort we can make toward mitigating the global warming and climate change crises on this planet?* This planet---our home!

Turkeys have a zest for living and enjoying the day. Like many animals they are intelligent and protective parents. Treated with respect, they are very friendly. But in factory farms, they are denied everything that is good and are subjected to routine mutilations---like having their beaks and toes chopped off---that would be illegal if done to dogs and cats. Turkeys are mutilated at birth, made obese and lame, diseased, drugged, sexually abused to reproduce and tortured to death. Horrendous? Yes. Necessary? No.

Daily Emerald: What does one eat at a vegan Thanksgiving?

LS: Typical fare at a gentle thanksgiving celebration is wide and varied. It can include everything from vegetable lasagna (using soy or rice cheese) to tofurky roasts. Nut/rice tortes, sweet potatoes, lentil soup, roasted garlic potatoes, corn chowder, fresh focaccia bread, hummus and pita appetizers including some mushroom pate, 3 bean salads, roasted eggplant with red peppers, pasta primavera, risotto, mixed harvest vegetables, shepherd's pie, mashed potatoes with golden gravy, fresh homemade cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie, and vegan truffles, egg-less nog and apple pie a la mode. **All vegan!** The list is endless. There are so many items, I could never cover them all.

This year, some of the items Govinda's will be offering in their restaurant are: homemade tofu/turkey, candied yams, cranberry chutney, mashed potatoes and gravy, large mixed green salads with homemade sesame or almond dressings, cornbread, dahl, and many other items including various homemade vegetable soups and more! **100% vegan** and all the trimmings!

Daily Emerald: What is a common reason for people becoming vegetarian or vegan?

LS: I can't speak for other people. Everyone's reason is slightly different. Plus as I mentioned, the rationale behind one reason will always be inextricably linked with other thoughts and reasoning. Reason for a veg lifestyle is multi-faceted! *All life is interconnected.*

However, I can say this: that founding, and running the EVEN group full-time, I am in touch with literally thousands of vegans and vegetarians across the US and around the world, and this I have learned --- **the most common reason is almost always one of ethics and integrity and compassion and the desire to live a cruelty-free life as best as possible.** There may be folks who become vegetarian strictly for health reasons, but most folks tell me the truth behind why they became vegan is the higher ethical standards of a compassionate life.

Daily Emerald: What is your name, age and occupation?

LS: Lin Silvan, 61, retired HR/Corporate Training & Development professional. I have been volunteering my retirement time and energy since 2005 as Founder and Executive Director of the Eugene Veg Education Network (EVEN). EVEN is a local vegan education and outreach group focusing on non-violence, compassion and sustainability.

[This interview was conducted with EVEN by the UO Daily Emerald in November 2010.]