



EVEN Interview with **Freya Dinshah**

**President,
American Vegan Society**

*Freya Dinshah is president of the American Vegan Society and edits its magazine **American Vegan**. Freya's late husband, H. Jay Dinshah, founded the American Vegan Society in 1960 and taught Ahimsa as the principle of vegan living.*

Freya grew up in England in a vegetarian family. She became vegan as a teen and so has many years of experience with this way of living. Her two children, now adults, were raised vegan.

*Freya's cookbook, **The Vegan Kitchen**, was first published in 1965 and is now in its 13th edition. Many of its recipes are also in a quantity card file (batched for 100 servings) produced by AVS and utilized by colleges and institutions across the country.*

Freya has helped organize numerous local and national events to encourage compassionate living.



EVEN: Who was an influential person in your life earlier on that led you to veganism?

Freya: My pen friend was Jay Dinshah who founded the American Vegan Society in 1960 and whom I married later that year. I was in England, but Jay told me about The Vegan Society (U.K.), and that cows don't "give" us milk; it's stolen from calves taken away for veal. And leather is not an innocent by-product but makes the meat industry financially viable.

*Although vegetarian, I had thought vegans risked health for principles.
To the contrary! My asthma cleared up when I quit milk, cheese, and eggs.
Our children grew up with no tooth decay.*
– Freya Dinshah, American Vegan Society

EVEN: Any other influences?

Freya: Geoffrey Rudd of The Vegetarian Society (England) wrote an influential book, **Why Kill for Food?** (1956) In it vegetarian doctors presented ovo-lacto-vegetarianism as a bridge to an entirely plant-sourced (vegan) diet, saying that legumes and nuts should replace meat instead of the extra eggs and cheese which people tend towards. They advised vegans ensure a source of B12.

Natural Hygiene (health) practitioner, Herbert Shelton, (U.S.) described all “food” from animals as “second-hand foods.” The same thought was behind The Vegan Society booklet, on how to eat, titled, “First Hand, First Rate.”

Seventh Day Adventists in the U.S., were known for their health sanitariums, medical studies, health food stores, soymilks, and canned meat substitutes. Valuable information came from Dr. John Scharffenberg, and from Loma Linda University.

We became friends with Dr Catherine Nimmo and Rubin Abramowitz who had started an earlier Vegan Society in the U.S. headquartered in California.

EVEN: Whom have you led to veganism?

Freya: My sister and parents became vegan. Dr. Frey Ellis, a hematologist, also influenced them. He published papers in *The Lancet* (journal of the British Medical Association) documenting how a vegan diet could alleviate the symptoms of angina. He also documented that vegans are at least as healthy as omnivores.

Many people have been influenced by the American Vegan Society. We corresponded with Victoria Moran (*Main Street Vegan* author) when she was a teenager. Jay (who died in 2000) was a strong motivator and dynamic speaker. I developed recipes for *The Vegan Kitchen* (first edition 1965) which was distributed throughout the U.S. and had a strong following in Australia. AVS played an important part within the vegetarian movement on lecture tours, at conferences, and locally. We were and are a source of books and information—many by authoritative medical doctors and dietitians, and professors of law and philosophy.

*You don't have to be 100% perfect.
Being vegan is a goal you progress towards.*
– Freya Dinshah, American Vegan Society

EVEN: What advice would you give to a vegan advocate wanting to become more of an activist?

Freya: Be a good example. People are swayed by what you do and how you appear. Be friendly, present factual information to back your argument. Help people replace the foods they give up, and to find substitutes for leather, wool, and toiletries.

EVEN: What do you think has made veganism hard for people?

Freya: Vegans are still a minority. There are social pressures. It has not always been easy to find good vegan food, but that's improving. And people are addicted to cheese! Becoming vegan builds character, and self reliance! It's an adventure to explore new food sources!

EVEN: What, in your opinion, is the most misunderstood idea about veganism?

Freya: That you have to be 100% perfect or it's not worth trying. Being vegan is a goal that you progress towards.

EVEN: Why are more people becoming vegan today?

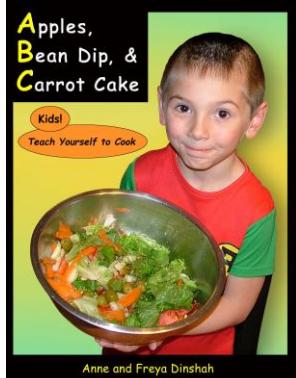
Freya: There's a growing range of convenience vegan food products to replace dairy and meat in super-markets. The internet speeds communication. The nature of animal agriculture and the terrors of the slaughterhouse are exposed on YouTube. Vegan eating is now recommended by medical and nutrition experts. Vegan cooking shows are on public TV, and on the web. Restaurants are introducing vegan menu options.

EVEN: If you were to mentor a younger person today, what guidance might you offer?

Freya: I've been mentoring several kids in an after-school program. They are learning to cook with me, making snacks. I introduce them to new fruits and vegetables, legumes as protein sources, whole grain options, and good fats in nuts and seeds. They are becoming aware of food choices. These kids inspired my recent book written with my daughter, Anne.

Today's children are not familiar with real food, where it comes from, or how to prepare it...and neither are their parents!

– Freya Dinshah, American Vegan Society



Apples, Bean Dip, and Carrot Cake: Kids! Teach Yourself to Cook has 60 recipes, arranged in a progressive order, starting with easy ones suitable for 4-year olds to make and advancing through levels of achievement up to recipes for 12-year-olds. There are also numerous "how to" pages detailing specific steps. It is a picture book which shows children who are obviously involved in what they are doing and enjoying the results.

2012, 8½x11" full-color photos throughout 160 pages,
\$24.95 available at www.americanvegan.org

EVEN: Of those 60 recipes, which are your favorites?

Freya: I like the **wraps** which bring together a few recipes they learn in the book, such as how to cook brown rice, wash lettuce, grate carrot, bake eggplant, and make hummus. Kids of different ages can participate in a wrap-making party. **Pita Pizza** is another good one for a group because it has many options. **Gingerbread Cookies** is a recipe that requires careful measuring. It's not overly sweet, using only a little brown sugar and molasses. Kids cut out shapes and can decorate them with seeds and fruit.

Variety is the key to a healthful vegan diet...

– Freya Dinshah, American Vegan Society

EVEN: Do you personally have a favorite vegan meal or food you can tell us about that really makes veganism work for you?

Freya: Variety is the key to a healthful vegan diet so I don't pick one favorite. **Breakfast** is primarily fruit with whole grain cereal (often Muesli: grated apples, rolled oats, soy milk, dried fruit, nuts/seeds). For **lunch** I have raw-vegetable salad, or soup, whole-grain bread or crackers with nut butter or avocado. **Dinner** features a soup or salad. My winter soups are often a combination of beans or lentils with leafy greens and root vegetables. I like baked potatoes with side vegetables and a legume. A quick and easy dinner is a rice and vegetable casserole with marinated tofu and nutritional yeast.

EVEN: How do you spend your leisure time?

Freya: I love playing with Clint, my 2-year old grandson. I enjoy tennis, swimming, hiking, and dancing.

EVEN: What is the American Vegan Society doing today?

Freya: We publish *American Vegan* magazine, which has news and articles of and by vegans around the U.S. It is available in print and online, and contains inspiring stories, recipes, and advice. We hold an annual Garden Party with speakers and an outdoor buffet lunch. We host gourmet vegan dinners prepared by students at the Academy of Culinary Arts at Atlantic Cape Community College near Atlantic City. In previous years AVS arranged conferences in many parts of the U.S. which were forerunners of present day events. We do outreach and book sales. We are involving more people in our programs and encourage volunteers to work with us on present and potential projects.

EVEN: Any opinion or insight on the future of veganism in today's world?

Freya: The future for the world *is* veganism.



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