

EVEN Interview with

Priscilla Feral

President, Friends of Animals



*Priscilla Feral is President of **Friends of Animals, (FoA)** an international non-profit that established an organizational base for the animal-advocacy movement in New York in 1957. For 57 years, FoA's growing community of thousands of members and supporters has worked to protect and defend animals from abuse and institutionalized exploitation. Priscilla has presided over the group for 27 of those years, as **Friends of Animals** charts the path that brings critical habitat, environmental, and animal rights issues into the animal advocacy sphere.*

*Priscilla authored **The Best of Vegan Cooking** (2009) and co-authored **Dining With Friends: The Art of North American Vegan Cuisine** (2005). Both cookbooks were published by Friends of Animals and have drawn rave reviews. FoA also distributes **Vegan Restaurant Guides** for San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City. The group's popular **Vegan Starter Guide** is widely distributed across North America.*



EVEN: How did veganism become part of your life?

Priscilla: Veganism is more than a plant-based diet, and eating animals and their products is a dreadful, inefficient way of feeding people. As

vegans, we strive to avoid playing a role in the injustice of contributing to an industry that's so hazardous to animals, our environment and human health. Also, veganism, in the context of animal rights is the logical extension of a movement for social justice.

Veganism is about an ethic of respect, a principle I've applied to my life since 1992. That year, it finally occurred to me that animal farming was wrong in principle, and there's no correct practice that respects animal rights.

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

Priscilla: Before I quit a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet in 1991, I was hoping to achieve a vegan diet, and after I met my partner, Bob Orabona, (already vegan) the transition gained momentum! Bob became my new cooking buddy, so I abandoned eggs and dairy products with rapidity. In short, I was inspired to change my habits knowing that dairy and eggs were not only by-products of the meat industry, but part of a betrayal that results in suffering, violence and ghastly slaughter.

EVEN: What do you think makes veganism hard for people?

Priscilla: Fundamental change is hard for people; many lack the discipline to disrupt their comfort zone. That kind of change comes from inspiration, so the question becomes: *How do vegans assist with providing a catalyst for change?*

EVEN: How do vegans become a catalyst for change? What do you recommend?

Priscilla: I think our best arguments for switching to a plant-based diet come from cooking and offering delicious meals to those unfamiliar with vegan cuisine.

People are inspired to switch off dairy, eggs, meat and fish when they see that they don't have to sacrifice enjoyment.

There's everything to gain including respect for conscious living.

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

Priscilla: That not consuming animals or animal products means a plant-based diet lacks protein, or that vegan cuisine is about sacrifice.

EVEN: What one thing from your thinking in childhood do you wish you could change?

Priscilla: That eating fish and crustaceans was OK because they lacked a central nervous system --- or whatever nonsense I imagined --- which meant I thought I was approaching vegetarianism if I occasionally ate fish.

I also didn't realize the hazards of the commercial fish-catching industry, or why consuming fish puts the lives of marine animals and birds in peril.

EVEN: If you were to mentor a younger person today, what guidance might you offer? What encouraging words might you share with a newbie?

Priscilla: Learn to cook vegetables and eat lots of fresh fruit. Purchase nice cookbooks with readable, reliable instructions for vegan food preparation, and take advantage of cooking lessons. DELICIOUSSTV.COM has a Series 1 and 2 (coming soon) called *Vegan Mashup* where one can see wonderful food preparation by notable chefs such as Miyoko Schinner, Toni Fiore and Terry Hope Romero.

Look for pleasure from preparing healthful foods and meals. My daughter's generation grew up in households where no one cooked. Sometimes there were gorgeous, expansive kitchens, but families never had home-made bread, soup, desserts, or much else. Meals arrived from take-out and pizza shops, or they ate in restaurants.

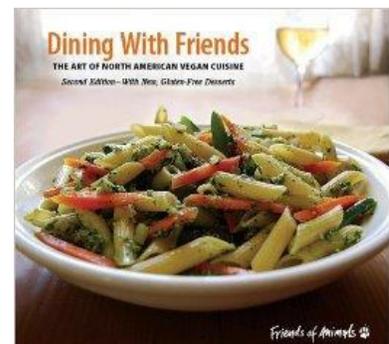
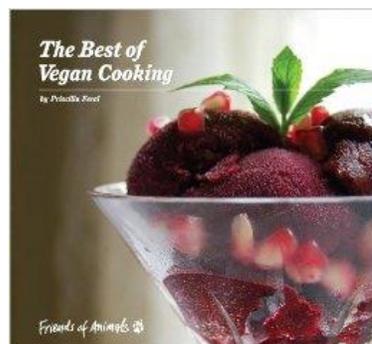
EVEN: What advice would you give to a vegan advocate wanting to become more of an activist?

Priscilla: Become a member of Friends of Animals! (Or become a member of EVEN!) Help us with tabling events, outdoor demonstrations and gatherings. Distribute FoA's literature and hold pot luck vegan dinners.

Become useful!

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

Priscilla: I adore a wide variety of vegan food, especially Italian cuisine such as risotto, focaccia, and pasta with a variety of sauces. Pasta Primavera or Cauliflower Risotto are crowd-pleasers. Both recipes appear in my cookbooks.



I routinely shop for organic, fresh fruits and vegetables; I enjoy making most meals from scratch. During Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, I make chestnut soup after ordering chestnuts from online farms. It's a particular hit with everyone.

I love Indian cuisine and Chef Raghavan Iyer is a friend and extraordinary talent whose new book, *Indian Cooking Unfolded* contains a particularly good vegan food section. It's not a vegan cookbook, but the vegan selections will allow anyone to create excellent dishes. I take a cooking class from him each summer that's customized for vegans.

Our go-to favorite restaurant is G-Zen in Branford, CT, and we have frequent dinners there because their all-vegan food is astonishing – both raw and cooked. I think treating myself to such elegance makes veganism work for me!

EVEN: What one thing makes veganism worthwhile for you?

Priscilla: Perhaps the most solid argument for veganism today is that consuming animals is absolutely unnecessary.

Animal rights advocacy prompts us to opt out of exploitation in all its forms – not to obtain concessions from animal exploitation industries.

Animal farming generates more greenhouse gases (the kind that cause climate change) than all forms of transportation combined. No matter how cows are raised, they still ruminate when digesting feed, producing methane, a greenhouse gas.

Ice at the poles is shrinking each year and rainforests are demolished to make room for cows to graze.

It's important for me not to feed these disasters with an irresponsible omnivorous diet.

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

Priscilla: We can make the world right for human and nonhuman animals when we elect enlightened, vegan-friendly officials to all levels of government, starting with the White House in 2016.

If the United States can make strides to eliminate animal farms, and cultivate people to commit to a plant-based diet, Africa and other regions will be influenced by what's valued here – where we place status.

Wildlife will have more protected habitat when it's not erased for cattle, goat and sheep grazing. Wild horses will gain freedom again on public lands when ranchers stop running our federal and state governments. Wolves will find refuge, perhaps, when ranchers and hunters lose their political influence which produces killing and misery.

Moreover, a vegan diet is the best ethical response to human hunger, to our environmental challenges, and to our commitment to respect animals with whom we share the planet.



Friends of Animals 

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