

EVEN Interview with Shawn Donnille

Vice-President/Co-Owner of Mountain Rose Herbs

Shawn (along with his partner, Julie Bailey) owns [Mountain Rose Herbs](#), a processor and supplier of organic herbs, spices, teas, and essential oils with a strict emphasis on organic agriculture.



Sustainability is at the core of their operation and Shawn has received numerous awards from the local, state and federal level for the environmental practices implemented at Mountain Rose Herbs. When he is not defending the rights of animals he can be found on the river fighting for the protection of wild habitat for native fish.

His specialty is in riparian health and aquatic eco-systems and he assists the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife with their Salmon-Trout Enhancement Program and currently he oversees the Mountain Rose River Project which conducts water quality sampling, river monitoring, riparian restoration, and stream enhancement projects.



EVEN: How did veganism become part of your life?

Shawn: It all started with a phenomenal punk band from the U.K. called Conflict. Their lyrics are incredibly powerful and they were the first band to aggressively take on the issues surrounding vivisection, vegetarianism, and the cruel practices being conducted at vivisection laboratories. They were supporting members of the A.L.F. and they routinely played A.L.F. prisoner benefit concerts which was not a popular notion back then, as it is now. I must also confess that the peace punk scene which I became intimate with during high school, and still embrace to this day, shaped my thoughts immensely concerning animal welfare and respect for all sentient beings.

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

Shawn: I have to give absolute credit to my past girlfriend Rainy. She was a devout vegan and when you live with one for nearly 5 years you see just how easy it is to incorporate veganism into one's diet. We collectively cooked and shared meals and, of course, all of these were vegan. On the weekends we would prepare vegan meals for Food Not Bombs, and in doing all of this, one could not help but become a vegan by default. At the time I was a strict vegetarian, however, my personal goal was to become a vegan and both Rainy and Food Not Bombs gave me all the tools to finish the job! Sadly we departed many years ago, but we are still close to this day, and even sadder still is the fact that Rainy now eats meat arrgh!

EVEN: What advice would you give to a vegan entrepreneur starting a venture?

Shawn: Think of the animals and don't turn back! In the 21st century nearly everything is possible including the owning and operating of a vegan company. In fact it requires very little effort or thought and the benefits are enormous, because your dietary statement will only solidify your company's commitment to absolute environmental integrity. This in turn will strengthen your customer's loyalty because they know you are an organization founded on a firm set of principled guidelines from the top down and that you are not afraid to embrace the difficult choices and decisions in one's life.

EVEN: What makes veganism hard for people?

Shawn: I would have to say access. Most communities throughout the United States hamper one's ability to conveniently continue a vegan lifestyle. However in a place like Eugene, or even Oregon for that matter, there is simply no excuse for not being vegan especially when you consider how many resources we have! I would also have to say that not having a support network makes it difficult as well. When you don't have any comrades to share your principles with, it makes you feel like your actions are in absolute futility which only encourages one's abandonment of veganism.

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

Shawn: That it makes one unhealthy and eating animal products is essential for human health. This is absolute bollocks and I can outclimb, outhike, outswim, and outperform any meat eater I know. Like I always say...“meat breeds weakness.”

I would also like to mention that I have not succumbed to illness in over 10 years which can be entertaining at times because all the meat and dairy eaters around me are falling ill 2-3 times a year. Makes you wonder.

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

Shawn: None that I can think of at the moment, however, I sure wished my Mom would not have fed me as much meat as she did!

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

Shawn: I would share with them the powerful words and expressions of the numerous bands and artists which influenced me in my early years. Their works are a powerful medium and they convey the importance of veganism in a way I never could, both from a philosophical point of view as well as an environmental one. I also believe in influencing folks through my modality of living and lifestyle. Just being around someone who passionately loves animals and lives a vegan lifestyle produces a tremendous sensation in those that witness such a lifestyle. And influencing that person, if only on a small level, is guaranteed. However, the results are not immediate, and changing someone's thought process through your modality of living takes time.

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

Shawn: I hate to admit it but Tofu Dogs! They're versatile, quick, inexpensive, mildly healthy and they remind me of one of my favorite pastime foods when growing up. I am also partial to Falafel sandwiches, and how can I forget the "Bueno No Cheese" burrito from Burrito Amigos!?!

EVEN: What one thing makes veganism worthwhile for you?

Shawn: Knowing that my diet is not contributing to the excess suffering of animals. However, this is nearly overshadowed by knowing the excessive environmental degradation and energy consumption required to produce animal products for human consumption. In my mind I truly believe that the majority of our environmental issues would be solved by two things: 1) Addressing our burgeoning human population, and 2) Abstaining from consuming animal products.

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

Shawn: Hopeful...very hopeful. The politics of food are becoming the center issue for most Americans and by default this leads them to studying the effects and dangers of consuming animal products. You see the importance of sustainable food featured in films, documentaries, magazines, and books, and most of the folks exposed to the issues presented through these media will eventually gravitate towards vegetarianism and veganism.

