

The inspiration for 'Diggers Veggie Kitchen'

A few years ago, my parents got sick. My Dad was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes and heart problems and my mum was diagnosed with lupus and diabetes as well. Both of them became very ill, my mother at one point became so ill, she could hardly get out of bed as her joints were inflamed and very sore. She could hardly feed herself, let alone take care of my father who just seemed to want to sleep all day and when he was awake, he barely had the energy to do anything.

I didn't want to lose my parents, I considered them to be too young to become so ill, in their early 70's. Their doctors didn't seem to be helping at all, telling them that everything would be ok if they just keep taking their medications. So, I became friends with Google and started searching for some answers. What I found would change our lives forever.

One of the first things I found was a study by Doctor Neal Barnard, who took some diabetics and put half of them on a plant based diet where no meat and no dairy were basically their only restrictions. The other half he put on the 'standard diet for a diabetics patient.' The study was only for a month or two but he found the results to be nothing short of a miracle. The patients on the plant based diet had two to three times better results than the other patients on the diet for diabetes (the one the doctors and standard dieticians put someone on, when they are diagnosed with diabetes). The patients on the plant based diet had results that were so good that many of them had no symptoms or signs of ever having diabetes at all.

I couldn't believe that no one had told either of my parents this, especially their doctors. I bought Neal Barnard's book to reversing diabetes. I also found that a plant based diet was a known cure for any auto-immune disease, including lupus. I found a book explaining this, "The Lupus Recovery Program," and bought that too. I also learned of plenty of other doctors who had healed patients of heart disease (Dr

Dean Ornish), auto immune diseases (Dr John McDougall) and even cancer (Dr Esselstyn and Dr Caldwell), all with a plant based diet. Joel Fuhrman was able to cure Joe Cross who had an auto immune disease and was on very heavy medications for over seven years, among thousands of other patients that their regular doctors had given up on. Why were these amazing doctors not household names, why did people not know of hundreds of thousands of healing stories?? They had proven results time and time again. Perhaps Big Pharma and meat and dairy industries were too big and powerful?? After all, doctors don't make money out of healthy people, or dead people! So, let's keep them somewhere in between!!

My Dad wasn't really interested in changing and I'm not sure if he actually believed me when I explained that he could heal himself, if he just made some changes to his diet. He didn't read the books. My mother, on the other hand, read both of the books. She was totally convinced and as I showed her more and more stories of healing, she decided to give plant based eating a go.

At first, it was a little tricky as we had been so used to cooking with animal products in almost every meal. We didn't know any different. However, we bought a few good cook books and went to a few cooking classes as well as made some new friends who also did not eat animal products. The plant based eaters were the most supportive people ever and before long, we were confidently heading to pot luck dinners and were proud to show off our new culinary creations!

My mum started to heal her body. Every time she went to the doctor, she was able to reduce her medications. One day she told her doctor that she had read she could reverse her problems if she cut out meat and dairy. He told her, "I will believe it when I see it!" He started to eat his words. Her dietician was so impressed with my mums healing, she told her to keep doing whatever she was doing. My mum's swelling was going down and she was feeling less and less pain. Pretty soon, she was off all her medications and playing 18 holes of golf without any pain. It was an absolute life changing journey of healing, that didn't require anything else except the most exquisite food and LOTS of it!!

My father insisted on eating the Standard Aussie Diet of meat and 3 vegetables. He couldn't see himself healing and therefore refused to change. Sometimes I think people are so conditioned by the society they live in, they find it hard to believe in something different, even if it will benefit them in the long run. It was especially hard for him because plant based eating was not mainstream and he didn't want to be considered "abnormal." Some people find it hard to go against what is considered, 'normal' in our society. I think my Dad just wanted to fit in and do what everyone else does, even if it would make him sick and slowly kill him.

My family never ate junk food or processed foods. We always had a salad and heaps of veggies at meal times and always preferred whole grains and lots of fruit. However, we did, like most Westerners eat meat and dairy. We didn't think there was any other way of eating and were blind to the damage it was doing to our bodies over time.

My Dad was slowly killing himself before our eyes and sadly passed away two years ago, actually on this day that I am writing this. Perhaps he is watching over me, guiding me in the right direction to tell his story. It was a terrible time for our family. He didn't die of anything in particular; his body just slowly gave up. He was on 13 pills a day, all prescribed by his doctor, who my father thought would heal him.

It was at this time that I started talking to people who ate a plant based diet about their stories. Some had similar stories of healing and health but many had other stories to tell. I didn't really ever consider anyone else when I ate meat and dairy, it wasn't really even on my radar. I just went to the meat section and bought whatever was on special or what was agreed would be on the menu for dinner. But I started learning about the horror of slaughterhouses and factory farming. I learned about animals confined in tiny cages, not even able to turn around, male baby chickens in the egg industry that are ground up alive, killing male baby cows and sheep to steal their milk, butchering animals who can smell death and know they are going to die. They die alone and terrified, they are only babies. I saw a few videos that were actual footage of animals dying, screaming for their lives in slaughter houses and it was enough to make me cry like a baby. Having horses, dogs and cats in my life, I knew that animals were not stupid, they were actually a lot smarter

than most of us, especially pigs that are smarter than three year old children. Yet, if we treated dogs like we treat pigs, cows, chickens, sheep, mutilating them without any anaesthetic, locking them up, throwing underweight baby pigs, cows, sheep and goats against concrete walls and butchering them for our pleasure, we would go to jail. What makes these animals so different? We are just conditioned by our society to believe that these animals were here for us to slaughter, exploit and then eat. But, what if our society considered it acceptable to eat dogs..cats...horses...swans....? What if our society still considered it ok to have slaves, to beat women, would we do that too? Do we have a moral obligation to live with our natural values of compassion and not harm the beautiful beings that we share this wonderful planet with? Especially when we do not need to? It made me very sad that I had caused such suffering to other innocent beings for such a large part of my life. It made me angry that I didn't know for so long about the horrible cruelty in the industry. It made me want to do more. It made me feel empowered that I CAN do something. It made me feel blessed that I had learned about the industry and that there were so many other people who felt the same way and wanted to do something. It is an amazing feeling when you decide that you will no longer accept cruelty into your life. Only people who have made this commitment to live more compassionately and healthily as a plant based vegan, will know the feeling I am talking about, but it is awesome and amazing and I highly recommend it! It made me want to share this amazing feeling with the rest of the world, it made me very convinced that it was my almost my duty to do this. Kind of like a calling....I'm not sure who was calling ...but you get my drift!!

Some time ago, my mother and I had the chance to visit Willowite Sanctuary, in Freshwater Creek. We were passing by and I had to pick something up. As I was chatting to a gorgeous young lady, by the name of Paris Crosbie, a sheep came up and put his head under my Mum's hand, something that my dog does often. My mother started to pat the sheep and it started wagging its tail. My mother stopped patting it and it stopped wagging its tail, pat, wag, stop pat, stop wag and so on. I said to Paris, 'he's like my dog,' to which she replied, "it's how you treat them but really they are no different to any of our "pets" that we are taught by

society to love.” A little piglet rolled onto its back and Paris started rubbing its belling. It looked so happy, it was smiling, I’m sure!! It was a bit of a lightbulb moment for me.

I remember Paris telling us that none of her family eat any animals or what comes out of them, they were all vegan. I had never really heard of this before and neither had my mum! My mother looked somewhat puzzled and asked, “what in the hell do you eat?” Fast forward a few years and now my mother and I do not have enough life times to cook all the wonderful recipes we have discovered!

As our journey continued, we also learned about the environmental impact that animal agriculture has on our planet. An enormous portion of land is cleared to produce food for animals, let alone grazing area for them, loss of topsoil, erosion, changes in water salinity. Over 70% of water is currently used in animal agriculture, when only 10% is used for fruit and vegetables for human consumption. Imagine how much water we would save if we all ate a plant based diet. Also, I learned that animal agriculture is responsible for over 53% of greenhouse gases. Forget coal, forget all the cars, trucks, trains combined. Yep, I didn’t know this either. Even the UN has declared a shift towards plant based eating for sustainability, so that we actually do not destroy all of it for our children and their children to come.

I also read the book, “The Blue Zones,” and learned that the healthiest people on the planet lived on a plant based diet. Here were these 100 and something year olds enjoying a wine and a ciggy (not encouraging anyone to smoke by the way!!) outside a coffee shop in Icaria, about to go and tend to their veggie gardens and cook in their veggie kitchens. The evidence was too strong for me! For me to not live my life as a plant based vegan, I would have to have rocks in my head, especially as the food is sooo damned good!! And it makes you feel so much better than you have ever felt before.

So, when my mother’s shop became vacant, in Feb, here was the opportunity to share the wonderful range of exquisite dishes we had found with awesome people who would come in the door! We have tested these on some very fussy eaters with great results and believe that

the way to someone's heart is through their stomachs! Eat, enjoy and be inspired.

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to ask our staff for more information as we would be more than happy to help anyone in any way. Great joy comes from inspiring others xx



Anita Rickey & her Mother Irena Karpala after the 'Festival of Colours'