

How did a Colorado Farm Boy become a Vegan?

by Charlie Renideo

When people ask me how I became vegan, I reply in a somewhat joking way, "It was a prenuptial agreement!" So, how does a Colorado farm boy even think of agreeing to become a vegan?

Every spring we would round up all of the cows and calves. I still, to this day, have haunting memories of those beautiful young calves screaming in pain as they were dehorned, branded and castrated without any anesthetic. I hated seeing the calves in so much pain, so I had to put the emotional connection I had with them in a box and not acknowledge that it was part of me. I now realize that everyone has to numb their feelings for animals early in life in order to consume meat, dairy and eggs, even though we may not be conscious of it.

The good part of growing up on a farm was that it allowed me to explore my connection with nature, which was a significant aspect of my later spiritual awakening.

In my late thirties and early forties I had finished a difficult divorce and been laid off from a job that I didn't like. I was ready for a new direction in my life.

I began a spiritual exploration which led to awakening to my inherent connection

to all life, to the earth and the universe. I was coming to see the world from a bigger and more compassionate perspective and to seeing myself as an integral part in it.



Part of my spiritual journey was making my dream trip to photograph Alaska. At the tale end of this journey of beauty and wonder, I had a brief encounter with Delisa, which 2 years later, evolved into a realization that we were spiritual partners. I knew she was deeply committed to her vegan life-

style, so when we decided to get married, I knew that was part of the agreement. So, I went from a meat eater to a vegan, cold broccoli! It was from a place of deep spiritual knowing that we were meant to be together that I was able to accept this "prenuptial agreement" quite easily as just part of my journey into the new life I had committed to

creating for myself with my new partner. (Besides, the food was actually great!)

Delisa knew, from my spiritual connection with nature, that once I understood the implications of

eating a plant-based diet, I would become committed to a vegan life, as she was. After reading the book, *Diet for a New America*, by John Robbins, I understood that what we

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eat has a huge impact not only on our own health, but also on the health of our planet and all life. At that point my commitment to a vegan diet became based upon my own awareness and values.

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As my consciousness evolved, it also became clear to me that being vegan was more than a dietary choice. It helped me to see that what I do has an impact on the intricate web of life, and that I am responsible for it. Making the conscious choice to eat a purely plant-based diet has helped to open the box I had closed many years before, allowing me to feel my emotional and spiritual connection to all other beings and to live a more compassionate life.