

## HOW I BECAME VEGAN

by June Cordasci

If someone had told me six months ago that my husband, Paul, and I would become vegans, I wouldn't have believed them. First of all, I didn't even know what a vegan was. I'd heard of vegetarians and had even been one for about a year, many years ago--but a vegan? But as we all know, life can throw us a curve that can send us down an entirely different path. Our new journey started by my being diagnosed with breast cancer on March 28th of this year.

I had surgery on April 14th. Because of a very skilled, caring surgeon and loving, supportive family and friends, I came through the procedure remarkably well. During my recovery, a friend told me about the Cancer Project's Food For Life Nutrition and Cooking Classes held at Providence Cancer center. Paul and I immediately signed up and started attending the classes on May 4th. What fun we had and what a delicious feast Delisa prepared in that first class. We were hooked!

At first it was challenging shopping, cooking and eating a totally different way, but I remember Delisa saying, "Your taste

buds have a three-week memory--the easiest way to retrain them is to jump right into this new way of eating." That's just what we did. We became vegans on May 5th. We cleaned out our refrigerator, pantry and freezer of all animal products--wow--now we had more room for fruits and veggies!



Fortunately, Paul was also eager to embrace this new lifestyle. Every week we tried the recipes Delisa demonstrated in class and he had a great attitude even when some of them didn't turn out quite perfect. When Delisa gave us the recipe for pita bread and explained how they puff up in the oven, he was so enthusiastic that he immediately made them at home and has become the pita bread master.

We looked forward to class every week and didn't miss one--they were just too much fun.

Another important part of the classes was the nutrition videos we watched and the access to resource materials. We read several books that Delisa recommended: *The China Study*, *Diet for a New America*, *Eat to Live*, and I even gritted my teeth and read *Skinny Bitch*. The language is atrocious, but the message is so *see June's Story, continued on page 11*

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## ***June's Story, "How I Became Vegan," continued from page 3:***

powerful. I loaned the book to my niece and now she and her daughters are embracing the vegetarian lifestyle.

We are now attending the monthly potlucks sponsored by the Alaska Vegetarian Society and have become members. The wonderful food can only be topped by the wonderful people we have met there. It's a great place to try new recipes, get support and learn so much about all aspects of a plant-based diet.

Another exciting result of our new way of eating--my bad cholesterol came down 53 points without the aid of medication. And I went through 6 weeks of radiation with virtually no side effects. The doctors were amazed!

We started our journey to veganism because of my cancer. But along the way we learned that eating this way can also help us avert other devastating illnesses, such as heart disease and diabetes. We also

learned what a toll factory farms place on our environment, the unnecessary suffering of the animals, and how we could feed everyone in the world if we used our land wisely and embraced a plant-based diet. Now, even if I were to find out that eating our old way was healthy--because of

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what we have learned about the cruelty to the animals--I could never go back to eating them. What started out as a journey for my health has also become a lifelong journey for the health of our planet and

a conscious effort to help stop the suffering of the animals who walk through this world with us.

This may sound crazy, but getting cancer was actually a good thing. It was truly a defining moment in our lives--a wake-up call! It gave Paul and me the opportunity and the will to change our lives for the better.