



# 5 Years After a Stage 4 Cancer Diagnosis, My Mom Is Thriving on a Plant-Based Diet

By Mallory Taylor  
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My plant-based journey began the summer of 2017 after my otherwise healthy and vibrant mom received a shocking stage 4 lung cancer diagnosis. She wasn't a smoker; in fact, she was the most active and healthy 75-year-old I knew. The only indication that something was wrong came when she experienced shortness of breath while playing tennis. This led her to her doctor, a hospital stay, a battery of blood tests, scans, and biopsies. Then finally, the dreaded diagnosis.

As my mom's treatment plan began to fall into place, I couldn't help but worry that conventional medicine wouldn't be enough. The statistics for stage 4 lung cancer survival were dismal, and I refused to accept them. I racked my brain for something I could do to help her gear up for this battle. There had to be a way to help boost her immunity and discourage the cancer's growth.

## Friendly Advice

I knew nutrition was important, but I had no idea which way of eating would be most beneficial. I was overwhelmed by conflicting studies, differing opinions, and the sheer number of different so-called "cancer-fighting" diets. In a moment of complete frustration, I turned to my friend [Jane Esselstyn](#) and her father and plant-based expert, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, for advice.

Jane explained in great detail how a plant-based diet has been proven to not only prevent but in many cases reverse certain diseases such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and even some cancers. Her argument resonated with me, and I immediately dove headfirst into all the documentaries, books, and research I could find. The stories were powerful, and the research was undeniable. I began to feel a spark of hope deep down inside and was motivated to do whatever it took to help my mom fight this cancer. At that point, I knew in my heart that a plant-based diet was the best way forward for both of us.

Throughout our journey, my mom and I have had our share of struggles and successes in the kitchen, frustration while dining out, and difficulty explaining our beliefs to friends, family, and even doctors. We supported each other, stuck with it, and ultimately succeeded, but the experience taught me that getting started and sticking to a plant-based diet is not an easy transition for everybody—especially those who might be dealing with a new, life-threatening diagnosis.

After a year of treatment coupled with a plant-based diet, we were told my mom's cancer had completely stabilized. During one of her appointments, I asked her doctor if she could pause treatment and give her body some time to recuperate from the chemotherapy. He agreed, but was visibly perplexed, since most stage 4 cancer patients don't experience this outcome. I couldn't help but blurt out, "You should tell all your patients to eat a plant-based diet." He grinned and shook his head slightly, but seemed to consider my request, which I counted as a win!

## Sharing the Power of a Plant-Based Diet

Here we are, five years later, having just celebrated my mom's 80th birthday. Over the years, she has had some targeted radiation therapy, and she's now taking a maintenance immunotherapy drug that had not been approved by the FDA when she was first diagnosed. There is no doubt in my mind that this diet has prolonged her life. She has beaten the odds by a long shot and is enjoying every second of her busy and fulfilling life.

Ever since this life-changing experience, I have been searching for a way to get involved and help spread the word about the power of a plant-based diet. Early last year, my husband and I decided to partner up with Jane Esselstyn and her husband, Brian Hart, on [Plants Only](#), a brand that had started with Brian's live-edge chopping blocks and cookbook stands, which were wildly popular among Jane's conference attendees. Since then, our shop has grown to include a wide variety of gifts and gear designed

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for the plant-passionate community.

*Ready to get started? Check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path. To learn more about a whole-food, plant-based diet, visit our [Plant-Based Primer](#).*