



Celebrity Trainer Kollins Ezekh Talks Boxing, Veganism, and the Power of Nutrition

By Megan Edwards
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Photo by Brenda Bravo

Kollins Ezekh is one of the most sought-after boxing and fitness trainers in Hollywood, having helped countless celebrity clients, including *Aladdin* star Mena Massoud, rigorously train to achieve peak physical fitness. His secret to staying healthy and packing a powerful punch? A [plant-based diet](#). We chatted with Ezekh about how he stumbled into his unique career path, his decision to go vegan, and what's next in his career.

How did your fitness career begin?

Kollins Ezekh: I was born in the USSR, and when I was 12 years old my family moved to Thailand for their work with a travel agency. I started with Thai boxing because there was a studio on every corner. I was on the skinnier side and wanted to put on some muscle before going to college, and once I started seeing results I fell in love with it. I began training myself first, and then people would ask me questions, so I started training friends, neighbors, and family. It wasn't until I moved to the U.S. in my twenties that I could actually turn it into a career. I worked in a couple of big gyms and did physique competitions, ran marathons, and competed in boxing. I think the best way to market yourself is to lead by example, and I naturally gained clients from there.

What is your favorite part of your job?

KE: I love building relationships. As a personal trainer

you really become a part of your client's family. For example, I started training a Thai celebrity about five years ago and now she's invited me to her wedding. ... At the end of the day, I think that if you don't help other people in some way, then you're missing out on life.

How does nutrition factor in when coaching clients?

KE: Nutrition is everything. If a client's goal is weight loss, all they need to do is eat less-calorie-dense foods. While training in the gym is beneficial, it's not essential in that scenario. People often think, "Oh, I worked out, so now I can get a Starbucks drink." But a Frappuccino has more calories than what you'll burn in a workout session. That's why I always have a conversation about the importance of food. If you have a nice car you would put premium gas in it, and you should treat your body the same way.

What motivated you to go vegan?

KE: Once I moved to Los Angeles there were a lot of plant-based people around me, so I was exposed to lots of new foods. In 2015 I tried out Meatless March, and since I'm a bit competitive, I decided to see how long I could be plant-based. I was vegetarian for a month, and then I cut out milk and eggs because I didn't like them very much. Apart from getting into better shape after going vegan, I also felt better in terms of having a bigger purpose. I wasn't hurting animals, and I was helping the planet at the same time. So that was a great motivation to stick to the lifestyle.

What are your proudest achievements?

KE: There are three things: first, winning a men's physique competition as a vegan athlete, and placing better—against more challenging competitors—than when I competed as a non-vegan. Second, I ran the LA marathon even though I hated running. You've got to try what you don't like doing: That's something that I always preach, so I wanted to show my clients that if I can do it, they can do it. And third, I started competing in boxing

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as a plant-based athlete, which is pretty cool because a lot of people in that industry believe you have to eat meat to be strong. With the right strategy, the right discipline, it's possible not only to compete as a vegan but to win.

What are your goals for the future?

KE: I've opened my own gym in LA called Members Only Boxing and Fitness, so I'm really focusing on that now. I love working with people hands-on, versus being part of a big franchise. Right now I'm focused on growing my business so I have more time to visit my family in Thailand And compete in fitness competitions.

What's your best advice for getting into shape?

KE: Opt for exercises you enjoy, to make your routine sustainable. Whether it's dancing, yoga, or bodyweight exercises, finding pleasure in your workout increases the likelihood of sticking with it.

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