



Punk Rocker's Mission to Show There's Nothing Tough About Eating Meat

By Brian Wendel
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John Joseph, the lead singer and cofounder of the legendary punk rock group Cro-Mags, grew up on the tough streets of New York and was beleaguered by a life of drugs and violence. He credits a plant-based diet, which he adopted in 1980, for helping him turn his life around. We recently interviewed John about his diet, rigorous fitness regimen, and his work to inspire tough guys and anyone else to bring about positive changes.

In a previous [blog post](#) for FOK, you wrote about how plant-based living saved you from a life of drugs and crime and even saved you from an early death. How can people struggling to find their way use this lifestyle as a springboard to a meaningful life?

Well, once you make serious choices about how you live your life in terms of your diet, many positive things will happen from there. For me personally, I do not want to be responsible for the suffering of other living beings because I choose to eat them. Also, both the current health crisis in America and the state of our [environment](#) can be reversed by switching to an organic, whole-food, plant-based diet. It's a win-win-win situation.

Another important outcome of eating in the mode of goodness (satya) and living a life of ahimsa (nonviolence) is the shift in consciousness that accompanies it. Many people will attest to similar results. I was subjected to violence my entire young life. I was even incarcerated for two years. And I became very violent as a result. All of that has changed now, and that kind of radical shift is available to anyone. Change how you eat and search spiritually for your path, and amazing things will happen. I guarantee it.

Since you turned 50, you've completed two Ironman triathlons, and you have long been a workout warrior. What is your regular workout regimen like? How has a plant-based diet supported your fitness-oriented lifestyle?

Yes, two full Ironmans and an Olympic-distance one, too. I did my first Ironman on *no* sleep and a stress fracture in my foot. I played a concert the night before with my band the Cro-Mags, drove back from Philly, and got in the water for the swim. I finished in 95-degree heat. I'm turning 52 in a few months and have another Ironman and Olympic race coming up. I'm in the gym or out training every day. Eating a plant-based diet helps me recover quicker and gives me sustained, clean energy. I laugh when people ask me where I get my [protein](#). I tell them what I did training-wise that day and what I ate, and they shut up real quick.

You have a new book out called *Meat Is for Pussies*. Please tell us about the book and why you decided on such a provocative title.

The book is a how-to guide for dudes who have bought into the stereotype that you need meat, eggs, fish, dairy, and the rest to be tough. It explains why the tough person should rebel against these industries by adopting a plant-based diet. In doing so, they'll be standing up for their families, the animals, and the environment, all of which need our bravery.

We have an epidemic of bad health in America, and many stubborn men refuse to listen or change. They're suffering from all kinds of diseases due to bad diet and lifestyle, yet most do not realize how much their food choices are damaging them. My book is written for those dudes in *their* language. I've already received hundreds of emails from guys who the book helped, many of whom wouldn't normally have considered this way of life.

Why is it *not* tough or manly to eat meat?

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Because as I say in the book's introduction, a bad diet will make you feeble and dependent on the drug companies to keep you alive. Look at what these industries are doing — everything is being destroyed. They are killing millions of people. Is it macho to have a heart attack and die? To not be there for your kids? Is it macho to destroy the planet for all the kids that have to be here for generations to come? And what's so macho about getting your colon removed and having to crap in a colostomy bag? Nothing. As my boy Rip Esselstyn says in *Forks Over Knives*, "Real men eat plants!"

You have been doing the plant-based lifestyle for more than thirty years. Tell us what it was like to live this way 30 years ago in comparison to today.

Back in the day it was rough, especially going on tour. We had to bring 25-pound bags of rice and beans in the van and cook at people's houses. Now, wherever we are in the world, all we have to do is enter the city into [HappyCow](#), and we'll find tons of places to eat and shop organic. It's never been easier, and some of the most amazing veg chefs are out there whipping up incredible meals.

What is your favorite whole-food, plant-based meal?

I love kale, quinoa, and beans.

Do you have any other big projects on the horizon? Please share.

I'm writing a dramatic TV show, making films, and training for more Ironman races. And I've recently been approached by a pretty legit production company about doing a TV show about health. Mainly, my mission in life is to help others, especially the youth. People reached out to me and saved my life by teaching me about food and philosophy ... I owe a huge debt to the planet — and I will be working that off 'til I take my last breath.

John Joseph is lead singer of the Cro-Mags, which he co-founded in 1981. He is author of [The Evolution of a Cro-Magnon](#) and [Meat Is for Pussies](#). John is writing a new book and a screenplay and is training for an Ironman triathlon. Visit [Pure PMA](#) for more from John.

Photo by [Ray Lego](#)