



Following My Passion: How I Grew into a Plant-Based Chef

By Cathy Fisher
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In 2006, having resigned from a stressful position in publishing, I found myself sitting across from a career coach I found in one of those free New Age magazines. Halfway through our first session he blurts out, “You are such a number seven!”

“OK, now we’re getting somewhere,” I thought. As a person who’s had more jobs than socks, I was really hoping he could help me figure out my “life’s work,” as they say.

He explained that the Enneagram, a tool used for personal development, places people into one of nine personality groups. Sevens, he said, thrive on change and versatility, and seek out adventure as if it were water; they are the quintessential “Renaissance” people.

While “Renaissance woman” has a nice ring to it, I had come to feel that in my case it described one who couldn’t commit and was too idealistic. But three things were clear to me: (1) I wanted to do work I was passionate about, (2) I wanted to help and teach others, and (3) I wanted the freedom to express myself creatively.

He then asked me a pivotal question: “What kind of

books do you read for enjoyment?” Oh, that was easy: I read health and nutrition books, as they had helped me to overcome a couple health issues. From there nutrition had become a hobby of mine. Things were coming into focus.

With nutrition at the core, I began to get excited and envision myself helping others improve their health. I enrolled in a local nutrition certification program knowing that I did not want to return to college to become an RD, and most likely work in an institutional setting (my “seven-ness” sensed there would be less freedom and creativity there).

I simultaneously contacted [Dr. John McDougall](#), whose nutrition books had helped me a great deal, with the hope of landing a part-time or even volunteer job that would allow me to dip my toes into the field. The timing was right and I began working for the McDougalls part-time at their live-in nutrition programs and special events.

It was here that I began my “eyes wide open” education about food and its effects on the body. I repeatedly heard presentations by experts in plant-based nutrition as well as accomplished vegan chefs. I also talked with attendees who spoke of their remarkable health improvements on a plant-based diet. I was finally doing work I was passionate about.

Then in 2010 I had the opportunity to teach cooking classes at another live-in facility that specializes in water fasting and also promotes a plant-based diet: [True North Health Center](#). I jumped in with both feet and now teach there once a week. I also added “cooking instructor” to my list of duties with the McDougalls. I was finally teaching and helping others directly.

My [website](#) has been a labor of love. It is now filled with delicious, plant-based, SOS-free (salt, oil, sugar) recipes, including traditional favorites like potato salad and pancakes, as well as the more unique, such as Tandoori Love Soup and Rosemary, Mushrooms & Kale. With a

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background in writing, and a passion for photography and cooking, my website is an ideal outlet for my work, a place to express myself creatively on a regular basis.

I love that I am now able to bring my talents, skills *and* passions to my work. All of these have driven me to where I am today. But I have to believe there was a little luck involved. As for lucky numbers, I'd have to say mine is seven.

[Click here](#) to see Cathy's recipe for Mushroom-Basil Au Gratin, which was posted yesterday.