



## What Does 'Forks Over Knives' Mean, Anyway?

By Courtney Davison  
May 03 2019

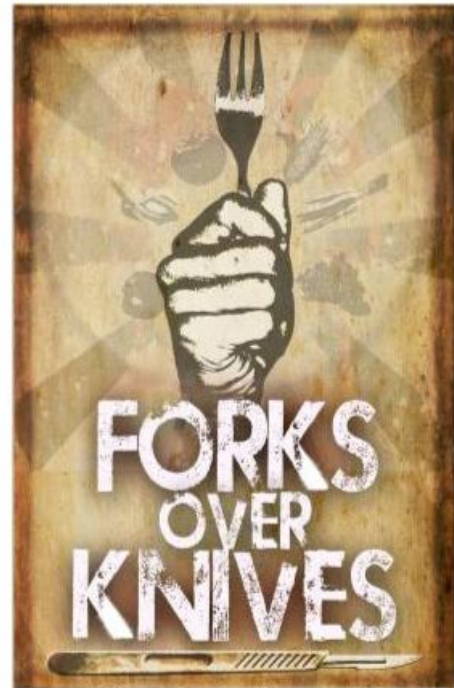
*Editor's Note: This week marks the eighth anniversary of the debut of the Forks Over Knives film. Ever wonder how Forks Over Knives got its name—and what the heck it means? Here's the real story.*

In August 2009, Brian Wendel, Lee Fulkerson, and John Corry were wrapping up shooting their new film. It was a documentary with a simple yet revolutionary message—that many chronic diseases can be controlled or even reversed by rejecting animal-based and highly processed foods. The film had in-depth interviews with world-renowned doctors and scientists. It had stories of real people who changed their lives by changing their diets. The one thing it didn't have was a title.

"I put out an SOS to my friends," says Forks Over Knives founder and president Brian Wendel, who created and executive produced the film. "I asked all of them to give me 10 title ideas." Dozens of suggestions came in over the next few weeks. "Each was more ridiculous than the last," Wendel says. Then an email arrived from Wendel's friend Armaiti May, DVM, who had already sent a list of ideas. "One more," May's email began: "*Fork Over Scalpel.*"

For Wendel, the idea quickly morphed into *Fork Over Knife* and then *Forks Over Knives*.

"Once I had it in my head, that was it," Wendel says. The title concisely captured the film's central message and served as a call to action: "Fight disease by changing what you eat, and you can avoid going under a surgeon's knife. I viewed the scalpel as a metaphor for the whole medical system."



An early mock-up of the movie logo, which convinced doubters that the Forks Over Knives name was viable.

Not everyone shared Wendel's enthusiasm. Friends tried to talk him out of it, concerned that audiences wouldn't understand. Some on his filmmaking team also needed convincing, but after they saw designer Geoff Nelson's mock-up of the logo—a fist triumphantly gripping a fork atop *Forks Over Knives*, with a scalpel underscoring the last word—things fell into place.

On May 6, 2011, *Forks Over Knives* was released in theaters, garnering national coverage and stoking conversation about the role diet plays in disease. *The Los Angeles Times* lauded the film's "unflinching detail." *The New York Times* said it made a "persuasive case for banishing meat and dairy from the dinner table." Roger Ebert wrote, "Here is a film that could save your life."

As *Forks Over Knives* became popular, it became clear that not everyone caught the scalpel in the logo. "People thought that *Knives* referred to steak knives," Wendel says. "Or they would say something like, 'You're less likely to need a knife when you're eating vegetables.'" Even several film reviewers explained the title that

(continued)

## What Does 'Forks Over Knives' Mean, Anyway?

By Courtney Davison  
May 03 2019

way.”

In 2014, when Wendel commissioned a redesign of the logo, he decided to ditch the scalpel for a sleeker look. “So now, *even fewer* people get the name,” Wendel says with a laugh, “but as long as they don’t have to go to the doctor as much, I’m happy.”

*Want to learn more about the whole-food, plant-based diet advocated in the film Forks Over Knives? Check out our [Plant-Based Primer](#).*