



Cooking My Way to Better Health with a Plant-Based Meal Planner

By Chris Noel
June 20 2019

Chris Noel wanted to go vegan for his health, but he struggled to know what to cook. He had returned to eating animal products and gaining weight—then he discovered the time-saving power of a plant-based meal planner.

I was always a big meat eater: I loved bacon, sausage, and chicken. I never believed it was bad for me. Then one fateful night almost two years ago, I came upstairs after tucking my oldest daughter into bed. My wife was 10 minutes into watching *What the Health*. I had heard of the movie but avoided watching it. I thought I loved my precious bacon too much to let some movie turn me into a vegan. But something about it pulled me in. Afterward, I decided to quit eating meat cold turkey, and my wife joined me. In the coming weeks, I watched various other documentaries, notably *Forks Over Knives*.

Striving and Struggling

When my wife and I first went vegan, we had no real plan. To say it was challenging is a massive understatement. Three times a day we would search through Pinterest and a few cookbooks we had bought looking for recipes.

After six weeks, the constant recipe-hunting was too much. Plus, I had actually started to gain weight since going vegan! I decided to add eggs and dairy back into my diet. I figured it would curb my hunger and give me the protein I felt like I needed so badly (because when I'd lost weight in the past, I was eating upward of 200 grams of protein per day).

For the next year and a half, I leaned heavily on dairy and eggs and even started eating fish twice a week. My weight began to creep up, from 217 to 222 to 230. I was back to the weight I had been originally. To top it all off, my father had lost about 75 pounds on the latest Weight Watchers diet, eating chicken, chicken, and more chicken. I was having a mental crisis: Was I doing the right thing by not eating meat?

This was around Christmas 2018. The holidays were a tough time for me to eat vegetarian. My mother always made a seafood casserole with a cheese base and lobster and scallops. This particular Christmas, as I went back for thirds and fourths, my oldest daughter asked me something that made me step back. She asked, "Are lobsters plants?"

I've always been open with my children and took the time to tell them that I didn't want to hurt animals and had stopped eating meat. So I felt like the biggest hypocrite in the world when she asked me that. It's like being in recovery from a type of addiction and relapsing in front of those that mean the most to you.

Getting the Help I Needed

By the end of December 2018 I knew I wanted to go plant-based again, but this time, I also knew I needed help. My wife is hugely supportive, but the two of us trying to guide each other in going [plant-based](#) was like the blind leading the blind. I reached out to a WFPB lifestyle coach. Our Skype conversation got me fired up again. I saw hope for the future. But I expressed to him that I needed some kind of meal planner. I needed to be told what to eat for each and every meal. He directed me to the Forks Over Knives website to look up [recipes](#).

While looking at recipes on the Forks Over Knives site I came across [Forks Meal Planner](#). I signed up in January 2019 and immediately changed my routine. Instead of my wife squeezing in the grocery shopping during the week while I was at work, I'd take my girls out on Saturday mornings and do the shopping. The Forks Meal Planner grocery list feature is incredibly useful, and I love the ability to swap meals. I take great pride in my grocery shopping, filling my cart up with lush greens, hearty potatoes, fruits, and vegetables. My daughters and I come home and do our batch cooking for the week.

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I love the satisfying portion sizes of Forks Meal Planner recipes. Our regular bowls just couldn't handle my meals, so my amazing wife, who happens to be a potter, made a line of bowls for me that would.

Changing My Diet Changed My Life

In the first month or two after going WFPB, I noticed some big changes. Firstly, I began losing weight. In the beginning of 2019, I weighed 233 pounds, and I have lost an average of 1 pound per week since—around 25 pounds total as of this writing.

Secondly, brain fog, which had plagued me before, started lifting, and I began feeling confident speaking to people.

Thirdly, after a month of WFPB, my anxiety level was manageable! This was the most significant change. It made my job much more fun and allowed me to focus more effectively.

Lastly, my relationship with my wife and kids improved greatly. I'm not impatient by any means, but I used to get irritable when I was tired in the mornings and at the end of the day, which is the main time I see my kids during the week. After going WFPB, I noticed that my patience increased. Little things didn't bother me like they used to. I now dance with my girls in the mornings and we sing songs together. I feel lighter and freer.

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.