

WHAT IF?

by Delisa Renideo

What if our bodies are designed really well and are supposed to be healthy?

What if we have built in trouble-shooting features that find problems and solve them automatically?

What if these features work best when we eat the foods we were designed to eat?

We may answer these questions one way with our heads, but our behaviors often say the opposite. How many of us really trust that our bodies are designed for health? We seem to have the expectation that our systems are going to fail and that we'll require drugs and surgeries to keep them operating properly. But does this make sense? Should we require medical intervention on a regular basis? All the other animals on this planet seem to have bodies that stay in pretty good health when they're able to live in a healthy environment and have enough food.

And yet, it's true that humans routinely develop chronic diseases and end up taking drugs for the rest of their lives to manage symptoms. It's the norm to see unhealthy people wherever we go. In fact, it's so common we don't even notice it. But it is notable when we see a sick animal.

So maybe humans really are just very poorly designed -- or maybe we're doing something that seriously interferes with our bodies' health-regulating systems.

If we saw a group of sick horses in a paddock eating donuts, coffee, soda, chips,

cheeseburgers, and french fries, what would we do? Would we take them to the vet to get medication for them? Or would we turn them loose in a green



pasture so they could eat their fill of the food they are designed to eat? What would work better? Would we be surprised when the sickly horses got better in their green pasture?

Why are we surprised that what we eat really matters?

Why are we likely to think that we can get what we need better from supplements than from food?

Why do we think we need to add protein powder to our smoothies?

I think it can be hard for us modern Americans to accept simple answers. We're impressed by complex, scientific, technological, specialized solutions to problems. If we consult a specialist about our health, we would probably be disappointed to hear something as simple as, "Eat plants. Lots of them. Different colors. Raw and cooked. As much as you want."

It's true that our bodies are complex. We have all sorts of self-balancing, self-regulating systems that technology can't begin to match. But fortunately, it doesn't need to. All we need to do is provide the basic fuel and materials our bodies need and our amazing and complex systems will work like magic. Good food, exercise, and fresh air and sunshine will allow our bodies to return to health, just like with the sick horses. A simple solution allows our complex bodies to attain and maintain health and vitality.

So . . . what if we ate plants? Lots of them. Different colors. Raw and cooked. As much as we want.

And what if we had never heard of protein?



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We Just Wanted to Do Something Fun Together

Vegan Story: Cable Starlings and Teri Wooten

I had no intention of becoming vegan. My wife, Teri, and I just wanted to do something fun together and some friends said this cooking class was fun. It was! But it has turned out to be much more than that for us.

I have a lot of cancer in my family. My father died of cancer, and he also had open heart surgery before that. But I never put the dots together until after the first session of our [Food for Life class](#) on February 23, 2011. In that class we watched a powerful video that described the effects of our diet on our health, especially cancer risks. This really opened my eyes, and it was great having Teri there with me, learning the same things.

During that same class, Delisa prepared some food that we both found delicious. My attitude going into the class was, "If meat isn't on the menu, it isn't a meal; it's a snack!" But that night we said to each other, "This is really good! We could do this." So we began choosing vegetables, fruits, and beans as our primary foods after that first class.

After our third class, we made a conscious decision that we were going to commit to a plant-based diet. It has been so much fun! Not just the classes, but all of it. We've enjoyed shopping together, cooking together, and of course, eating this healthy food together. In addition to being good for us physically, it has also been good for our marriage!

One thing that makes this work for us is that we do a lot of preparation on the weekends. We shop, do a lot of chopping together, and prepare one big recipe that we can then eat through-out the week. We make some staples, like Cheesy-Beany Spread and Nutty Spread so that during the week, it is really easy to make something healthy in a

hurry. On the weekends, we also cook beans from scratch and cut up fruit and freeze it to use in smoothies the rest of the week. We find we are cooking and eating at home much more, rather than eating out, and we're having a lot of fun.

I've lost 16 pounds already, and have gone from a size 38 waist to a 34. Fortunately, I still had some slacks in my closet from my slimmer days. Teri has lost weight too, and looks just great! Besides losing weight, my blood pressure has come way down. It was about 180/95 and now it's about 120/60. I had tried blood pressure pills before but they made me sick, so my doctor suggested I try to get it down with lifestyle. I had tried exercising

more, but hadn't had much success. But when I changed to a plant-based diet, my blood pressure just plummeted!

In addition to what I learned in class, I also read [The China Study](#), by T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D. I learned so much about the effects our diet has on many different aspects of our health. It made me think about the residents in my assisted living home, most of whom are overweight or obese, have diabetes and other chronic diseases, and are on all sorts of medications. In addition to their physical problems, these residents also have chronic mental illness. I began wondering what might happen if they began eating a healthy, plant-based diet instead of the unhealthy Standard American Diet. I'm determined to find out!

I'm in the process of seeking funding to do a controlled study with the sixty residents in my facility. It's easy to predict that those on the plant-based diet will lose weight and be able to reduce or eliminate many of their medications for diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol. But what will we discover about the effects of this diet on



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behavior and mental health? Wouldn't it be something if we find significant improvements there also?

Teri and I certainly met our goal of doing something fun together. In fact, we might even take a vacation sometime to a place that offers cooking classes! But we have gained so much more than we

could ever have imagined. We're much healthier, have more energy, enjoy our food more, and enjoy each other more. We won't ever go back. In addition, the residents in my assisted living home will benefit and possibly, someday, others struggling with chronic mental illness will benefit from what we've learned.



Nutrition Nuggets: Grow Your Own Veggies

by Delisa Renideo

Everyone knows we need to eat more vegetables -- the more the better! We also know the fresher they are, the more nutritious they are. But unless you've had a just-picked vegetable, you don't know what you're missing in terms of taste. Unbelievable! And vegetables grown during our long summer days in Alaska grow so fast that they are incredibly tender and sweet when they're first picked. When something tastes that good, you'll automatically want to eat more of them, and remember -- the more the better!

Some of you are seasoned gardeners, so you know what I'm talking about. But I know there are many of you who have never grown vegetables. I hope to inspire you to change that!

Many people grow flowers and have fun creating beauty with their efforts, but think that growing vegetables is just plain work -- or too mundane -- or boring -- or complicated. In my experience, it isn't that way at all! Instead of hiding your vegetable garden in a back corner of your yard, why not put it where you can see it and marvel at its beauty every day! You'll have much more interest in it if you put it in a place of honor, instead of treating it like a utilitarian aspect of life--like a vacuum

sweeper, which is necessary but not beautiful or exciting, so you hide it in a closet.

You can start small. One option would be to plant some vegetables in with your flowers. You'd be amazed how they can add interest and beauty. Lettuce looks almost like a bouquet, and you can just pick the leaves around the outside, leaving the center growing so that you don't disturb its beauty. Kale comes in different varieties. Red Russian Kale is particularly beautiful to look at, and delicious to eat. Carrot tops add some feathery greenery to your beds while growing some really yummy, sweet treats under the ground. Swiss Chard has beautiful, shiny leaves and you can grow Rainbow Chard with red, yellow, and orange stems and veins.

If you're cramped for space, you could plant veggies in pots on a patio or deck. If you have a lawn, you could convert part of it to a garden. You might consider raised beds, which can be constructed in a hurry.

Whatever space you have, I simply encourage you to consider edible landscaping. It will feed your eyes and your soul, along with your grateful body.





"More Than You Ever Wanted To Know About Your Intestines"

Saturday, May 14, 2011

Presented by John McDougall, M.D.

On the 2nd Saturday of each month, we show a free film. We've seen some fascinating films so far this year: *Preventing and Reversing Heart Disease*, by Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, *Are Humans Designed to Eat Meat?* by Dr. Milton Mills, and *Women's Health*, by Dr. Pam Popper.

This month, you'll learn "*More than You Ever Wanted to Know About your Intestines*," by Dr. John McDougall. But actually, it isn't more than you want to know. We should all know these things! And it isn't only about our intestines, but every part of our digestive system.

This one hour presentation will discuss bad breath, GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), stomach ulcers, gall stones, constipation, and hemorrhoids, among other things. You'll learn the causes, how to prevent or correct them, and why they can be more than an in-convenience or

embarrassment. You'll walk away feeling edified and grateful that you are eating a plant-based diet -- or you'll discover another reason you may WANT to shift to a plant-based diet!

When: Saturday, May 14, 2011 from 7 to 9 p.m. (Discussion follows film)

Where: Dayspring Enrichment Center on Edlund Rd., Wasilla

Who: Anyone who wants to understand their digestive system better

Visit www.alaskaveg.org for more info, or call 907-373-1526 and talk to Delisa or Charlie.

Cost: FREE

NOTE: *This month we'll be meeting at the Dayspring Enrichment Center in Wasilla, from 7-9 p.m.*

For the rest of 2011, the location of our films will alternate between Palmer and Wasilla.



AUS Second Annual Picnic

Food, fun and friendship will be in abundance on Saturday, June 25th as AVS enjoys it's 2nd Annual Picnic Potluck at Matanuska River Park from noon until ??

Bring your favorite vegan food dishes to share and your own tableware (plate, utensils and cup). Let's keep those disposables out of the landfill!

Polish up your hula-hooping skills. It's time for more fun and games led by "game guru" Toni. And don't forget the sun block, 'cause we're going to have sunny weather this year!



[Click on this text to see more photo of last year's picnic.](#)

BREAD BAKING CLASS



Instructor: Delisa Renideo

There's nothing quite like the aroma of home-baked bread, and you can't get anything fresher than bread you make yourself. And if you want to have control of the ingredients, using only whole grains and avoiding added fats and animal products, making your own bread is the answer. But how do you do it? Come to this class to learn how!

- Learn how to make 100% whole grain bread that tastes great.
- Learn more about different kinds of wheat, and what works best for bread.
- Learn to make vegan pizza with a homemade crust.
- To top it off, we'll also bake a cake.

This brand new, hot-out-of-the-oven class will be offered as a 5-hour class, only at Dayspring Enrichment Center in Wasilla. This is not a series! Choose just one date below.

When: Saturday, May 7
Saturday, June 4
Saturday, July 16

Time: noon to 5 p.m.

What: instruction, demonstration, and a pizza lunch and potluck dinner

Cost: \$50

To register, call Delisa and Charlie at 907-373-1526 or visit www.YesToLife.info

Class size is limited to 10-15.

Preregistration is required!

Alaska Vegetarian Society

Mission Statement:

To create a compassionate and sustainable world by inspiring and supporting reverence for all life and the adoption of a plant-based diet.

5010 W. Lakeside Drive
Wasilla, Alaska 99654
907-373-1526 www.AlaskaVeg.org

Recipe of the Month:

Pumpkin Spice Muffins

A favorite of Peggy Robinson

Makes 10 to 12 muffins

2 cups whole wheat pastry flour

1/2 cup sugar

1 Tbsp. baking powder

1/2 tsp. baking soda

1/2 tsp. salt

1/2 tsp. cinnamon

1/4 tsp. nutmeg

1 15-ounce can solid-pack

pumpkin OR 2 cups mashed yams or squash

1/2 cup water

1/2 cup raisins



Preheat the oven to 375°F. Mix the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a large bowl. Add the pumpkin, water, and raisins, and stir until just mixed.

Lightly oil-spray muffin cups and fill to the top. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until the tops of the muffins bounce back when pressed lightly.

Let stand 1 to 2 minutes, before removing from the pan. When cool, store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Per muffin: 137 calories (0% from fat);
3 g protein; 31 g carbohydrate; 0 g fat;
128 mg sodium; 0 mg cholesterol

Who to Call



Elaine Albertson:

AVS Newsletter Editor.....746-4668

Peggy Robinson:

Treasurer and Membership.....373-1901

Toni Truesdell:

Advertising Coordinator.....745-4404

Delisa Renideo:

AVS President.....373-1526

Charlie Renideo:

Bookstore and Website.....373-1526

Upcoming Events



Saturday, May 14

Next AVS Film Night, 7:00 - 9:00p.m. Dayspring Enrichment Center in Wasilla. See page 7 for film title and more details.

Saturday, May 28

AVS Potluck Dinner, 6:00 - 8:30p.m. United Protestant Church. See www.alaskaveg.org for more information.

Saturday, June 25

AVS Potluck Picnic, 12:00 noon - ??? Matanuska River Park, Pavilion B. See page 7, and watch for more details in the June newsletter.

HOW TO BECOME AN AVS MEMBER

Online at www.alaskaveg.org (click the "Membership" button) or contact Peggy Robinson at 907-373-1901 or her email fmlyrob@mtaonline.net.

The Alaska Vegetarian Society is under the umbrella of Rays of Hope, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation.

Food for Life *Nutrition & Cooking Classes*

If you're sick and tired of being sick and tired, we can help you!

The Standard American Diet (SAD) is creating a nation of sick people. No amount of medical care can counteract the effects of this unhealthy diet. But each of us can begin to reverse this process by eating a diet based upon vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes. This diet is naturally low in fat and high in fiber and provides optimal nutrition.

Join Delisa & Charlie Renideo for a 7-week series of nutrition and cooking classes.

Cost: \$90 for the series.

FOR UPCOMING CLASS SCHEDULE

www.yestolife.info

Delisa & Charlie Renideo: 907-373-1526

delisa@yestolife.info

Classes will be held in Wasilla and Anchorage, starting in June.

