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story  
and photos  
by guest writer,  
Brooke Gordon

# How I Got Healthy with Plant-based Eating

My motto  
is don't  
live to  
eat...  
eat to live!  
Today, I am  
building  
my life  
around  
food that  
heals.

Fast forward through the last 12 years of my health history. At age 15, I developed a breathing problem with wheezing and shortness of breath, accompanied by pains in my chest. Next came a 10-year marathon of doctor visits, tests, and prescriptions, yet nothing revealed the root cause of my health issues. My only goals were getting back my energy levels and resolving my breathing problem. In my chase after health, I saw 10 conventional doctors, 4 holistic doctors, and 4 chiropractors. The "remedies" were: inhalers, steroids, breathing therapy, herbal supplements, and health shakes. Through all that, I never heard, "What do you eat three times a day?"

In the spring of 2013, after I tore my second ACL, I got a road bike to more quickly rehab my knee. As I rode, I began listening to health podcasts by Rich Roll, an ultra-athlete. (An ultra-athlete competes in double-ironman distance triathlons.) At the age of 40, he was overweight and out of shape. He decided to do something about it by eating totally plant-based (vegan) diet and not only

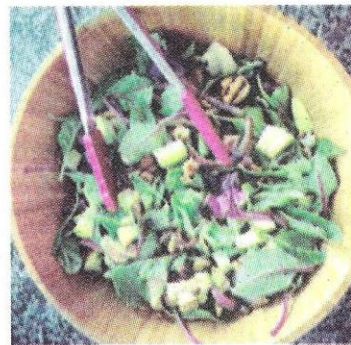
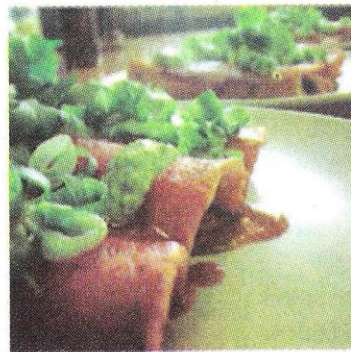
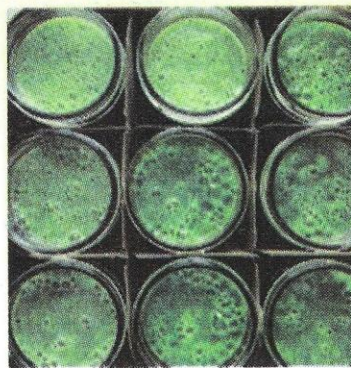
competing, but placing in the ultra-mans. I thought, if plant-based eating is good enough for him, it must be good enough for me!

I started slowly... a green shake one morning; next I tried Roll's chocolate chia seed pudding, and began to feel a difference in my body. I found more recipes online and kept going... and I had more energy than I'd had in years! I felt my body healing and strengthening like never before. Finally, I was giving my nutrient-deficient body the fuel it needed for the day. I eat a lot and need hearty foods, and I found an abundance of resources to give me just that.

Because I am a photographer, and because I wanted others to see that eating nutrient-dense food is actually quite delicious, I began posting photos of my creations to dispel the notion that a plant-based diet consisted of tofu, twigs, and dirt. And, one can follow a plant-powered eating plan without being vegan.

A year later, people began to notice my weight loss and increased energy. Plus, they were intrigued by the delicious food photos! In the fall of 2014, a handful of friends were asking to learn about how I ate. I offered to host a session and opened it up to my friend network. Thirty people came out to hear my story and sample some recipes. After that, the group asked for a deeper

session, wanting to know more about how to put plant-based eating into action. I hosted another event in January of this year. On a





Saturday afternoon, in 10-degree weather, 63 people came to learn how to work more plants in their diets and how to cut boxed and processed foods out.

Today, I am building my life around food that heals. I really enjoy growing relationships around plant-based cooking with friends, and

teaching my niece about nutrition. Rather than spending time in front of the TV, we are doing something nourishing and positive.

Like most small towns, ours is lacking in resources. My goal is to bring more options that will allow us to be more mindful about what we put in our bodies. Yes, it can be more expensive, but I see it as an investment in healthcare. There are many factors that dictate our health, but isn't what we deliberately choose to put into our mouths each day be one of the most important decisions we make?

Let's leave a better legacy of health for our children, and let's make a stronger community through food.

Want to learn more?

Let's get connected! I have been hosting seminars and demonstrations. To hear more, join my "Plant Power" Group on Facebook and email me: brookekgordon@gmail.com.

*Brooke Gordon is also zesty about portraiture, her bulldog, travel, good friends, and great coffee.*

## Things to know:

- **How one family cut out processed foods:**  
[100daysofrealfood.com](http://100daysofrealfood.com)
- **Plant-based recipe websites:**  
[ohsheglows.com](http://ohsheglows.com) and  
[forksoverknives.com](http://forksoverknives.com)

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# Front Porch Recipes

## Plant Power Recipes



by  
Brooke Gordon

### Mixed Berry Bean Blondies

A quick whole-foods recipe kids will think is a cookie! Vegan and gluten free. Makes 8 to 10 bars

#### Ingredients:

1 15-oz. can white beans, drained and rinsed  
 ½ cup mixed berry preserves (I use homemade)  
 ¼ cup tahini  
 ¼ cup honey  
 1/3 cup whole-wheat flour or gluten free all-purpose flour  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 dash sea salt

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Coat bottom and edges of 10-inch square baking dish with coconut oil.

In a food processor, combine all ingredients, blending well, until smooth. Pour mixture into baking dish, smoothing the top. Put a dollop or two of preserves on top; drag a knife through mixture to create a marbled look.

Bake 20-25 minutes, or until the top is firm and a toothpick comes out of the center clean.

Let them cool...and dig in! My husband likes to make these very un-plant-based by putting vanilla bean ice cream on top. I love him anyway.

### Creamy Mashed Cauliflower

For a mashed potato taste without the artery-clogging guilt. My husband, who loves meat and potatoes, actually prefers this over regular mashed potatoes. Vegan and gluten-free. Serves 8-10.

#### Ingredients:

2 heads cauliflower  
 1 bag red potatoes (approximately 15 medium sized)  
 2 cups "Just Mayo" Vegan Mayonnaise by Hampton Creek or other vegan mayonnaise substitute  
 2 tablespoons sea salt (we prefer Selina Naturally Celtic Sea Salt)  
 parsley for garnish

#### Directions:

Fill a large pot ¾ full of water.

Add potatoes to the pot and boil on high until they are soft.

In a separate large steamer pot, steam cauliflower heads until they are very soft and translucent.

Drain potatoes in a strainer and gently rub the potato skins off with your thumbs under a cool stream of water.

Return skinned potatoes to cooking pot. Cut the tops off cauliflower and add into the pot as well. Add vegan mayo and sea salt. Use those triceps and mix well by hand until the mixture is creamy.

### Chocolate Peanut Butter Chia Seed Pudding

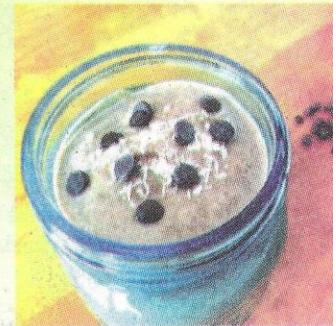
A breakfast pudding packed with omega-3 and protein, yet tastes like dessert! I make a whole blender full and eat it over the course of the week. Recipe may be halved. This was the biggest game-changer for me in my journey toward eating more plant-based and nutrient-dense foods. I have had this nearly every morning for 2 years. It stabilizes me because of the large amount of healthy fat and protein content. Vegan and gluten-free. Makes 8 servings

#### Ingredients:

4 tablespoons raw cacao powder (cacao powder is not easy to find, but it's the best option to get the healthy chocolate taste)  
 ½ cup raw honey or other natural sweetener (dates or agave nectar)  
 1½ cups black chia seeds  
 1 medium avocado  
 2 tablespoons organic coconut oil  
 1 cup peanut butter  
 5 cups filtered water  
 dash sea salt

#### Directions:

Fill blender or processor with 5-6 cups water. Pour in cacao, honey, avocado, coconut oil, peanut butter, and sea salt. Combine other ingredients before adding chia seeds, as they gel quickly. Blend until creamy, just like traditional pudding. Depending on your blender or processor, you may need to blend chia seeds first and then add all other ingredients. Chia seeds get sticky when they get wet, so they can cause issues, but it's well worth the nutrition and flavor of this pudding! Store the leftovers tightly covered for up to 5 days in the fridge.





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