

Introduction

(Excerpted From *Have Your Cheeseburger And Keep Your Health Too!*)

By Melanie R. Jordan, Copyright 2002
Sun Lover Publishing, All Rights Reserved)

Healthy Eating Coach's Corner

<http://www.healthyeatingcoach.com>

Have Your Cheeseburger And Keep Your Health Too! is available for purchase as a print paperback or Adobe PDF format from the following URL:

<http://www.booklocker.com/books/846.html> for fastest service

Also available at major on-line bookstores such as Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble.com, and in bookstores by special order through Ingram.

So why did I use a cheeseburger in the title of this book? It's simple. I wanted to take one of the most beloved and unhealthy fast food concoctions I could think of, and show you that you could still enjoy a cheeseburger as part of a healthy diet. What? Cheeseburgers are healthy? What's the catch?

Okay, there is a catch, but it's a small one. The cheeseburger I am talking about is delicious, and it is also meatless (the recipe is in *Chapter Twelve: Healthy Recipes For Comfort Foods You Love!* by the way). Now before you freak out, understand that while the food industry has certainly put out its share of unhealthy food, some of the most ingenious food products that have come about in recent years can make a diet that reduces or excludes meat and poultry, without giving up your favorite comfort foods, deliciously possible.

I would have rolled over in a fit of laughter if anyone had told me years ago that I would voluntarily decide to give up meat and poultry. So read this book with the knowledge that at one time I was just like you. But I did give them up, and the reason I succeeded was because I did not try to force myself to eat things I didn't like. I found ways to convert all my favorite foods Over to their non-meat/poultry forms, so I lost nothing—except 20 pounds--and I gained energy, health and control over my eating habits for the first time in my life.

A friend of mine said to me as I showed her the title of this book that "if I can eat cheeseburgers that I enjoy and be healthy, I'm in"! So I figured if I could get her attention—a true cheeseburger lover--I would get yours too. Okay, so now that the title of this book has worked its magic, let me give you an idea of where I'm coming from.

I believe that most people would eat healthier if they knew that there were many ways to do so while still enjoying their food, and still being able to eat out. Eating more of a plant-based diet, is being pointed to more and more as a great way to maintain good health or

lessen the severity of illness or disease when it does strike. In fact, it is health reasons that are mentioned most often as why people either reduce their intake of, or give up, meat and poultry.

You'll see an article that says "eat a mostly plant-based diet", but how do you do so and stick with it without feeling like all your best "food friends" packed up and left town? And how many of the people making these claims actually follow this diet? Ever go to a hospital to visit someone and see many of the healthcare workers outside on their break smoking cigarettes? Knowing what you should do, and finding a way to do it that you can stick with, are two different things. That's why I wrote this book, and that's how I coach people in adopting a healthier lifestyle.

Please believe me when I say that you can go without (or at least decrease your consumption of) meat (beef and pork) and poultry (chicken and turkey), and still eat the foods you love--the foods you grew up on, and the foods you like to eat out--you'll just find healthier ways to have them by making substitutions.

Plus, there are substitutions, and there are substitutions. You have to be careful about the new foods you adopt, because some of them are still produced more healthfully than others. They can sound healthy, but actually have some ingredients in them, or be prepared in ways that could possibly do you some harm. Even the obviously healthy foods--fruits and vegetables--have good choices, and then have great choices. Also, some fruits and vegetables are grown or packaged in a healthier fashion than others. Navigating around these potential land mines is an important part of the best possible healthy lifestyles, and issues that few address in a simple-to-understand manner.

It was not always true years ago, but today we have so many products that are terrific substitutes for meat and poultry that you can use to eliminate the garbage that the fast food franchises, the casual dining restaurants, the brand name food giants and your own family have gotten you hooked on, that there really isn't any excuse. In fact, as you become more knowledgeable about food choices, you'll begin to wonder why all food isn't made in its healthiest forms. You'll probably even become angry when you realize that it can be done, the companies just don't want to offer it. Oh sure, they will point the finger back at us and say "well if we offer something healthy no one buys it".

I maintain "no one buys it" because 99% of the marketing dollars are spent on telling us how we can get the unhealthy food which is priced so much cheaper. We may get a rare ad for a salad or veggie burger, but it's the super-duper triple burger with cheese and bacon—a future heart attack on a plate—that is always heavily promoted every commercial break with a group of people all smiles having a great time. It's the junk food that's always on special for 99 cents, or maybe buy one, get one free? And the toy that they try to sucker you in with for kid's meals—it's usually a hamburger meal. Yes, let's get them hooked on red meat now while they are young so we have the next generation of customers built in—at least until they keel over at an early age. (By the way, just to make sure we are all on the same page here, these are not the healthy cheeseburgers and burgers that I was talking about in the title of this book!)

It basically comes down to the fact that we have to all join together and demand the healthiest possible food with that most powerful of all encouragement—our wallets. People don't do it because they don't know what's possible. I'll show you what's possible.

Now you're probably saying--"I'm interested, but I love cheeseburgers, BLTs, chicken parmesan, tacos and spaghetti and meatballs and don't want to give them up! There can't be delicious substitutions for all of these foods, right?" Surprise! You can have all of the above and more in healthy, delicious, non-meat/poultry forms! And, as part of an overall healthy diet, you'll learn to eat fish, more of your favorite fruits, vegetables and other simple non-meat/poultry dishes that are whole grain-based (think pastas and rice), that are easy to prepare and that you'll love too. My goal is to help you become the healthy eater that you want to be--whether you want to give up meat and poultry all of the time, or just from time-to-time. Sounds good? Let's begin!

My Story

(Excerpted *From Have Your Cheeseburger And Keep Your Health Too!*

By Melanie R. Jordan, Copyright 2002

Sun Lover Publishing, All Rights Reserved)

It all started nearly three years ago when I was visiting my parents. My Dad mentioned a couple of new health gurus to me that were raving about the benefits of a vegetarian diet. My Dad loves food and as my Mom always says "he never met a meal he didn't like". But in recent years, Dad has tried hard to eat healthier and channel his overall love of food into healthier outlets. He also became an avid walker. These were both factors in why his heart attack a few years ago was a mild one. Dad turned vegetarian for awhile after this "warning" and did very well, but gradually went back to adding in fish, chicken and turkey with red meat a rare treat (thankfully), and he still had many more non-meat dishes than meat/poultry ones.

I feel that one of the big reasons he was not able to successfully stick with a vegetarian diet at that time, despite his good intentions, was because he tried to make himself fit the diet by eating things he didn't enjoy and tossing a lot of his old favorites out the window. This went against many of his natural eating patterns, so it was likely only a matter of time before he couldn't stand it anymore and went back to what was familiar and enjoyable. In my own experiences with making the transition to my current eating style, I learned from my Dad's attempt, modified it, and came up with ways to make sure I would succeed. Now, with this book, you too can succeed in becoming the healthy eater you have always wanted to be. Or if you have already been eating pretty healthfully, you'll succeed in taking your great habits to a whole new level.

Back to the story. So when I looked at my diet, I liked to think I was doing pretty well. I had not eaten any red meat in three years. I was never a big beef fan and had heard enough about its evils, that cutting it from my diet was not very difficult. Chicken was also slowly making its exit from my diet, and I was focused on making turkey and fish the

"meat" in my diet. Always open to more changes I could make in my eating habits, I decided this time to check out Dad's gurus and see what they had to say.

We watched a video together from Dr. John A. McDougall, M.D., author of several books including *The McDougall Program* (Plume, 1991), that my Dad had received. It was informative and actually pretty funny in spots. Dr. McDougall went into a fast-food hamburger chain and asked for a burger and had them hold the burger! The counter employee was stunned. Next stop was a pizza restaurant chain where he ordered a pizza with no cheese and no oil. The restaurant's employees all looked at each other with shocked expressions on their faces. Who was the freak?

I thought to myself--okay, that's a bit farfetched for many people, but Dr. McDougall seemed to have a point that a lot of our health problems are tied to diet, and that the closer you can come to a plant-based diet, the better off you'll likely be. I stayed up late that night and read Dr. McDougall's book, which my Dad happened to have. After finishing it, I felt that while it was a bit too strict overall for me, he definitely had some valid tips that were worth trying to incorporate in my diet. When I returned home, I read more of his books and got my hands on everything I could about going without meat and poultry, convinced that I was on to something.

The more I read, the more I became convinced that further reducing, or eliminating meat and poultry from my diet, made sense for my overall health and well-being and I was convinced to at least give it a try. I'm always interested in health and fitness topics and try to do what I can to create a healthy lifestyle for myself and my husband. The motivation for this is not hard to understand. I come from a wonderful family where I have inherited many great qualities, but I may also have inherited my family's genetics which unfortunately have a rich history in heart disease and Type 2 diabetes.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending upon your point of view, like Scrooge in "A Christmas Carol" I have an ongoing glimpse into my possible future. My "Ghost of Future Health" shows what life is like as a diabetic and living with heart disease. While my parents have a good, happy, loving life together, and have learned to manage their healthcare needs well, theirs is a daily ritual of medications, blood sugar readings, and in my Mom's case, insulin shots. By the way, if you don't know what is involved in a blood sugar reading, you usually have to prick your finger with a needle every time to draw a drop of blood. This is then tested to see what your blood sugar level is, and to make sure it is under control with medication, diet and possibly insulin.

On top of diabetes, my Dad, as I alluded to earlier, has heart disease. His mild heart attack a few years ago required angioplasty (where they insert a special type of balloon into the blocked artery in the heart to keep it open and the blood flowing). And over a year ago, when some new artery blockages turned up during a routine stress test, he underwent open heart surgery--a double bypass that turned into a triple bypass. Dad, as always, trying to as he calls it, "keep things light", joked that he was supposed to just have the double, but the surgeon needed another fancy chandelier for his office, so it became a

triple bypass. Ironically, my Dad's brother, less than a month later, also needed to undergo open heart surgery--see what I mean about the family history?

What is amazing is that when you tell someone that your Dad had open heart surgery, suddenly you find out that they either had it themselves, or had a family member, a friend, or a co-worker who did. They tell stories of how "Joe" had open heart surgery and was out jogging two days later--it's no big deal. It is scary just how commonplace this surgery is.

Let me tell you, having witnessed my Dad's open heart surgery experience first-hand, this is no simple thing and no one jogs two days later--it's an ordeal. Do you even know what they do in open heart surgery? In the most common type of procedure, the surgeon has to crack open your chest--yes, break a perfectly good breastbone--so they can work on your clogged arteries. The surgeon then "robs Peter to pay Paul" by taking unclogged arteries from other parts of your body—usually the mammary artery and arteries from your leg (so now you have to have your leg cut open when there is nothing wrong with that either). These veins are then grafted so your blood can be re-routed around the blockage--like a detour on a busy freeway. While bypass operations last a long time, they often need to be repeated especially if the patient did not make enough diet and lifestyle changes to keep those "new" veins open. Sounds real pleasant, doesn't it? It's not.

Could there be any connection to the rise of all those fast food franchises pushing their artery-clogging beef burgers and fries in super-duper sizes? I think so, and so do most of the health authorities and gurus. And most people know it too, yet the number of open heart surgeries and strokes is not decreasing; Type 2 diabetes is occurring in almost epidemic proportions; and cancers that are believed by researchers to be at least in part diet-related, like breast and colon cancer, are on the rise. Yet overall, we just can't seem to break away from the irresistible, convenient food from the chains and our supermarkets. It's just too good, and that heart attack, stroke, diabetes or cancer is years away--I can get my fast food cheeseburger and fries now at three places within the next block. The sad thing is that you can have that cheeseburger and fries in a healthy way—just no one wants to bother.

So even though open heart surgery has an extremely high success rate and the ability to even do it is a medical miracle, wouldn't it be even better to try and do what you could to prevent having the surgery in the first place?

As for myself, I see the writing on the wall. Going back to our friend Scrooge--I am like him waking up after his experience on Christmas morning and realizing that he still has time to change. If there is any way that I can help control my future health destiny through a healthy lifestyle by eating more of a plant-based diet (which I and many other well-respected doctors and gurus believe is possible), I am going to take charge and do it.

Years ago, we didn't know as much about how one's diet and lack of exercise contributed to disease, or how a healthy diet and regular exercise may even prevent or lessen the severity of disease. Today, it seems every day we learn more and more about this topic,

so there's really no excuse. Yes, the information is sometimes confusing or conflicting, but common themes repeat themselves, and the benefits of a diet that emphasizes plant-based foods is one of those themes.

So the next time you see a popular fast food or chain restaurant TV commercial featuring cheeseburgers with everyone having a great time, stop and think for a minute. Try to visualize what it would be like if you had to have a daily shot of insulin and prick your finger every day to test your blood sugar. Or maybe what it would be like to have a heart attack or undergo open heart surgery the way I described it. The people in the commercials wouldn't be laughing so much if they made a clear connection that enough cheeseburgers and this could be their fate! (Remember, if you really want a cheeseburger, I can show you how to do it in a delicious, healthy and meatless way!)

And suppose you already have health issues. Do you just say the "heck with it, I've already messed up"? It has been shown by doctors and researchers that in some cases, dietary changes, like emphasizing plant-based foods can have a powerful effect on coronary heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and the prevention of strokes in those at high risk. Very strict vegan diets (they go further than my eating style--that is vegetarianism without any animal products including eggs and dairy), can possibly aid in fighting cancer. And let's go to the worst case scenario. Even if you don't reverse a disease, you may lessen the severity and give yourself the best possible chance to fight it.

For example, fortunately, my Dad, because he did try to take some steps in the right direction, was a candidate for open heart surgery—not everyone is. So even having the availability of that surgery is no guarantee that if you mess up your arteries, you can make everything right by undergoing surgery. Someone else who didn't try to do any healthy things at all might be out of luck completely. And if you do get that surgery, it is, as they said in the booklet my Dad received from the surgeon, "a second chance for your heart". Another chance to do it right this time. Think about it.

To this day, I know that the odds of me staying healthy as I live my life aren't as high as maybe someone else due to heredity. Yet the more I research and read, the more I learned that most of the factors of disease are ones that I can do my best to control. Whether it keeps me free of the diseases in my family history, just delays their appearance and/or they are less severe if they do develop, I figure why not do the best I can with what is in my power to change? Besides, why wait for these things to kick in and then have to fight them? If I fight today, maybe I won't have a fight later on...or it will be an easier fight. The glass half-full view of the world, rather than the half-empty one, is my philosophy.

Sure it's true that some horrible twist of fate that is beyond your control could end your life, and your health wouldn't have mattered at all. But I like to think that the odds are stronger that how long I live, and/or how healthy I live in my later years, may very well be dictated by the way I took care of myself in the prior years. I will work to control what I can. Besides, I am advocating that you not feel deprived. I want to help you find delicious and

healthy ways to eat your favorite foods while eliminating or reducing your dependency on meat and poultry.

When I was ready to make this transition in my own diet on a full-time basis, I never did find any one particular way that I felt would work for me. People would tell me to eat X% of my diet as carbohydrates, or eat beans or pasta. But no one addressed psychologically how you get yourself off the meat and poultry to make the transition as painlessly as possible. Or how to stick with this lifestyle change and learn to enjoy it—especially in the face of others who think your change is a big joke? How do you fit in with friends and family? How do you eat out? Plus, I had so many favorite foods that I wanted to keep eating. After all I'm human too, and like my Dad, I love food.

One of the big problems was when I picked up many books, magazines and cookbooks that advocated diets without meat and poultry, most of the recipes were very upscale and unappetizing to me. While I knew that I had to make changes, I never liked fancy food. I didn't see myself regularly eating tofu. I didn't want to eat like a rabbit. I was a child when fast food franchising really came into its own, and today we live in a world where you can have four branches of the exact same fast food chain within six miles, and twelve different places to buy a hamburger in one mile's distance! I also had my favorites from family dinners, restaurants and clipped magazine recipes. If this was going to work, I had to find a way to eat food I'd actually heard of and wanted to eat.

How I successfully made the transition and have stayed with it despite the obstacles, is the subject of this book. More importantly, if I can do it, so can you! Keep in mind, you can adapt the ideas in this book to meet your individual needs. Maybe you only want to eat more non-meat/poultry "NMP" dishes from time-to-time and aren't ready to eliminate them completely from your diet—and that's okay for now. Although I believe once you start along that path, you'll eventually want to go all the way to full-time "NMP" eating. Maybe you want to be stricter than I am and adopt a vegetarian or vegan diet—that's okay too. I truly believe that any steps you take to distance yourself from the "typical American diet" are steps in the right direction.

Subscribe to Melanie Jordan's free monthly e-zine "Have Your Cheeseburger And Keep Your Health Too! Update" by e-mail to healthycoach@aweber.com. It is for those who favor the "NMP" healthy eating style and healthy living in general. It is full of tips for sticking with the "NMP" lifestyle, encouragement, success stories, recipes, food makeovers, news and reviews of new healthy food products and Melanie's very popular "Ask The Coach" column with her answers to reader questions on "NMP" eating and healthy living. Back issues are available at Healthy Eating Coach's Corner at <http://www.healthyeatingcoach.com>.