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"THE PRESCRIPTION YOU NEED  
TO LIVE A LONG, HEALTHY LIFE."

—Sanjay Gupta, MD



THE  
**FORKS**  
OVER **KNIVES**<sup>®</sup>  
PLAN

**A 4-WEEK MEAL-BY-MEAL MAKEOVER**

How to Transition to the Life-Saving,  
**Whole-Food, Plant-Based** Diet

Alona Pulde, MD, and Matthew Lederman, MD

FOREWORD BY DEAN ORNISH, MD

“Doctors Pulde and Lederman have written an easy-to-follow, four-week prescription to better health. Get it, read it, do it.” —*Terry Mason, MD, chief medical officer for the Cook County Health and Hospitals System, Chicago, Illinois*

“Comprehensive, pragmatic, and beautifully simple. A big, plant-strong thumbs-up.” —*Rip Esselstyn, former professional triathlete and author of The Engine 2 Diet*

“[This] powerful and practical four-step method provides readers with a GPS to health. We simply cannot afford to continue harming our bodies with food.” —*Robert Ostfeld, MD, director of the Cardiac Wellness Program at Montefiore Medical Center*

“*Forks Over Knives* changed our lives! Eating plant-based is the one simple elegant thing that *everyone* can do to help clean up the environment and create a better planet where our children and grandchildren can thrive.” —*Suzy Amis Cameron and Jamie Cameron, environmental activists*

“Eating plants revolutionized every aspect of my life for the better. It worked for me and I promise it will work for you, too. So do yourself and your loved ones a favor and get this book!” —*Rich Roll, vegan ultra-endurance athlete and author of Finding Ultra*

“This life-changing book will empower you to feel better and live better.” —*Gene Baur, founder of Farm Sanctuary*

“Yes, there’s overwhelming scientific evidence that a whole-food, plant-based diet can save your life, but how do you actually do it? That’s what *The Forks Over Knives Plan* is for!” —*Michael Greger, MD, founder of [NutritionFacts.org](http://NutritionFacts.org)*

“With *The Forks Over Knives Plan*, adopting a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle has never been easier or more delicious.” —*Chef AJ, author of Unprocessed*

“This book is an absolute jewel! In just a few days, you can feel a growing confidence and excitement as you follow these stepping stones to the life you deserve.” —*Douglas Lisle, PhD, coauthor of The Pleasure Trap*

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THE  
**FORKS**  
OVER **KNIVES**<sup>®</sup>  
PLAN

How to  
Transition to  
the Life-Saving,  
**Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet**

**Alona Pulde, MD, and Matthew Lederman, MD, with Marah Stets and Brian Wendel**  
Recipes by Darshana Thacker and Del Sroufe

A Touchstone Book

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Foreword by Dean Ornish, MD.

## **PART I: EATING THE FORKS OVER KNIVES WAY**

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Chapter 2: Let Food Be Thy Medicine: The Science Behind a Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet

Chapter 3: The Forks Over Knives Lifestyle: How Can Eating *More* Lead to Weight Loss and Better Health?

## **Part II: WELCOME TO YOUR FOUR-WEEK TRANSITION**

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Chapter 5: Week Two: The Forks Over Knives Lunch

Chapter 6: Week Three: The Forks Over Knives Dinner

Chapter 7: Week Four: Fine-Tuning Your Lifestyle

Conclusion: You're on Your Way!

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### Breakfast

Multigrain Pancakes with Fresh Berries

Corn and Black Bean Cakes

The Easiest Granola

The Quickest Breakfast Wrap

Twice-Baked Breakfast Sweet Potatoes

Breakfast Smoothie

Breakfast Fruit Crisp

Potato Scramble with Hot Chile Sauce

Big Breakfast Burrito

Fruit and Nut Oatmeal

Baked Breakfast Polenta with Berry Compote

### Wraps, Roll-Ups, and Burgers

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Sloppy Joe Pitas

Black Bean and Rice Burritos

White Bean Lettuce Wraps

Shiitake Mushroom Lettuce Wraps

~~South-of-the-Border Pizza~~

Pizza with Creamed Spinach, Sun-Dried Tomatoes, Red Onion, and Olives

Tuscan White Bean Burgers

Navy Bean Hummus and Mixed Vegetable Pita Pockets

Spinach-Potato Tacos

Asian Wraps

Side Dishes and Salads

Jamaican Fruited Rice Salad

Beets and Barley Salad

My Mama's Potato Salad

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Mixed Bean and Vegetable Stew

30-Minute Chili

Borscht (Beet Soup)

Lentil-Vegetable Stew

Red Lentil Dal

Kale and Mung Bean Stew

Chickpea Flour Soup

Creamy Spinach Soup

Cream of Broccoli Soup

Butternut Squash Soup with Sautéed Green Peas and Pesto Sauce

Potato-Vegetable Chowder

Lima Bean Soup

Tortilla Soup

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Chickpea Chili on Baked Potatoes

Pasta e Fagioli

Casseroles

Sweet Potato Lasagna

Rice Casserole with Lentils and Sautéed Vegetables

Tex-Mex Bean and Cornbread Casserole

Potato Enchiladas

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Curried Twice-Baked Potatoes

Shepherd's Pot Pie

Quinoa and Sweet Potato Shepherd's Pie

Polenta Casserole with Cilantro Chutney

Roasted Stuffed Winter Squash

Polenta Pizza Pie

Pasta and Noodles

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Fusilli with Marinara Sauce

Broccoli Lo Mein

Spring Thing Pasta

Penne with Tomato-Mushroom Cream Sauce

Ratatouille Fusilli

Spaghetti with Roasted Tomatoes, Chickpeas, and Basil

Amazing Grains

Quinoa with Red Lentils

Coconut-Dill Rice

Mushroom and Green Pea Risotto

Polenta Curry

Rye and Wheat Berries with Celery and Apples

Millet in Coconut Curry

Quinoa and Millet with Kale and Roasted Butternut Squash

Easy Veggie Stir-Fry

Red Beans and Quinoa

Sauces, Dips, Dressings, and Salsas

Red Beet Dip

Artichoke Dip

White Bean and Rosemary Spread

Lentil-Pecan Hummus

Sun-Dried Tomato Hummus

Sun-Dried Tomato Tapenade

Ginger-Miso Sauce

Wasabi Orange Sauce

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Creamy Poppy Seed Dressing

Cucumber-Tahini Dressing

Raspberry Vinaigrette

[Creamy Tomato-Basil Dressing](#)

[Balsamic Vinaigrette](#)

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[Sour “Cream”](#)

[Del’s Basic Barbecue Sauce](#)

[Enchilada Sauce](#)

[Hot Chile Sauce](#)

[Tomato Salsa](#)

[Desserts](#)

[Chocolate Raspberry Parfaits](#)

[Fudgy Brownies](#)

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We dedicate this book to the loves of our lives—Kylee and Jordan—who remind us  
every day why we do what we do and who make it all worthwhile

# Foreword

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The most influential trend in medicine today, growing exponentially, is the emerging field of what is known as Lifestyle Medicine—lifestyle as *treatment*, not just prevention.

Doctors Alona Pulde and Matthew Lederman are extraordinary pioneers, leaders, and healers who represent the future of medicine. They are a new breed of doctor who integrate the most powerful medicine—good plant-based food—into the best of conventional medicine in how they treat their patients. They have empowered thousands of patients by practicing this way. Now, in *The Forks Over Knives Plan*, they will help many more understand that an important key to healing their bodies can be found in the foods that they eat. As they eloquently describe in this book, our bodies often have a remarkable capacity to begin healing if we focus on removing the main underlying *causes* of disease instead of just trying to eliminate the symptoms.

Many people tend to think of advances in medicine as high-tech and expensive, such as a new drug, laser, or surgical procedure. They often have a hard time believing that something as simple as diet and lifestyle changes can make such a powerful difference in our lives—but they often do. In our research, we've used high-tech, expensive, state-of-the-art scientific measures to prove the power of these simple, low-tech, and low-cost interventions.

For almost four decades, my colleagues and I at the nonprofit Preventive Medicine Research Institute and UCSF have conducted clinical research showing, for the first time, that a whole-food, plant-based diet (along with moving more, loving more, and stressing less) may reverse the progression of even severe coronary heart disease.

Many other doctors, such as those featured in the *Forks Over Knives* film (including Doctors Neal Barnard; Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr.; and John McDougall), have found similar results in their clinical practices and research.

My colleagues and I also found that these diet and lifestyle changes may stop or even reverse the progression of early-stage prostate cancer. We found that more than five hundred genes were changed in only three months—turning on genes that protect us and turning off genes that promote heart disease, type 2 diabetes, breast cancer, prostate cancer, and colon cancer, among others. Our latest research showed that even as our telomeres get longer (the ends of our chromosomes that control aging); and as our telomeres get longer, our lives get longer. Thus, our genes are a predisposition, but our genes are not our fate.

All of these studies were published in the leading peer-reviewed medical journals and provide additional validity for the recommendations in this book. Based on this research, Medicare is now covering our lifestyle program, helping to create a new, financially sustainable paradigm of health care rather than only sick care.

In each of these studies, we found that the more people changed their diet and lifestyle, the more they improved and the better they felt—at *any* age. It's not all o

nothing. So, if you indulge yourself one day, just eat healthier the next. *The Forks Over Knives Plan* shows how to make this transition in a sustainable way.

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*The Forks Over Knives Plan* is the right book at the right time. It can help transform your life for the better in sustainable ways. Because these underlying biological mechanisms are so dynamic, if you eat and live this way for just one week, you're likely to feel so much better so quickly that you'll find these are choices worth making—not from fear of dying but joy of living.

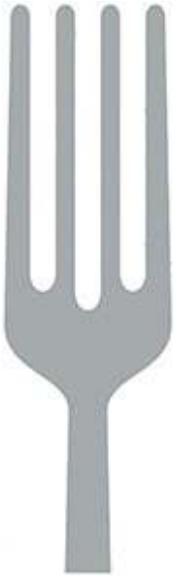
Dean Ornish, MD

Founder and president, Preventive Medicine Research Institute

Clinical professor of medicine, University of California, San Francisco

author of *The Spectrum* (and other books)

[www.ornish.com](http://www.ornish.com)



## **EATING THE FORKS OVER KNIVES WAY**

**I do not accept that I have to die of heart disease as my father did.**

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—Sylvia Cowe Nascimben, 68, retired project manager, Williamsville, NY



**I no longer count calories and am losing weight naturally. I have more energy; I no longer have heartburn, colds, upset stomach.**

—Laura McMullen, 64, retired, Federal Way, WA



**You just get into a “groove.” Whole-food, plant-based eating is just what you do—you don’t even have to think about it.**

—Nimisha Raja, 51, public relations/communications professional, Toronto ON, Canada

# WHAT IS THE FORKS OVER KNIVES PLAN?—AND WHY WILL IT WORK FOR ME

**In the spring of 2009**, we received a very interesting phone call. On the line was Brian Wendel, who said he was making a film on the power to prevent and treat chronic disease with a whole-food, plant-based diet. He turned to us because we were running our medical practice using this diet as a primary treatment. Brian wanted to show an audience how patients suffering from serious chronic conditions can, with relative ease and in a short time, turn around their difficult situations and achieve true health and vitality—just by eating well. Given our experience and training in lifestyle medicine, we were confident in this approach. We knew the power of this way of eating and were eager to help in whatever way we could to introduce its significant promise to a wide audience. And so without hesitation, we agreed. The film *Forks Over Knives* was released in theaters and on home video in 2011. The responses of audience worldwide surpassed our best hopes for its reach and influence.

The food-as-medicine concept is now reaching millions of people and the movement is growing stronger each day. The movement's popularity is driven by one important factor: The lifestyle works! More and more people are learning that a diet based in fruits, vegetables, tubers, whole grains, and legumes makes all the difference when it comes to achieving good health . . . and the word is spreading in a big way.

Nearly five years after our involvement in the documentary, we are thrilled to have teamed up with Forks Over Knives again—this time to provide this four-week transition guide. In this book, we bring you the specifics of the Forks Over Knives philosophy and guide you through an A-to-Z transition so you can live the whole-food, plant-based way for a lifetime. Among other things, we detail what a whole-food, plant-based diet *is* and *is not*—and you'll see that this means you will be living on food that is not only healthy, but also hearty and satisfying. We show you how to survive and thrive on the foods you love—like pancakes, burritos, mashed potatoes, and lasagna—and at the same time, get all the nutrition you need.

People seek dietary changes for various reasons, whether it's to become healthier, lose weight, improve athletic performance, or just feel better. Regardless of the reasons for wanting a change, you are probably looking for a better result than you are getting now. Many diets fail because they tend to be nothing more than variations of the Standard American Diet. That is, they basically require a reshuffling of the same animal-based foods—oftentimes in order to meet target goals for certain individual nutrients, such as protein, calcium, or omega-3. They also tend to follow similar principles, such as counting calories or even purchasing supplements from the diet author.

On the other hand, when you adopt the Forks Over Knives way of living, you will be ~~trying something completely different. You will not be eating for single nutrients, counting calories, or buying supplements from us.~~ Instead, you will simply focus on eating the whole, plant-based foods you enjoy. Though the food you'll eat is neither unfamiliar nor exotic, the *composition* of your plate of food will change substantially—so much so, in fact, that the lifestyle achieves something unlike anything else out there.

The hallmark of the whole-food, plant-based lifestyle is its unique ability to prevent, halt, and even treat chronic illness, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes. The changes it can bring to your life are often rapid and measurable. The ultimate goal of this program is simple: to leave you energized and free from debilitating chronic conditions so that you can spend less time in the doctor's office and more time with the people who are important to you, engaged in the activities you enjoy. This book will provide you with the tools you need to make it happen, including guidance and tips on stocking your house with good-tasting food; handling cravings; eating out and dealing with social situations. Finally, we'll give you more than 100 recipes so that you have delicious meal and snack ideas literally at your fingertips.

As you'll learn from the pages that follow, we were once seeking dramatic change in our own lives, and the lifestyle we discovered changed everything.

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When you consult with your health care provider before you begin your transition, you should discuss with him or her any medication you are taking to manage a condition. Transitioning to a whole-food, plant-based diet may result, in possibly a very short time, in improvement in your condition for which you are taking medication, and your doctor may decide to adjust your medications and/or dosage. This is not because of a problem with the lifestyle. It is because your health may improve and as a result you may need a different dosage than you're taking now. It is very important that you and your doctor monitor the situation so you take only the amount of medication you need.

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## OUR STORIES

If you've seen the *Forks Over Knives* documentary, then you are already at least a little familiar with us, Dr. Alona Pulde and Dr. Matthew Lederman, and with what we do. We are two classically trained MDs who found traditional medicine lacking, given its emphasis on pills, drugs, and unnatural interventions. Instead, we've developed a food-first approach to practicing medicine. With this book, we'd like to share even more with you so that you, too, can start making changes in your diet, *today*. These changes will release you from the burdens of chronic disease, poor health, and the conventional medical system that in many cases offers little benefit and plenty of harm.

The four-week transition to the Forks Over Knives diet that we present in this

pages has come about after years of treating our patients and seeing time and time again how food is truly the best medicine. Interestingly, if you had told either of us when we were first starting out that someday we would be prescribing food over medicine, we'd never have believed it. But we now believe this so fervently because we've seen the effects of this way of eating firsthand, in both our patients and in ourselves. It has changed the way we treat those in our care, and it's profoundly changed the way we think about medicine, food, disease, and health.

*A brief editorial note before we introduce ourselves one at a time: This is the only time you'll hear from each of us individually. Speaking for ourselves we can more easily explain why each of us was seeking answers that conventional medicine could not provide and how the whole-food, plant-based diet became both our lifestyle and our cause. After this brief interlude, we will return to using our joint voice.*

## DR. PULDE'S STORY, IN HER OWN WORDS

For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be a doctor, as evidenced early on by the teddy bears and dolls often lined up to see four-year-old Dr. Alona. I was as eager to help and heal those furry, stuffed paws way back then as I was excited to learn how to help and heal actual humans when I dove into the pre-med undergraduate program at UCLA many years later. Unfortunately, what I really learned there was that medicine had become a business more focused on making money by selling pills and procedures than on caring for and advocating for patients' rights and well-being. The doctor-patient relationship depicted best in the paintings of Norman Rockwell had disintegrated, as doctors were relegated to ten or fifteen minutes per patient and patients were restricted to just one complaint. It was no wonder these quick-fix methods were not producing successes and that patients were sinking deeper into their chronic illnesses, relying more and more on medications and "life-saving" procedures. I was devastated. This was *not* the medicine I had so anticipated practicing.

Fortunately, at the same time that I was coming to this disappointing realization, I was volunteering at a shelter for patients with HIV and AIDS. There I worked with an acupuncturist who taught me a completely different approach to medicine. She not only spent an hour with each patient, focusing on their needs, concerns, and ailments, but she treated them in a comprehensive manner that addressed their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. She didn't cure them of their disease, but she did alleviate a lot of the suffering associated with their illness as well as the side effects caused by their medications. Equally important, her patients felt heard, taken care of, and supported. *This* was the medicine I had always envisioned practicing, and so I pursued an education in Chinese medicine.

I spent four wonderful years at Emperor's College getting my degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine, which included courses in acupuncture and herbology. For the first time in my adult life, I was doing something I absolutely loved and completely believed in. I would have been happy to stay focused on traditional Chinese medicine

for all of my career, except that my greatest mentor, Dr. Xiuling Ma, believed that the only way to truly provide comprehensive medical care to patients was to combine Eastern and Western medicines. She learned medicine this way and it was what made her so competent in her practice. And so I went back to school to get my medical degree.

Dr. Ma was absolutely correct that in order to be a comprehensive health care provider it is helpful to know, to understand, and to practice both Eastern and Western medicines. The knowledge and experience that I attained while in medical school are invaluable to my practice today—invaluable, but unfortunately also incomplete, as I discovered in a devastating way at the end of my second year of medical school, when my beloved father died suddenly.

With all my training and knowledge, I could not understand how a healthy man could suddenly die of a heart attack at age fifty-five. Yes, he had high cholesterol, but it was managed with cholesterol-lowering medication, and other than that, he was in terrific health. After all, we lived in a home that followed (for the most part) the Mediterranean diet. We ate tons of fruits, vegetables, and olive oil. We exercised regularly. We followed the recommended guidelines, hoping to reduce our cholesterol and fat intakes even more by eating chicken, turkey, and fish instead of beef and lamb; and our dairy intake was limited to occasional cheeses and ice cream. So, how could this happen? I was consumed with rage. What was this medicine—philosophy, pharmacology, and practice—worth if it couldn't allow a seemingly healthy and much-loved husband, father, and friend to live to a ripe old age? Obviously, I was missing something.

As luck, or maybe fate (thanks, Dad!), would have it, it was around this time that I met Matt, who had already discovered the answers I was looking for. He introduced me to the works of John McDougall, MD, T. Colin Campbell, PhD, and Caldwell Esselstyn, MD, among others. All at once, I was reawakened to a world where medicine was making a difference in people's lives. Patients were not only losing weight but were getting rid of their medications as they *reversed* their heart disease, *cured* their diabetes, and *reduced* their blood pressure and cholesterol.

How were they doing this? Through diet and lifestyle changes—specifically, by adopting a low-fat, whole-food, plant-based diet and eliminating animal products, oils, refined and processed foods, and bad habits like smoking. The more I read, the more I was enthralled, because for every argument I had—Where will I get my protein? Isn't olive oil good for you? What about calcium? Aren't chicken and fish healthy?—these doctors had an answer and the evidence to back it up. I evaluated the evidence only to find that they were right *every* time, although I really only needed to look at the success they were having with their patients to know what they were saying was true.

As with so many things in life, this was a bittersweet realization. Bitter because I wish I had known this information sooner, as it might have saved my dear father's life. But sweet, too, because I now have the opportunity to share this knowledge with the rest of my family and my friends, as well as you and your loved ones, in the hope that it will help you live the long, healthy, and happy life you deserve.

# DR. LEDERMAN'S STORY, IN HIS OWN WORDS

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I never really considered becoming anything other than a cardiologist, just like my father. Helping sick patients, participating in life-changing research, and being an educated resource to those in need drew me into this challenging profession. Unfortunately, after four years of medical school and three years of practicing medicine, I grew disillusioned and was ready to leave medicine altogether. I do not know what was to blame, whether it was the frustrations that come with a practice driven by the pharmaceutical industry and the insurance industry or the simple fact that patients were not getting better despite my delivering the best care available. The medicine that I was practicing had very little to do with my original motivation to become a doctor.

Additionally, I felt lousy. I was physically ill. I couldn't go through a day without feeling awful. My stomach was my worst enemy. I was given the vague diagnosis of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and took pill after pill to reduce the stubborn symptoms. Nothing worked. My diet was healthy, according to modern medicine. I even removed lactose as much as possible, except when my cravings kicked in. My diet "hiccup" was a double barbecue bacon cheeseburger and fries followed by ice cream. "Every once in a while won't hurt," I thought. "Those foods are treats!"

I had already experienced my fair share of medical procedures and blood tests looking for other potential causes of my escalating symptoms. I even went to integrative physicians and tried all sorts of alternative medications. I was considering yet another invasive procedure when my father reminded me of the risks involved. I was desperate, under the impression that more procedures would ultimately provide an answer. However, he challenged me to at least experiment with eliminating alcohol and junk foods before proceeding. The South Beach Diet I was on wasn't helping, but he wasn't sure what other diet to recommend. He was sure, however, that more medical care was clearly not the answer. Moreover, from a cardiologist's point of view, it couldn't hurt to at least stop the alcohol and fast food.

I committed *only* to doing some research. I went to the bookstore and read about nutrition and health, a topic overlooked in most medical schools. I was fascinated by the claims made by so many medical nutrition experts: reverse chronic disease, lose weight without dieting, lower cholesterol without medication, etc. "Craziness," I thought. "Likely just a bunch of medical quacks trying to sell an easy answer."

Thankfully, I was stubborn and determined to prove the medical nutrition experts wrong. I continued my research and exploration of medical journals and studies. I discovered that these experts told the truth, which was a hard truth for *me* to digest. I contacted Dr. John McDougall, one of the leading medical nutrition experts in the country, who has a successful practice in Northern California promoting plant-based nutrition as a medical strategy. Dr. McDougall kindly invited me to observe his practice, and I accepted.

I thank Dr. McDougall for reigniting my passion for medicine. His practice embodied my childhood understanding of what medicine should look and feel like. His patients were engaged in the process of becoming healthy and were empowered to make lifestyle changes. They were happy, excited, and thoroughly supported. As a

result of following the McDougall program, his patients were reversing chronic diseases, losing weight, and seeing significantly improved blood test results. In my new excitement and enthusiasm, I decided that nutrition-based lifestyle medicine was the only way I could continue practicing medicine.

Somewhere in the process, I discovered that my stomach symptoms were undeniably related to my diet. Animal products (dairy, eggs, meat, fish), processed foods, and oils triggered painful reactions. Whole, plant-based foods were a joy to eat in comparison. It was an easy decision to hold off on further medical procedures and instead opt to continue with my nutrition experiment.

I committed to eating a whole-food, plant-based diet. Unfortunately, these foods were hard to come by, even in health-conscious Los Angeles. Most vegan restaurants doused their food in oils and depended heavily on processed foods (there were commercial meat substitutes galore in their kitchens). Additionally, despite my abilities to perform complex medical procedures, I could barely figure out how to turn on my stove. At first I ate simple plant-based whole foods: oats, rice, beans, fruits, and vegetables. I ate what I could cook. But after about a week, my willpower ran out. I felt miserably deprived. In a moment of frustration, after passing my favorite fast-food drive-thru, I succumbed to a double barbecue bacon cheeseburger and fries. The resulting pain reminded me that this food is far from harmless.

I committed to trying whole, plant-based foods again, only this time I knew I needed to arm myself with the tools to succeed. If eating out was not a regular option, I needed to learn how to cook. I started slowly and learned to cook one recipe at a time. I learned how to be forgiving, as I cooked some meals I wouldn't wish upon my worst enemy. Each "failure" was a new lesson. Each lesson helped me reach my ultimate goal of feeling healthy and happy. Real failure was just not an option.

Without even trying, I lost weight. At 6 feet tall, I weighed 195 pounds when I started my new diet and lifestyle, and I am now a lean 180 pounds. My stomach troubles are also under control, so long as I follow a diet filled with whole, plant-based foods. My blood test results are impressive. But, more than all of that, I am happy. I enjoy what I eat, and I love that I am pain-free and finally have some control over my health.

Despite my success, I received a lot of criticism and judgment from my medical colleagues, my peers, and even my family. It's been a hard journey. I am aware of how crazy my claims may sound to newcomers. In fact, I had those exact same thoughts until I experimented on myself. But trust me—I'm a doctor! (Actually, in all seriousness, never trust anyone who tells you to trust them simply because they are a doctor. Trust how you feel, the results you see, the happiness you derive, and, hopefully, unbiased science.)

## SHARING THE MESSAGE WITH YOU

We spent the early years in our careers working within a medical system focused on alleviating symptoms more than on fixing the core problems. We found an approach that brings about something far more satisfying and lasting, and we've seen what

did in our own lives. Furthermore, we have studied and researched what most doctors don't ever think about: the relationship between food and the human body. Armed with facts, research, and healthy recipes, we have helped our patients—not to mention family, friends, and colleagues—understand how to transition to optimum health. We are enormously grateful to our mentors and to each other, for we now walk this path absolutely united (both professionally and personally) as physicians focused on being true patient advocates. Ultimately, we refuse to recommend anything other than the safest, most effective, evidence-based medicine available.

With this four-week guide we are providing you with a road map to health. We will show you how in just one month you can transition to an entirely whole-food, plant-based diet—meal by meal, week by week. By the end of these four weeks it will be clear how what you eat affects your body and why this way of eating is the best way to stay strong and achieve optimum health. The decision of what to do with this evidence and whether you follow this map is entirely up to you. Once you read this book, you will have all the information you need to be fully armed for success. You can decide to think of this as an overwhelming lifestyle change, or you can decide that you want to take control of your health and run with it. Either way, you are choosing how to live the rest of your life.

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## GETTING PERSONAL

**Whenever I am feeling down, or start to think my choices are extreme or radical, I turn to online support, or open a book, to remind myself. What I am doing is making a difference. I am not only making choices to increase my longevity, but I am ensuring a better quality of life for myself by feeling good each day that I have.**

—Jodie Plummer, 40, medical office administrator, Nottawa, Ontario, Canada

**My life is, well, better—in every way! The first things I noticed were my boost in energy and the enhanced taste sensations of my taste buds. After cutting out animal foods and cutting down on processed foods, fruits and vegetables began to explode with flavor I had never experienced before. I also cook (well) now—and I enjoy it! Before: a bowl of cereal, a grilled cheese sandwich, a chicken breast with some salt and pepper. Now: chickpea curry, monster kale salads, sweet potato polenta stacks, homemade veggie burgers, and much more.**

—Steven Todd Smith, 30, Reiki master teacher, life nutrition coach, FOK community manager, Los Angeles, CA

**This is not a diet. It is just a change in lifestyle and approaching food differently—it's a different way of thinking. . . . Another woman that I work with and I are trying to set up a monthly meeting group—gathering people that are on this same journey, so we can share thoughts and ideas.**

—Laura Hoepfner, 63, teacher, Appleton, WI

**My husband and I have learned about all sorts of foods we never knew about before, and enjoy the greater variety. Both of us have experienced improved blood work (labs), weight loss, increased energy, and less joint pain.**

—Kathy Mode, 50, retired, Daytona Beach, FL



**Once the processed foods, meat, dairy, and other garbage were removed from my diet, the taste buds came alive and vegetables tasted so much better than they used to.**

—Jamie Lasee, 39, recreation director, Fond du Lac, WI



**When I think about how miserable I was before, how sick I was, it's amazing to me how much simple dietary changes have changed everything about the quality of my life.**

—Suzanne Schier-Happell, 37, college professor, Columbus, OH

# LET FOOD BE THY MEDICINE: The Science Behind a Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet

**We will begin the four-week** transition in chapter 4. First, we want to show you how a whole-food, plant-based diet will actually improve your health, as opposed to the procedures and prescriptions of conventional medicine, which in most cases only improve the indicators of disease—without significantly helping to prevent or eliminate the disease itself. In this chapter, we demonstrate why letting food be your medicine is the smartest step you can take to ensure your excellent health for lifetime.

Let's face it: Americans are sick, tired, and overmedicated. Every fifty-three seconds someone in the United States dies of heart disease, which, as the nation's number-one killer, claims about 600,000 lives per year. <sup>1</sup> Cancer, now the second leading cause of death, takes the lives of more than 1,500 people per day. <sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, nearly 10 percent of the population has diabetes<sup>3</sup>; and our children are getting sicker, as indicated by the startling fact that obesity has more than doubled in children and tripled in adolescents in the past thirty years.<sup>4</sup> We have turned to the medical system for help, and it has delivered medication in a big way: Nearly 70 percent of Americans are on at least one prescription drug, more than 50 percent take two, and 20 percent are on five or more prescription drugs.<sup>5</sup> Despite the billions of dollars being spent on pharmaceuticals, the needle almost never moves downward on the rates of chronic disease, and people still feel lousy and sick.

Health statistics aren't just about numbers on a page or data on a statistician's ledger. These are our mothers, fathers, siblings, and children. These are our friends. The health crisis is taking a real toll on our daily lives, profoundly affecting the personal happiness and productivity of millions of us every single day.

There is good news, though. Research is revealing with greater certainty that we understand the main cause of this epidemic: an American diet that derives more than 90 percent of what we eat from animal-based and processed foods.<sup>6</sup> *Understanding the cause means there's hope!* The research tells us that if we change to an entirely different way of eating, we can dramatically alter our health destiny.<sup>7</sup>

Modern pioneers like T. Colin Campbell, PhD; Caldwell Esselstyn, MD; Dean Ornish, MD; John McDougall, MD; Neal Barnard, MD; and others are leading the charge. Thanks to these doctors and researchers, along with an emerging body of scientific evidence from all corners, we now know that a whole-food, plant-based diet is more powerful at preventing and treating chronic diseases than any medication or procedure. We are so convinced by the evidence that we believe if this diet came in a pill, it would be heralded on the front pages of newspapers and magazines around the

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sample content of The Forks Over Knives Plan: How to Transition to the Life-Saving, Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet

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