




# Confessions of a Vegan



Her own personal trip to wellness began with her mother's illness. Now, **Kate Murray M'03** eats a plant-based diet of whole foods, and has written a book to help others lead healthier and happier lives.

By Geoff  
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2012 Gallup poll found that 5 percent of Americans consider themselves to be vegetarians, while just 2 percent identify as vegans. So when Kate Murray M'03 published her book "A Silent Cure in My Back Yard," she did so with no illusions about converting the masses.

"I don't expect everyone, or anyone for that matter, to read the book and become a vegan, because it's not an easy thing," Murray says. "I just hope I can motivate them to make a couple of healthy changes. And then they'll see how much better they feel eating grains, beans, nuts and vegetables, including vegetables they haven't heard of."

For Murray, Alvernia's MBA program was a kind of organic farm for entrepreneurs. She thanks Scott Ballantyne, chair of the university's business department, for fertilizing her creative drive. "I gained the resolve to ignite my own passion and purpose, to create a sense of ownership in my own ideas," she says.

Murray aims to make food, and facts about food, more digestible. "Most of the information we get is so convoluted and confusing," she says. "We're told that wine is good for us on the morning news, and bad for us on the evening news. How do we make sense of what is really good and what is really not, especially if we don't have time to read scientific articles?"

As a nutritionist with a post-graduate certificate in plant-based nutrition from Cornell University, Murray published her book through her design firm, Vogue Media, located in Shillington, Pa. It includes recipes for living longer with more life, and traces her pilgrimage toward adopting a diet of plant-based whole foods low in saturated fats and high in antioxidants.

Her personal trip to wellness began with illness. Murray started

studying and eating healthier food in 2001, the year her mother, JoAnne Rizzuto, learned she had breast cancer. Murray expanded her dietary research and practice after she gave birth to two children and helped guide her mom toward recovery after receiving a bone marrow transplant in 2007.

In "A Silent Cure," Murray celebrates her mother's Italian communal feasts. She also criticizes some of her mom's favorite foods. Citing 20- to 30-year studies, she contends that animal products, including red meat and cow's milk, can cause heart disease and cancer. She points out that one tablespoon of olive oil, a staple of Mediterranean kitchens and the star of the much-publicized "Mediterranean Diet," has 14 percent saturated fat, more than triple the amount in a chicken breast.

Murray provides healthy twists on nearly 20 of her mother's recipes. For a mushroom-asparagus risotto, she recommends sautéing onions in vegetable broth, wine or Bragg's amino acid, a soy-like sauce. For her mom's apricot bar cookies, she suggests replacing white flour with brown-rice flour and white sugar with unsweetened applesauce.

Like other nutritionists, Murray recommends supplementing whole foods with holistic exercises: yoga, walking, five-minute meditations through the day. She accelerated her favorite exercise — running — to reduce the stress of caring for her youngsters and her mother, who died in 2008. She's particularly proud of completing

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**Kate Murray**

a marathon in San Francisco that raised money to battle leukemia and lymphoma.

Murray personifies the one-stop shop. She writes a column for the Reading Eagle and a blog for [mindbodygreen.com](http://mindbodygreen.com). Her own website, [asilentcure.org](http://asilentcure.org), is a lively forum for everything from a primer on protein (lemons contain 16 percent, the highest concentration) to a list of the best smartphone apps for plant-based foods (i.e., vegan cupcakes). Her Facebook giveaway of a week's full share of vegetables doubled as a promotion for Berks County's cornucopia of organic farms, and a sweepstakes for a box of locally grown, USDA Certified organic vegetables was a hit.

Not one to let dust settle, Murray is currently planning an educational garden for the rooftop of a Berks County elementary school, where she envisions elementary schoolchildren planting seeds in boxes made by high school students, and the older students making meals with vegetables and herbs for the younger students. Also in the works is a children's book on nutrition tied to a campaign to have kids take Murray's trademarked Plant Pledge.

Her children didn't have to take the pledge. Carla, 6, and Joe, 5, have never complained about not eating chicken nuggets because they've never eaten chicken nuggets. Their father, Steven Murray M'09 hasn't griped about a meatless diet, despite growing up on grilled hamburgers. An assistant principal at a high school, he knows full well how healthy food helped his wife stay healthy during an unhealthy period.

"Steve will eat whatever I cook," says Murray with a laugh. "It doesn't always turn out great; I'm not a chef formally trained in France or anything. But we laugh about it and move on."

Sometimes Murray relaxes her rules. Every now and then, she'll serve cheese with tacos. And summer wouldn't be summer, she admits, without an occasional ice cream. "The conventional wisdom is: 'Everything in moderation,'" she says. "Our running joke is: Moderation is a town we bypassed long ago for the town of Excess." **A**