

## Barb and Carl's Story – Finding a Food Path Together

I just wanted to be a vegetarian. As I withdrew from the pork chop and meatball diet of my childhood, it gave me quiet pleasure and a sense of self-approval. First the red meat went, then the poultry, then the fish that had faces, and ultimately all flesh. I ate lots of rice and beans, and green vegetables when I had the time to cook. And I still allowed myself my favorite treats as long as they were produced by companies whose ethics matched my own. The only problem was that I didn't feel well. I have a tendency to get depressed anyway, and during the two years I was the strictest, I started taking antidepressants.

At the same time, I met and fell in love with Carl. Carl is a recovering alcoholic who is thoroughly committed to his program and his recovery. I highly recommend falling in love with a recovering alcoholic, if you can find one. They are devoted to something bigger than themselves and have learned how to work a program, a skill that translates into a capacity for dedication.

Carl and I were perfect for each other, except for one thing; we didn't eat many of the same foods. Carl's digestion was really destroyed during his drinking years, and it was a long slow process bringing him back to health. There were so many foods he couldn't tolerate, no sugars or sweeteners, no breads or pasta, most dairy foods made him ill. His colon was seriously at risk when he learned he might be able to save it if he went on a strict diet that divided the world into allowable and not allowable carbohydrates. It allowed some honey but no sugar, allowed yoghurt if you made it yourself but no commercial brands. It was very scientific and I didn't understand the details, but we decided to take it on faith and just do it.

I haven't mentioned that animal protein was allowed. I had a big decision to make, and it was a combination of family and friends and my OBGYN that tipped the scale. My doctor knew we wanted to get pregnant; she also knew I wasn't doing a good job with my vegetarian diet, self-medicating with organic vegan chocolate and not eating enough vegetables. For myself, I wasn't thrilled about being on antidepressants while I was pregnant and nursing a baby. My family was on the doctor's side.

My problem wasn't that I dislike meat, it was more an ethical decision for me. So I decided that if I gave thanks every time I ate the flesh of another creature and ate only the amount I needed to feel stable, I would do it. The first time was easy as it was November and I had one slice of turkey at Thanksgiving. It felt just right.

It took Carl and me a couple months to sort out the diet and figure out how to eat without devoting the entire day to feeding ourselves. Eventually it became easy. We didn't stray from the grocery list and I learned 10 days' worth of dinner recipes we both liked, mostly meals with lots of vegetables and just a little flesh for me and more for him.

We both attend Suppers for Sobriety now, drawn in by friends who, like Carl, had lots of years of sobriety but no years of vibrant health. We feel better. Sometimes we indulge in sweet things; it's not like alcohol where you need to be totally abstinent. We sit among friends who speak the same language. We all have different diets, but somehow we manage to work together, like Carl and I did, to allow for everybody's preferences.

We had our baby six months ago. I was able to get off antidepressants through the grace of fish oils. I am mentally and emotionally prepared to take medication if I ever need to, but for now I'm stable and happy on whole food and fish oil.

## **Barb and Carl's Story – Finding a Food Path Together**

supplements. We started our new family life together sober and Suppers sober. I really want to be a vegetarian again, or at least near vegetarian if I can do it without getting depressed again. The difference between me then and me now is that I'm practiced at reading my body. I know the difference between inclinations and urges. I will eat according to my inclinations and ride out my urges to eat things that don't honor my body and the child we created together.

Suppers changed my life. The readings, the books we were introduced to, the support at meetings gave me a program to work right alongside my husband. Randy is our Suppers Baby, even-tempered and happy, but he arrived in this world with a family history of alcoholism, depression and sugar addiction. I can't think of a greater gift I could give this child than breastfeeding him and introducing him only to real food.