

# Making Ripples

## Food Freedom

by Amanda Bancroft

I'm not really a vegan, so you needn't fear a long-winded lecture on the virtues of veganism. No, I'm not even a vegetarian anymore. Or an omnivore, or a flexitarian. But wait, don't I have to technically fit into at least one of these labels? I certainly thought so, at one time.

It has been almost one year since I gave up my favorite food in the world, cheese. It's been so long that I habitually type it as "cheeze"! Although aware of the environmental and health consequences of eating dairy, I was still in denial that going vegan was possible for a cheese lover like myself. I told the universe that I would never, ever choose to give up cheesecake, quesadillas, and pizza. So the universe simply made me do it.

In 2012, after nearly a decade as a vegetarian, I received several diagnoses that translated into, among other things, stop eating eggs! And gluten. And dairy. My facial expression resembled this cut-open bell pepper (photo), screaming in panic. I bawled like a baby. I had recurring nightmares about being chased by pizza, until I would finally give in, take a bite, and end up in the hospital from an egg reaction. I would see a deviled egg platter at a picnic, and think, "Yep. Eggs are the devil alright." Macaroni & cheese cravings would hit me around mid-afternoon, tantalizing me with warm, gooey, fluorescent orange fantasies.

At first I turned to pre-packaged products for convenience. No luck. You can buy a gluten-free pizza, and a vegan pizza, but you cannot buy a gluten-free vegan pizza. But I have now made tasty gluten-free vegan pizza at home, which puzzles me, since I am by no means a talented chef, and the pros claim that what I did is just too difficult for them.

Eventually I realized, with the backing of good science, that the non-organic animal products I'd been over-consuming have joined the ranks of refined sugars & flours, caffeine, and fried foods, which cannot compete with local organic spinach for a spot in the top ten healthiest foods. I also realized my tastebuds had actually changed! I was now having mid-afternoon cravings for brussel sprouts.

Greenhouse Grille has been very supportive of my newfound food freedom. Their quinoa sauté, with its depth of flavor, beat the pants off the bite of quesadilla I stole from Ryan. I can't be a vegan since I have honey in my tea, and the occasional indulgence. I can't be an omnivore since I only eat poultry a few times per year, at most, and saying "omnivore" would make people confused when I refuse meat consistently. So what do I eat? Healthy, sustainable food. Isn't that the label we all need?

*Ripples* is a blog connecting people to resources on sustainable living while chronicling their off-grid journey and supporting the work of non-profit organizations. Read more on this topic and others at [www.RipplesBlog.org](http://www.RipplesBlog.org)