

You Are Never Too Old for a Lifestyle Change!

By Carole Audet

Char Nolan is a septuagenarian whose journey to veganism began with Rip Esselstyn's cookbook *The Engine 2 Diet*. She earned her Rouxbe Plant-Based Pro Certification in May of 2015, then was asked to join as an instructor in 2019.

Since converting to a plant-based diet and incorporating the life-changing advice found in Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn's seminal work, Char has enjoyed optimal health and well-being without the need for medication. Instead, she lives by the certainty that "food is medicine."

In September of 2009, armed with her copy of Rip Esselstyn's *The Engine 2 Diet*, Char picked up what she needed from the grocery store to give this program a try. Prepared to experiment on her own with the program's 28 Day Challenge, she made herself a bowl of oatmeal for breakfast the next morning. She didn't have to wait 28 days to determine if she liked the program or if she was going to stick with it.

"On day 10, for the first time in years, I woke up and was totally free of osteoarthritic pain, which had plagued me for years. At that very moment, I thought to myself, *I am staying with the pillars of Engine 2, no more meat for me.*"

This was mere weeks before Char turned 60, proving "you are never too old for a lifestyle change," which has become her motto.

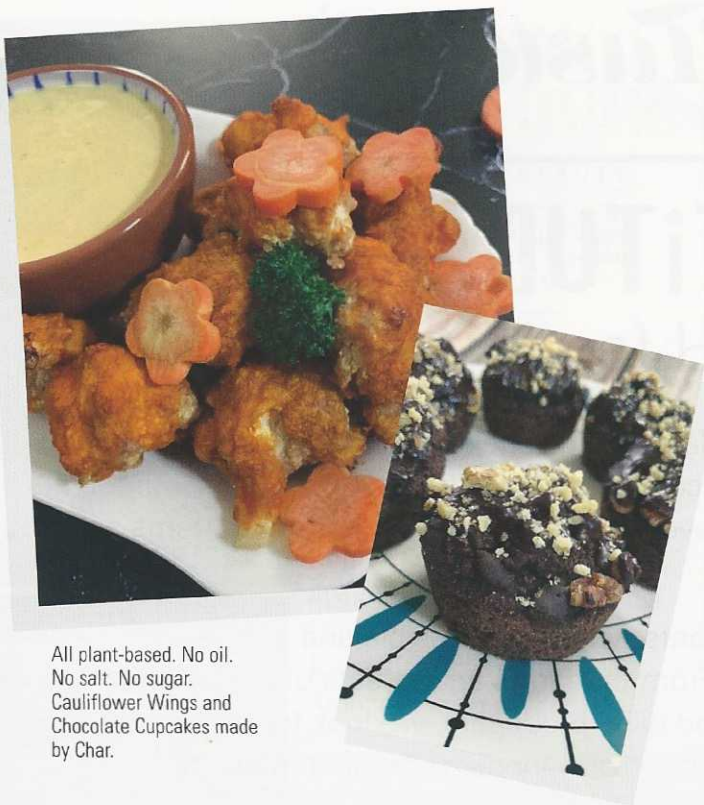
"When I started eating Engine 2 style, I did it for my health. Now, everything has come together, in that, I eat plant-based for myself, the animals, and the environment."

When Char explored making a career switch, she eventually decided to study at Rouxbe. She felt the program complemented her background in public health. "My goal was to take plant-based cooking and nutrition to under-resourced communities where co-morbidities are prevalent. My Rouxbe studies provided me with invaluable lessons and experiences. I can tell you that



the coursework was intense, but that the individual approach from the instructors was amazing."

Rouxbe's Plant-Based Professional Certification program is a six-month online course developed by Chef Chad Sarno, who is respected in the plant-based cooking



All plant-based. No oil.
No salt. No sugar.
Cauliflower Wings and
Chocolate Cupcakes made
by Char.

world. The program has more than 85 lessons with more than 200 instructional technique videos that benefit chefs and home cooks alike.

Once plant-based certified, Char and a friend started offering pop-up dinners based on *The Engine 2 Diet* program, which is devoid of oil, sugar, and salt but contains plenty of delicious meals made with beans, grains, and vegetables.

Char shares that graduates of the Rouxbe Plant-Based Pro certification program go on to do spectacular things with their new skills. Some have opened restaurants and cafés, others offer catering services, others still have launched cookbooks and podcasts.

"The Rouxbe logo, for me, fills my heart with pride. When I meet a Rouxbe grad, I know that they have received a well-planned outline of culinary coursework," says Char.

For those new to plant-based cooking, Char recommends books from the Esselstyn family, including those by Rip Esselstyn, and the book that started it all written by Rip's father Dr. Esselstyn with input from Ann Crile Esselstyn, his wife.

Ann and Jane, their daughter, partnered to create *The Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease Cookbook*, which is another title Char recommends, in addition to those by Dreena Burton, Diane Wentz, and the Forks Over Knives

Series. "*Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease* by Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr., MD, has been and remains a great go-to. For me, the book set the standard for healthy eating in the early days of the surge of plant-based eating," she explains.

Char loves to transform someone's favourite go-to meat-based dishes into its plant-based counterpart—and surprise the omnivore in the process. "I am involved with a program in Philadelphia where I work with older adults who are rather cemented into lifelong eating habits that are not beneficial to their well-being. They will try new recipes, whose ingredients are familiar and non-intimidating."

Char's advice for those new to plant-based eating is simply to "Do your best. I tell people to follow ten resources on social media, and expose themselves to their information. My philosophy is this: Lean into plant-based eating, and find foods that you like. Try a new food every day. Most importantly, 'progress IS perfection' in the sense that trying new things and being the best version of yourself is a personal victory. Learn to eat lots of leafy greens and have fun cooking!"

Char's intention for the future is to travel to Italy. "I am very proud of my Italian heritage and the life that my grandparents set forth for their children and grandchildren. My grandparents were from the Puglia region of Italy. Later this year, I plan to spend a week cooking on a wheat farm in Bari, Italy to reinforce my Pugliese culinary roots. I have converted so many of my grandmother's recipes to plant-based, and I'd like to explore more recipes. And, who knows, I just may write a cookbook someday! I am still perfecting the delicious bread specialty item, focaccia, whose roots are in Puglia."

Perhaps spending a great deal of time as a child at her grandparents' New York City Italian restaurant made her career transition to cooking and recipe creation an eventuality. ●

For our readers who would like to connect with Char, follow her on social media.

 @char_nolan |  @nolancharlene