

National Vegetarian Week 2004

Radio Norfolk Feature, Monday 24 May 2004

Breakfast show, Today in Norfolk, just before 8am.

Interviewer: Graham Barnard, Radio Norfolk

Sonia Cutter, butcher's wife.

Tricia Frances, vegan author.

Transcript by Max d'Ayala. 24 May and 28 May 2004.

Graham: ... [It's] National Vegetarian Week, this week, and to mark the occasion we've come up with a challenge. We've found a butcher in the county who is prepared to give up meat for five days and become a Veggie. Sonia Cutter runs a butcher's stall on Norwich market with her husband Paul and she thinks she can break the habit of a lifetime by not eating meat and to help her we've enlisted Tricia Francis, author of the recipe book *Glad to be Vegan*. Nice to see you both, thanks for coming in.

Sonia, have you ever considered eating meat?

Sonia: "Have I ever considered eating meat?", Umm, no, it's just something that's in our daily sort of diet, every day really, and I wouldn't consider not eating it, up until now.

[Break in interview of about 15 minutes. Interviewer appears to have the wrong script or have asked the wrong question.]

As I was saying, it is National Vegetarian Week this week, and we've set our own challenge. We thought, what shall we do for National Vegetarian Week. Well, we found a Norfolk butcher who is going to give up meat for five days and become a Veggie. Sonia, congratulations, and thank you for taking up this challenge. You are a butcher's wife, and you are a butcher yourself, I suppose we can call you.

Sonia: Yes, that's right.

Graham: Do you know what you are letting yourself in for?

Sonia: Umm, I've just been speaking to Tricia, and yes, I do now, thank you.

Graham: Well, Tricia Frances is the author of the recipe book *Glad to be Vegan*, and we'll talk to you Tricia in a few moments, but do you know much about meat free dishes?

Sonia: Nothing at all. Every day we eat meat, obviously, because my husband has been a butcher for 22 years now and I can't imagine what I am going to eat.

Graham: Are you really really going to do it though for us?

Sonia: Yes, definitely.

Graham: Any ideas at this stage what you are going to eat?

Sonia: Probably salad. (laughs)

Graham: But there are all sorts of meat alternatives now.

Sonia: Yeah, that's right, yeah, I have tried them.

Graham: So you can have a spaghetti bolognese that is meat free, but it still tastes and feels like, the bolognese sauce, the mince, that's in it. Yeah.

Sonia: Yeah

Graham: Well, we've actually, because we are nice we have printed out a load of recipes for you, things that you can have for breakfast. For example, healthy hash browns, that are vegetarian, savoury breakfast rolls that are vegetarian. Is it just you, or the family, going to do this as well?

Sonia: If I could I would love my husband to do it.

Graham: This is the thing, could a butcher go vegetarian for the week?

Tricia, nice to see you. Thank you for being part of our challenge as well. Talking about meat alternatives, are they something that you go for?

Tricia: They are, I am mainly vegan. I've been vegan since 1991 and I don't find it, I don't miss meat at all. Chicken was the last thing that I eat and the reason I became a vegan was because I bought a portion of sweet and salmonella chicken.

Graham: Sweet and salmonella, was that number 512...

Tricia: something like that

Graham: ...at the restaurant.

But that's taking things another stage isn't it, because vegetarianism is for many people, but veganism, if that's the right word, is for another section of society. Why did you take it one stage further?

Tricia: After I had the salmonella I became really ill and I found I'd got lots of food allergies. Some I realise now I'd had before, but didn't know what they were, and not so much allergies perhaps as intolerances. But dairy has a reaction on me, so it was an easy choice to become a vegan.

Graham: You look well on it.

Tricia: Thank you.

Graham: You should see Sonia's face. Sonia (laughing). What advice can you give Sonia?

Tricia: Don't panic.

Sonia: Ok

Graham: Don't panic, yeah...

Tricia: Don't panic, they are so easy to do now. When I became a vegan in 91 you could only get one type of soya milk and there was nothing in the supermarkets. Now, there is just so much you can buy, ready made, and I've got my recipe book here, which I'm going to give you a copy of, which will make it even easier. You can have curry and risotto and all sorts of things, it's so easy. And if you miss meat you can buy meat alternatives, as Graham said, you can buy quorn pieces and veggie mince, and all sorts of things which you can make it, different dishes. I made a chilli once and invited some meat eating friends around and they didn't know the difference.

Graham: Really, oh how clever

Graham: Well, Sonia, off you go.

Sonia: Ok

Graham: No meat. We're going to catch up with you again by the end of the week.

I won't tell you, um, Tricia close your ears because, on a Monday the breakfast team, we always treat ourselves to a lovely lovely bacon sandwich, (laughing) all right. So smell that bacon, (Sonia: Mmmm, laughing.) No meat for a week and we'll catch up with you again on Friday.

Sonia: Ok, thank you.

Graham: Ok, and thank you very much Sonia Cutter and Tricia Frances. Lovely to see you as well. We'll see you later in the week as well.

Tricia: Yes, thank you.

Graham: And finding out how Sonia gets on, on Friday. There are those recipes for you, ok.

End of interview 1.

Part 2 : Friday 28th May 2004

Graham: Now, staying with food, I wonder if any of you have become vegetarians this week. Well, it's National Vegetarian Week and we set one of Norfolk's butcher's wife a challenge. Sonia Cutter, who's husband runs a butchers stall on Norwich Market agreed to give up meat for five days. She was with us on Monday morning and she was still going on Wednesday. She's in the studio now. Sonia, have you made it through the week successfully?

Sonia: Yes I have, and I have enjoyed some of the meals, to be honest, But, I don't think I'm going to stay a vegetarian. (Laughter)

Graham: How difficult has it been?

Sonia: It hasn't been too bad. My local supermarket has got a great range of food for vegetarians and it is quite easy to buy meals, you know, that are quite easy to prepare as well.

Graham: Was that something that surprised you? Because presumably, being the wife of a butcher you maybe didn't have a great knowledge of the vegetarian meals that were available, until this week.

Sonia: That's right. I spent a good hour looking at packets with the 'V' sign.

Graham: So what have you been eating? Take us through some of the meals that you have particularly enjoyed this week, and maybe some that you haven't.

Sonia: I really enjoyed a pasta bake that I made with broccoli and cheese. That was really lovely. I made a chicken stir fry with the quorn chicken style pieces. It wasn't my greatest hit, I don't know if I cooked the chicken pieces like I would do chicken and they went a bit crispy. So that wasn't too good. And I've just had like jacket potatoes and soft cheese for vegetarians on ryvita, and so had a varied amount of food.

Graham: What sort of support have you had from your family. What's your husband made of it? Has he gone vegetarian in support this week as well?

Sonia: Definitely not! He isn't agreeable with me at all, and I sort of wound him up as I was walking round the supermarket saying, "I might stay a vegetarian", and he wasn't very pleased.

Graham: Well, I suppose that's probably what you would expect that from a butcher. Have you still been cooking meat for the rest of the family.

Sonia: Yes, they've had roast beef and chicken. So, yeah.

Graham: Now that must have been particularly hard if you are used to eating meat, and you enjoy eating meat; having to cook it and know that you are not going to be able to eat it.

Sonia: Yes, definitely. I had roast beef, and I'd been cooking it, and I'd got it out of the slow cooker and I nearly put a piece in my mouth. And I thought "Oh no! I can't eat that!"

Graham: Was that the time you were most tempted, or were there other times this week.

Sonia: Definitely.

Graham: What about even walking round the supermarket. You must have been down the meat part of the supermarket, and did you get really tempted then as well?

Sonia: Probably not in the supermarket, because obviously all our meat comes from my husband's butchers on Norwich Market. Probably when I worked yesterday on the market and I could smell the bacon and people having meat then. That was probably one of the times when I thought, "I could just have a bacon sandwich".

Graham: You've got amazing will power.

Sonia: Yeah, it's been hard, but.

Graham: Also in the studio is Tricia Frances who is the author of the recipe book *Glad to be Vegan*. What about that?

Tricia: Well, I think she did really well. Yeah.

Graham: She's done all right hasn't she. Working in, even having to work in a butchers, her husband is a butcher, he's still eating meat, she's cooking it, and yet she's managed to stick it out all week.

Tricia: Yeah, I think that's great. And the other thing Sonia said about the food being readily available, I think that probably helped you a bit. But it is, It is easy to buy these days, but if you haven't got a taste for it, well, there's not much you can do, it doesn't matter what you buy.

Graham: Does that generally surprise people, the range of food that simply is available for vegetarians.

Tricia: I think it does these days, as I said on Monday. When I became a vegan in 91 you just couldn't buy hardly anything. You know, one sort of soya milk, and there was virtually nothing. But now it's so easy. If you are a vegan it is slightly more difficult but it's not impossible, even if you just shop in a supermarket.

Graham: When you were here earlier in the week you gave Sonia a few tips. Did they help you?

Sonia: Yes, definitely. I didn't panic, I left and I felt, sort of, very open minded, and I am definitely pleased with myself because if something has been set to me I wouldn't cheat because, my husband was like "oh, just no one will know", but I couldn't, because I said I'd do it, so...

Graham: We'll believe you. Tricia, you've got a book signing on Saturday haven't you.

Tricia: I have, yes.

Graham: *Glad to be Vegan*. Where are you going to be?

Tricia: City Farm Stores between 12 and 2.

Graham: And some other events as well.

Tricia: Yeah, there's um, the Veggie Folk, are the local Vegetarian Society, and they meet at Mangreen the second Saturday of every month for lunch. You don't have to be a member to go along, so that's quite a good thing to do if you are a vegetarian or a vegan, or thinking about it.

Graham: Well I'm not sure you are going to get Sonia along to those; but Sonia you have done so well and you said something a couple of moments ago that you were tempted by a bacon sandwich earlier this week.

Sonia: That is what I am going to have today when I go to work.

Graham: Well, our producer Victoria Holden ...

Sonia: Oh, bless you heart!

Victoria: This is a little present, I couldn't let you go away without a bacon sandwich.

Sonia: Oh thank you very much.

Victoria: Smell that bacon.

Sonia: It's lovely, I'm going to really enjoy that.

Graham: Well, this was supposed to be a test. We were going to put it there, and you were going to say whether you were going to stick with vegetarian, or whether you were going to go for the bacon roll. But, you made it quite clear earlier on that vegetarianism is not for you, is it.

Sonia: No it isn't.

Graham: But well done for trying it out.

Sonia: Thank you.

Graham: Thanks very much Sonia cutter. Good to see you and enjoy the bacon roll.

Sonia: I will.

Graham: Thanks very much for coming in.