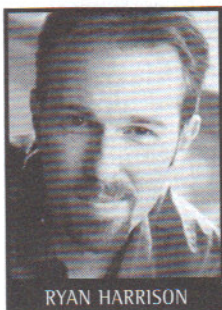


Something to chew on

Suspend disbelief for a moment and imagine this: a **cure (rather than a treatment) for heart disease, cancer, auto-immune disorders, and diabetes.** What if this cure was a do-it-yourself treatment that cost less per month than many prescription medicines, and which could not only stop disease in its tracks, but in many cases, reverse it? Would you be interested? I certainly would be, and I am.



RYAN HARRISON

As a holistic and integrative health practitioner, I am keenly aware of some of the most pressing health concerns we face in the United States today. In brief, the Standard American Diet (aptly termed "SAD" in health and wellness circles) and the host of diseases that attend it are at the center of our protracted "war on cancer," the prevalence of heart disease (the most common cause of death in the US), skyrocketing rates of diabetes (especially in children), and the sobering reality that a whopping two-thirds of us are either clinically overweight or obese. Without a doubt, you know someone who is already dealing with at least one chronic or degenerative disease; you may be on that list, yourself. Well, pull up a chair and let me serve up some hope.

Forks Over Knives offers an all-natural, alternative vision. Viewers feast on the film's fare through two complementary approaches: science and anecdote. You meet Drs. T. Colin Campbell (a highly regarded nutritional scientist at Cornell University) and Caldwell Esselstyn (a top surgeon at the world-renowned Cleveland Clinic), who detail their groundbreaking research into the relationship between diet and disease. Yet you also meet featured "reality patients" like San'Dera Nation, Joey Aucoin, Evelyn Oswick, and others who, to put it bluntly, were unwitting victims of their own diet and lifestyle choices.

Admittedly, it's quite a bit easier to spit out (rather than chew and digest) the brain-food that *Forks Over Knives* dishes up. But here it is, in a spoonful: By altering your diet to include markedly fewer foods derived from animal sources and more unprocessed fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, and grains, you can empower your body to heal itself of just about any chronic dis-

ease—heart disease and cancer included.

This may not be news to you. When you see this simple formula in action, however, it can be newly persuasive. And this is where this film excels. For example, you watch San'Dera, Joey, Evelyn, and others shed weight, halt diabetes, reverse markers of heart disease, and outlive cancer, while they also gain energy, reduce dependence on medications (saving hundreds of dollars in the process), and breathe new life into their relationships—all by making different food choices.

You also see Dr. Campbell discuss how he and fellow researchers were able to turn cancer "on and off" simply by adjusting the amount of animal-based protein in a diet. And Dr. Esselstyn introduces you to a group of individuals who became a research project for him after traditional western medicine sent them home to die from irreversible, untreatable coronary artery disease—20 years earlier.

But what will you do with this information? It certainly challenges some cherished cultural food-centered beliefs ("What? I don't need meat or dairy to get enough protein?"), some of which directly affect many of our family, social, and religious traditions. Like a menu in a foreign language, you may need to spend some time with *Forks Over Knives*. Thankfully, for every bite of admonition, the film also offers palatable solutions flavored with possibility.

Some may suggest that it's too hard or unpleasant to "eat healthy." That perhaps it's too "extreme" to do so. Dr. Esselstyn proposed we reframe our priorities, noting that it is far more extreme to be put under, have your chest cut open, and have a blood vessel taken from your leg and connected to your heart so you can keep eating hamburgers, chili dogs, and BBQ ribs.

Granted, the film's not-so-clever title is slightly clumsy, but its message is important: you can minimize your risk of "going under the knife" by being more careful about how you use your fork. Given our ubiquitous health crises, this is one meal that, although it may taste a little too much like humble pie, is worth serving to family and friends alike. **M**

Ryan Harrison attends the La Verne Church of the Brethren where he started and led monthly Spiritual Cinema Circle gatherings for more than five years. He now teaches Spiritual Cinema at the University of La Verne, and is currently pursuing a PsyD degree at the University of the Rockies.

ABOUT THE MOVIE

Title: *Forks Over Knives*. **Rating:** PG. **Creator and executive producer:** Brian Wendel. **Writer and director:** Lee Fulkerson. **Producer:** John Corey. **Co-producer:** Allison Boon. **Running time:** 96 minutes. **DVD release:** August 30, 2011. **Notes:** "Here is a film that could save your life," says film critic Roger Ebert. "It is a documentary in which Lee Fulkerson enacts a mirror image of the journey taken by Morgan Spurlock in *Supersize Me*. Instead of eating only at McDonald's for a month and nearly killing himself, he eats a plant-based whole-food diet for six months, gets off all of his cholesterol and blood pressure medications, drops a lot of weight, sleeps better, and has more energy." And, from Dr. Susan Albers, "In a nutshell, *Forks Over Knives* is about two doctors . . . who are advocating a plant-based diet. . . . Whether you agree or totally disagree with the message of this movie, it may get you to start thinking critically about what you eat and how it impacts your health."

