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Q&A

BEGIN

A Vegan Revolutionary

Miyoko Schinner and her company Miyoko's Creamery are leading the charge on creating delicious plant-based cheese and butter.

BY LISA A. BEACH

With plant-based diets soaring in popularity, Miyoko's Creamery seems positioned as a leader in the vegan space. Launched in 2014, the California-based brand churns out artisan butter, cheese and other dairy-free products made from nuts, oats and legumes. Founder Miyoko Schinner started the company in her 50s after spending decades as a chef, cooking show host, gourmet restaurateur and cookbook author. We caught up with her to learn about her backstory and what's on the horizon for her brand.



Q What inspired you to launch Miyoko's Creamery?

I wrote a book in 2012 called *Artisan Vegan Cheese* (Book Publishing, 2012) that became a bestseller. Just like dairy cheese, making vegan cheese takes days of fermentation, brining and aging. People kept saying, "I love the vegan cheese, I love the way you've taught me how to make real cheese out of plant milk. But it's a hassle—can't you just start a company?" I heard that so many times that I finally just said, "OK, I'll do it."

*** How do your recipes' proprietary methods make your vegan products different from competitors?**
We've expanded on the fairly rudimentary recipes in my cookbook and developed the commercialization piece of

it. We understand more of the science behind why certain plant milks—such as those made from oats, cashews and legumes—behave a certain way and how the proteins, fats and carbohydrates work. Most companies making vegan cheese just use oil and starch. We're making plant milk, fermenting it and turning it into cheese on a large scale.

* What advice can you give to others who aren't vegan but want to eat more plant-based?

Everyone is a "pre-vegan," on their own path to figuring out how they can change their diet to impact not only their own health, but

the health of the planet, other people and animals. The best thing we can do is provide them with not only information, but inspiration through recipes and different foods.

* Forbes and the United Nations recognized you as a vegan revolutionary. What does this term mean to you?

I have the slogan "Phenomenally Vegan" tattooed on my arm. People asked why I used "vegan" because of its baggage. I'm trying to change that, to show that it's phenomenal! When people go vegan, they enlarge their food choices, not limit them. They start discovering foods they never even thought about before. They also get healthier and become a

superhero because they're saving animals and the planet. Being vegan is kind of like being in a club, where there's a really deep connection based on a philosophical value of, "What can we do to make the world better?"

* What's next for your brand?

I'm going to be more visible in the brand. I'm also going to do more cooking shows. Last year, I did a one-hour Facebook Live show called "Miyoko's Home Comfort" every day for four months, then three times a week, then weekly—for over a year. It was just me in my kitchen with my daughter filming me. I think that was part of the charm—it was so organic and real. So we're going to do something a little bigger, professionally filmed.

