

A Mom's Journey From "Food Babe" To Overcoming Her "Food Fears"

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My guest post today is by Golden Carter. Golden talks about her journey as a mom trying to make the best decisions on what to feed her family. She talks about the real fear she had about food perpetuated by people like the "Food Babe" and realizes now how unreasonable that fear was. Follow her story. I believe many can relate to her story because I know I did. These are her words and her journey. . .

I like to think of myself as a reasonable person. I like evidence. I like science. I enjoy reading about the next exciting things in science like "NASA's New Orion Spacecraft Completes First Spaceflight Test." I am particularly fond of that one because my son is named Orion. I would so love it if he became interested in space. He is four years old. He could actually be one of those people that goes to Mars. Yet I was fooled by nonsense. I fell into a pit of scary "chemicals in your food will kill you!" here or "nitrates cause cancer!" there. Food dyes were going to give my kids ADHD and GMOs were going to cause them to have autism, according to the Institute for Responsible Technology. All of these things were in articles I had read when I decided that my children and I needed to change our eating habits from junk food and processed meals to a more "healthy" diet.

My husband and I started out poor. We were teenage parents. He joined the military to support us. We had two kids and ate essentially ramen noodles and hotdogs for two years. My husband was deployed and returned. Another child was born and our poor eating habits continued. We ate boxed meals like Hamburger Helper, Kraft Macaroni and Cheese, and Rice A Roni. I rarely bought any fresh vegetables. My husband hated them and we really couldn't afford them anyway. My husband deployed again. I found out I was pregnant the day after he left. I was back home with family throughout the deployment. We still ate pretty much the same types of foods, but with a more home cooked flare. I would make meatloafs like my mom did. Not everything came from a box all the time. I had computer access much more frequently than I had ever had before. I kept track of my pregnancy progression and had access to more food information than I had before. We were always on WIC before, too, but their information never sunk in as much as what came from the internet. Or rather, it didn't scare me.

I read a lot of the information, but I didn't put much of it into use. I don't really remember much of any of what I read at that time besides the standard pregnancy related "don't drink caffeine" or "avoid lunch meat." It wasn't until after my husband had returned home and we had returned back to our own home in Virginia that the dietary changes really started weighing on my mind. We rarely ate vegetables and the websites I read said that you were supposed to be eating at least five to

eight servings a day. At least one man, Dale Pinnock, believes we are supposed to be eating twenty servings of fruit per day. So, I looked into getting more vegetables and fruit into our diets and that lead me into some things I wish I had never seen.

Personal Note From Minnesota Farm Living: Before reading the next section I felt like I needed to address some of Golden's statements. I agree there are awful videos from livestock farms. I am outraged by any type of animal abuse. But as I have said numerous times before, the vast majority of farmers take very good care of their animals. I am not editing her story because this is her personal view, but I felt I needed to address issues Golden brought up.

Factory farming. I saw awful videos. I won't go into it here, but I will say that it lead me straight into veganism cold turkey (pun not intended, really.) This was really difficult for my kids. My husband straight up told me he was not going to do it. So, I spent our food budget on two different meal plans each pay day for about three months. Food was wasted because the kids hated it and absolutely refused to eat most of it. I actually did like quite a bit of the food. My husband refused to try any of the meals. We spent too much money on food. At the time, we were in a better place financially than we had been at the beginning, but not well enough to be spending \$1000 a month on food. Veganism, and I am not going to say I discredit it or dislike it, had me convinced that I could save the world. I needed to keep eating only plants or it would be my fault that the animals were being tortured. I needed to eat only plants or it would be my fault that the world was going into environmental disaster. It was at this point that I began checking every single label of every food item that came into the house. I had to. There could be no product that contained animal ingredients. This was time consuming at the grocery store with four kids, but I did it every single time.

I started shopping at natural food stores. I spent more money than I would like to admit in those places. I fell for the "removes toxins" claim on most products. I switched my son to cloth diapers around this time as well. I still have mixed feelings about those. (TMI moment here) I also switched myself to cloth pads. I do have to admit that I never went back after that. They were simply more comfortable. Sorry, fellow science lovers.

I started making my own bread, muffins, brownies, cookies, and basically any other foods I could to try to get the kids to like the vegan food, but they still didn't go for most of it. So, I switched back to animal products and went for "clean" approach. I followed websites and blogs that advocated for living a "Clean" lifestyle. Clean eating is eating only whole foods, nothing processed or containing "chemicals." I was terrified of "chemicals." Eventually, that led to the Food Babe. Vani Hari is "food activist." She has a fairly famous blog and calls herself the Food Babe. I didn't follow her religiously, but I did subscribe to her newsletter and I think I liked her Facebook page at one point, but I never commented on it. I found her because someone had shared a quote of hers on Facebook that said "If you can't pronounce it, you shouldn't eat it!" I thought that was brilliant! Along with that quote, another rule in clean eating was that the ingredient list should be no longer than five items total. So, again with the checking of every single label. I had to make sure the

ingredients were pronounceable, and that the list was no more than five ingredients long. Bonus points if it happened to be vegan because I still felt guilty about the animals. I still do feel guilty about eating meat, actually. My husband was a tad more on board with clean eating. He started to eat lettuce more and raw spinach. The kids were still very picky, but some meals were a success like coconut crispy chicken fingers or loaded potato soup in a bread bowl.

Clean eating was all about avoiding the nasty GMOs, though. So, I did that, too. I bought organic food when I could. I looked for the GMO Project stamp on my soy milk. I went to farmer's markets, even. I even drove to an actual farm three hours away from my house just to buy eggs.

This was one thing, though, that I wasn't sure about. Sure, I saw the Natural News articles. I admit that I did share them back then. Even then, though, I gave side eye to some of the things that were said. When people started saying that GMOs were responsible for cancer, autism, ADHD, eczema, asthma, and basically anything else under the sun, I decided to investigate for myself.

I stopped listening to Food Babe. I stopped listening to 100 Days of Real Food, and every other blog and website I had subscribed to. In fact, I went and unsubscribed to all of their newsletters. Because when I did look, I found not a single peer reviewed journal to back up any of those claims. They used the Seralini Rat study several times as a claim, even though that study has been discredited. Those rats were genetically predisposed to cancer. I lost my critical thinking skills when it came to this whole healthy eating thing.

I drove myself crazy just trying to do the right thing. I was so stressed out just about food that I would sometimes cry about it. It shouldn't be that difficult to just feed a meal to my family. Yet, these internet "food activists" had me so blinded that I believed it all. I believed them over actual scientists. Scientists are just in the pockets of Big Ag, right?

I will say that I am happy to have made it through that relatively alright. My kids do eat a bit better now. My husband eats spinach. I make better meals and more of them are not from boxes. I am far *less* stressed these days about food now that I don't have to worry about every single ingredient coming into the house. I do still read food labels out of habit but I don't read every single one.

And . . . I just had some Cheez-Its. ;)

Here are some people/websites/blogs I follow to help me through my learning journey about GMOs:

[Kevin Folta](#) - Public scientist and educator interested in teaching the hard scientific information about the strengths and limitations of biotechnology.

Minnesota Farm Living

Connecting Consumers with those who grow your food
<http://www.mnfarmliving.com>

Biofortified - Biology Fortified, Inc. is an independent, non-profit organization devoted to providing factual information and fostering discussion about issues in biology, with a particular emphasis on plant genetics and genetic engineering in agriculture.

[GMOAnswers.com](#) is an initiative committed to responding to your questions about how food is grown.

CommonGround - A website where moms can go to get answers on how their food is raised or grown.

Ask The Farmers - A direct connection to farmers to get the truth about how food is raised and grown.

Truth About Trade and Technology - Truth About Trade & Technology (TATT) is a nonprofit advocacy group led by farmers who support freer trade and a farmers freedom to choose the tools, technologies and strategies they need to maximize productivity and profitability in a sustainable manner.

[This is Why It's Okay to Feed Your Family GMOs.](#)

[Why I Am Pro-GMO](#)

[Is It Time To Relook at GMOs?](#)

[10 Things I Wish the Food Babe Knew](#)

[What I Wish People Knew About Pig Farming](#)