



# Cosmic, Imaginative, and Fresh Meet the Memphis Veganistas

BY JENNIFER CHANDLER  
PHOTOS BY MELISSA PETERSEN

# Veganista

## Nevada Presley

### Get Fresh Memphis

“Delicious, healthy meals for people on the go;” that’s how Nevada Presley enthusiastically describes her new business.

Nevada is one of those people who bounces into a room with an energy that is contagious. “I love being a vegan. I wouldn’t trade my lifestyle for anything. I feel great!” she exclaims. And you know what? It shows.

Originally from Colorado, Nevada moved back to Memphis for the second time last spring. She had lived in Memphis about a decade ago before heading back home to Denver to work at Whole Foods. While in Denver, Nevada enrolled in a four-month program to become a Certified Natural Foods Chef. After completing that program in December 2010, she knew she wanted to open her own business and decided that Memphis would be the perfect place.

When she first arrived in Memphis, Nevada worked as a personal chef, preparing vegan and vegetarian meals for her clients. She quickly discovered that people desired more ideas about what to eat. “People are hungry for knowledge and ideas on how to be a vegetarian or vegan,” Nevada explains of her decision to expand her business.

Nevada first became a vegetarian 21 years ago and in 2007 decided to take her lifestyle change one step further and become a vegan. “The reason I make this lifestyle choice has evolved over the years,” she explains. “In college, I started cooking for myself and just never prepared meat. When I became a vegan, I swore off processed foods and discovered I loved to cook.”

As part of her research into the health benefits of veganism, Nevada discovered that many of the vegan options for people who are busy or on-the-go are frozen meals where all the nutrients are processed out. “With my business, I want to provide options to help folks to eat the nutrient-dense, whole foods that they need.”

Located inside the First Congregational Church in the Cooper-Young neighborhood, Get Fresh Memphis is a prepared-food business that offers an all-vegetarian menu with many vegan options.

“I try to use seasonal and local ingredients in our dishes,” says Nevada. “Food that doesn’t have to travel long distances is healthier, and better for you and the planet.” And with the Cooper-Young Community Farmers Market and the Tsunami Winter Farmers Market basically right outside her kitchen door, using local ingredients is easy.

Get Fresh Memphis menu items change weekly. Choices include such dishes as Kale and White Bean Soup with a Vegan Whole Grain Muffin and Quinoa Spinach Casserole with a Mediterranean Edamame Salad. Nevada also offers a selection of homemade, no-sugar breakfast bars and all-natural energy squares for a healthy and quick on-the-go breakfast and snack option. In a hurry? No worries. Get Fresh Memphis offers pick-up for those who call-in orders, as well as delivery for those who don’t want to venture out to eat.

“If the country would just cook, many of our lifestyle diseases would be cured.” That’s Nevada’s sentiment about the benefits of veg-

anism and elimination of processed foods from our diet. And while the reality may be that not everyone will cook a balanced, healthful meal, we now have an option — a home-cooked meal prepared by Nevada’s loving hands. *eM*

#### Get Fresh Memphis

www.getfreshmemphis.com • 303-506-5576  
1000 South Cooper

### ASIAN CUCUMBER SALAD

From Nevada Presley  
Get Fresh Memphis

#### For the dressing

- 6 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons brown rice vinegar
- ½ teaspoon curry powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper

#### For the salad

- 2 cucumbers, unpeeled and thinly sliced
- ½ cup red cabbage, thinly sliced
- ½ cup carrots, julienned

Combine all of the ingredients for the dressing in a blender and pulse to combine. Place the cucumbers, cabbage and carrots in a large salad bowl. Pour the dressing over the vegetables and toss to combine. Serves 6

# Veganista

## Ashley Dunn

### Cosmic Coconut

### Organic Juice Bar & Café

Ashley Dunn's journey to veganism was set on course about four years ago, not by a space captain as her business name would suggest, but by a yogi. "At a yoga class, the yoga instructor had said that no matter how humanely the process is done, the animals know they are about to die. The end result is meat full of unhealthy cortisol and stress hormones." Ashley says that statement got her thinking and it was at that point she made the decision to stop eating beef, chicken, and pork.

A few years later, that same yoga instructor recommended that Ashley consider becoming a vegan. Ashley admits that the decision was for moral reasons, but she quickly realized her choice would make her feel better. "As soon as I eliminated dairy from my diet, I felt better and my stomach became less 'angry,'" she explains.

Her original decision to forgo meat products was based on ethics and animal cruelty. However, when her father became ill, Ashley began a quest to understand the health benefits of veganism. She began in-depth research into how foods nourish our bodies.

Cosmic Coconut was the solution for a void Ashley felt there was in Memphis. There was no option for a quick place to go — vegan or not — for freshly pressed organic juices and healthy raw snacks.

Inspired by her friend Jenifer Kuntz's business, Raw & Juicy in Seaside, Florida, Ashley decided to create a similar concept in her hometown. She found an ideal location for her dream business in the heart of East

Memphis in Sanderlin Centre and opened her doors in April 2011. Cosmic Coconut serves organic juices, smoothies, coffees, and tea. Everything served is vegan. "I put the vegan label on everything I serve so that people can come here and know they are safe. No dairy products or eggs are in my kitchen."

In addition to being vegan, nearly 100 percent of the items served at Cosmic Coconut are organic. "It's about wellness," Ashley explains, "You get more nutrition from your food when it's organic, as well as the benefit of fewer toxins."

The focus of Ashley's menu is on freshly pressed juices and smoothies. Made to order, every concoction on the menu boasts a fun name (such as Mango Mama and Chimps in Space) and is labeled to let you know which chakra in your body will benefit from that particular blend of fruits and vegetables. "Your chakra is the energy system that runs through your physical body," explains Ashley, "If you need a boost for a certain area of your body; you consume the produce that complements that area. For example, the vibration of a carrot corresponds with the vibration of the solar plexus."

In addition to juices and smoothies, Cosmic Coconut also offers breakfast and lunch specials. For breakfast, items like steel-cut oats with fresh berries and acai bowls with acai purée, bananas, coconut milk, and granola are sure to start your day off on a healthy foot. For lunch, Ashley offers a limited, yet satisfying, menu. "I love our homemade vegetable soup.

It has sweet potatoes, carrots, bell pepper, garlic, onions, celery and lentils," Ashley chimes in when discussing her lunch offerings.

All You Need is Love (kale, raspberries, and strawberries blended in fresh apple juice) is Ashley's favorite offering on her menu. Memphis is lucky Ashley decided to share her love of good foods with us. *eM*

#### Cosmic Coconut Organic Juice Bar & Café

www.cosmiccoconut.com • 901-729-7134  
5101 Sanderlin Avenue, Suite 104 B

#### GUACAMOLE

From Ashley Dunn, Cosmic Coconut

- 2 avocados, halved, peeled and finely chopped
- ¼ onion, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato, finely diced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Dash of cayenne pepper

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Serve with veggie sticks or corn chips. Serves 4





# Veganista

## Kristie Jeffrey

### Imagine Vegan Café

Imagine a place where you can go and enjoy a hamburger or hot dog while still following a vegan diet. This is the place that Kristie Jeffrey and her husband, Adam, have created.

“I know how hard it is to make the transition to a vegan diet,” explains Kristie. “When you first make the change, you miss the comfort foods like burgers, mac-n-cheese, and pizza. We opened Imagine Vegan Café to offer options to omnivores who are trying to adopt a vegan and vegetarian lifestyle.”

better I felt.” She is also quick to point out that, in addition to feeling better physically, she feels good about the change in her heart, too. “I did a lot of research into the dairy industry and what I discovered is mind-blowing. That research helped confirm that we had made the right decision.”

Flash forward to Valentine’s Day 2011. Kristie and her husband were trying to decide where to eat out...not an easy task for a vegan. “We had always joked about how we

So it’s no surprise that Imagine Vegan Café is a family business through and through. The entire staff is family, including Kristie’s sister, Kimberly, who can often be found in the kitchen or serving customers; and Kristie’s mom, Karen, who comes in and helps out. There’s even a playroom in the corner of the dining room where the Jeffreys’ young children play throughout the day, much to the delight of customers’ little ones who join in the fun while waiting for their meal.

Kristie is quick to point out that she is not a trained chef. “I order a lot of things into the store. I have spent a lot of time looking for the best vegan foods available. If I find a good product, I use it.”

“I don’t want to compete with other folks who are really good at raw foods or health foods, for example,” Kristie explains, “I want to offer something different for the customers who need us.” *eM*

**vegan [vē-gən] • noun • a strict vegetarian who consumes no animal food or dairy products**

*Merriam-Webster’s Medical Dictionary*

Kristie offers her customers a taste of the best vegan foods available. “I want people to know that there are more options for a vegan than a vegetable plate. If you crave pizza, you can still have that.”

Speaking of pizza, Kristie confesses that giving up cheese was her most difficult obstacle to becoming vegan. A 15-year vegetarian, Kristie and Adam made the decision to adopt the vegan lifestyle about three years ago. “When Adam first suggested the change, I was reluctant because I survived on cheese. But as soon as we made the change, I immediately loved the lifestyle. I loved how much

thought we needed to open a vegan restaurant and that night we decided to actually do it.” New to the restaurant business, they just dove into the project headfirst and opened the doors of their Cooper-Young restaurant on April 30.

Family was an influential reason that Kristie and Adam decided to open their restaurant. “We wanted to offer our daughter, Savannah, a place where she could go and eat foods like chicken nuggets and hot dogs that her friends were eating. I did not want her to feel like she is missing out.”

#### **Imagine Vegan Café**

www.imaginevegancafe.com  
901-654-3455 • 2156 Young Avenue