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Margaret Ellen "Peggy" Raisglid '96

How does an engineer with a doctorate in chemistry go from solid-phase extraction research — featured internationally, no less — to owning an all-vegan restaurant in Tucson?

In part, it was that skill in chemistry that led Margaret "Peggy" Raisglid '96 to experiment with recipes in her own kitchen. As the owner of Lovin' Spoonfuls, Raisglid says, "I want to show people that vegan cuisine is something tasty, not grainy. I always enjoy cooking, and I enjoy the challenge of being able to create some of the old familiar dishes using new, different, healthful ingredients that appeal to vegans, vegetarians, and nonvegetarians alike" she said.

In fact, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals named Lovin' Spoonfuls its Restaurant of the Month and noted that, "Raisglid is determined to take the intimidation factor out of meatless dining by offering vegan versions of everything from Southwestern favorites to popular dishes from around the world. Even the warm and inviting décor, with its abundance of wood and exposed brick, says, 'Welcome!'"

The road to owning Lovin' Spoonfuls, which Raisglid opened one year ago, was circuitous. Raised in New York City, she worked for many years as an engineer with Mobil. Raisglid moved to Tucson after accepting a research position at the University of Arizona, where she also conducted worldwide technical training for International Sorbent Technology. During these years, Raisglid completed her doctorate in chemistry at the UA. Her work in solid-phase extraction was featured at many international symposiums and in research publications, and Raisglid spoke internationally on her research.

Raisglid became the director of better learning at Persistech, where she developed Infrature, an e-learning training-tool package used by many worldwide corporations, including Shell Exploration and Production, part of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group, the world's fourth-largest corporation. She also managed the instructional design of computer-based training and became the vice president of course development at Mentix.

A dedicated vegan of nearly 17 years, Raisglid actively promotes animal rights and veganism in speeches at Tucson-area churches and schools, speaks at demonstrations, and is the vice president of the Vegetarian Resource Group of Tucson. This commitment arose from her long-held belief that, "We have allowed the medical and pharmaceutical industries to convince us that we can eat anything we want, and they will just give us a pill for a cure or slice us open to remove the damage. By now, we're all aware that there's a link between diet and disease — for example, heart disease and red meat.

"We draw a line based on who we think counts and who doesn't count. We each have to draw the line wherever we feel comfortable, but no matter where we draw that line, the ones on the other side of that line get hurt. If we are truly superior and of higher moral status and higher intellect, and more aware of others' suffering, is there not an even greater onus upon us to walk as gently as we can among our fellow creatures?"

Such thoughts led to the birth of her restaurant. When asked what her goal for the restaurant is, Raisglid emphatically expressed, "Outreach, absolutely! Outreach!"

— Jennifer Rich