

Rip Esselstyn:

The heart of a hero, what does that mean exactly? Here at The Plant-Strong Podcast, as you can tell from all of my guests, it means throwing your whole being behind a mission. It means putting health before everything else, and not just our own health, but the health of animals, the planet, and perhaps most importantly, our children's health. You'd be hard pressed to find a bigger advocate in this work than Suzy Amis Cameron. For over 30 years, Suzy has dedicated herself to caring for the health and sustainability of our planet, and Suzy is unapologetically passionate about plant based foods as a solution to so many of the issues we face today. She's the author of *The OMD Plan: Swap One Meal a Day to Save Your Health and Save the Planet*. This book was so powerful that she was featured as a guest with Oprah on SuperSoul Sunday.

Rip Esselstyn:

Suzy, along with her sister, Rebecca, also founded the MUSE School in 2005, the first school in the country to be 100% solar powered, zero waste with 100% organic plant-based lunch programs. Perhaps most importantly, Suzy is also responsible for initiating her husband, James Cameron, the world-famous director of the *Titanic* and *Avatar* into a whole food plant-based lifestyle after watching *Forks Over Knives* together in 2013. If not for this life changing moment, I think it's fair to say the documentary, *The Game Changers*, which was executive produced by James and Suzy Amis Cameron may never have had the global impact it's having right now. In fact, it is the most watched documentary of all time with almost a hundred million downloads and counting. Thank you, Suzy, for your tireless efforts on these and all of your plant-based ventures that we're going to learn about today. I can't wait for you to get to know Suzy. Let's get going.

Rip Esselstyn:

We surveyed the attendees at our recent virtual live events, and the response overwhelmingly was not more cowbell. It was more kitchen inspiration, more demos, more Jane, more Ann, more Esselstyn. You're the first to know. We are super excited to announce our first Plant Strong primer kitchen rescue. It's going to be held Friday and Saturday, October 23rd and 24th. This live interactive workshop will provide all the tools that you need to set yourself and your kitchen up for success in the Plant-Strong lifestyle. I'll be headed to Cleveland to spend the weekend with my family. We're saving you a seat at the famous lazy Susan table at the knob that you will want to get to know. We're going to clean out your pantry and help you restock with the world's strongest nutrition. We're going to make dozens of recipes and show you how easy and delicious it is to eat this way.

Rip Esselstyn:

Every ticket includes video access after the event, so you can watch again and again. Register for early bird pricing by visiting primer.plantstrong.com today.

Rip Esselstyn:

I am here with Suzy Amis Cameron. I don't think I've seen you in probably four years, and I want to talk about the three times that you and I have been together, that we've met each other. But before I do, I first want to talk about ... I'd like to talk about you and Jim. So, your background, and you tell me if I get this right, you grew up in Oklahoma.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Correct.

Rip Esselstyn:

It may be 16 or so, your brother was playing with cameras, took a photo of you, your aunt Betsy got a hold of it, took it to a modeling agency. The next thing you know, you're on the Merv Griffin Show. He's basically saying, this is the face of the '80s. It launched you into this career in acting, and before you know it, you're doing Fandango with Kevin Costner, and then you're doing the Titanic with James Cameron.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Correct.

Rip Esselstyn:

Did James actually pick you out to be on the Titanic?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

The story is actually crazy because there was another actor that was supposed to play Bill Paxton's role. This actor, he was much older, and he pulled out at the last minute. Jim had to recast it. He called up his buddy, Bill Paxton, and said, "Hey dude, will you come in and do this film?" Because they'd worked together on multiple films already and were really good friends. He had to cast the so-called love interest in the same age range. He pulled together this last-minute casting, frankly. I was coming off of a film in Albuquerque, in Santa Fe, and I was in the Albuquerque Airport. It was Suzy Amis pick up the white courtesy phone back when they ... I don't even know if they still have white courtesy phones, but pick up the white courtesy phone, and I picked up the white courtesy phone. My manager said, "You have a meeting with James Cameron at seven o'clock tonight when you arrive."

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I said, "Now, who is he again?" She said, "Oh the Terminator and Aliens and The Abyss." I was like, "Oh, I love the Abyss." Anyway, I went in, and I actually had in my mind someone else. I was envisioning an older man that ... I'm not going to name any names, but I had an idea of somebody else that ... Anyway, this long willowy blonde guy came waltzing in and said, "Hi, I'm Jim." I just wasn't expecting that." Typically, those kinds of meetings are about, I don't know, 20 minutes, sort of a meet and greet kind of a thing. We ended up talking for an hour and 45 minutes. I can't say it was love at first sight, but I totally thought he was a cool guy, for sure.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I think it was mutual. After about an hour and a half, he said, "Well, we probably should talk about the movie because we'd been talking about motorcycles and guns and airplanes and helicopters, all the cool, groovy stuff."

Rip Esselstyn:

He probably doesn't talk to many, I would imagine, women about that kind of stuff.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

No, probably not. No, and I have that in my vocabulary because it's in my background. Then, he basically told me a little bit about the role, handed a script to me. It was the fattest script I'd ever seen. It was 145 pages, and said, "You're going to have to read this tonight because you'll have to leave in 48 hours and so we need to know by tomorrow." I saw the list actresses that he had met that night, and I was on a plane 48 hours later. It was a two-and-a-half-week gig. By the end of it, we were so professional. We didn't tip our hands until the day I was wrapped. Anyway ...

Rip Esselstyn:

That role that you had, it was two and a half weeks long? Is that what you ...

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

Okay. Didn't it take nine years to do the film or something ridiculous?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Well, with all of his research and his dives to Titanic and all of that, yes, it did take a long time, but I was just in the present-day portion of the film. My shooting, it literally only took two and a half, like three weeks.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yep. Okay. You guys started dating, and in your book that I want to talk about in great length, OMD, you talk about how you started dating and his cupboard was atrocious looking. Can you tell me what that cupboard looked like?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

It had like hungry man and like Wolf brand chili, stuff like that, and these protein bars. I think the first time that I happened to be over there around breakfast time, I went in and there was literally nothing in there except for Rice Krispies, and even Rice Krispies for me, because there's BHT in the packaging. I'm so specific about what I put in my body, and I certainly have been for, I don't know, 30 years or so. Anyway, it was the only thing that I could even imagine eating, and it's actually become a tradition of ours to eat Rice Krispies on our anniversary.

Rip Esselstyn:

Nice. You, on the other hand, so Jim is eating a smorgasbord of just nothing that's of bluh. You're more of a vegetarian, right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I can't say I was really vegetarian, although there have been so many times through my life, because I was trying to get rid of allergies and being a model and being an actress, it's the pressure, the social pressures that happen, especially for a woman in those businesses, to be slim and trim and make sure you've had enough sleep, and you fit in the clothes and all of that. I was always very specific about what I was eating. I would definitely, during times I was vegetarian and vegan, but I just didn't ever put a

name on it. I didn't put a title on it. But yeah, during that time, I definitely wasn't, but what I was doing was making ... because my little boy was six at the time.

Rip Esselstyn:

Jasper.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Jasper, who has a baby now.

Rip Esselstyn:

Wow. I can't believe that.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I know, and he's so sweet. Anyway, so whole world was about being organic and dye-free and pesticide free and all the cleaning products, hair products, body products. I had taken time to phase into this world and learning more and more about it. I didn't let anything, certainly nothing past Jasper's lips that wasn't organic. But I thought we were doing all the right stuff, the grass-fed meat and free-range chicken and cage free eggs and organic dairy. We thought we were doing it all right.

Rip Esselstyn:

Then, on one fateful day, the date I believe was May 6th, 2012, you watched a documentary that, in your words, irrevocably changed you.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

What happened?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

It changed me. It changed my life.

Rip Esselstyn:

What was the documentary?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

The documentary was Forks Over Knives. I am very vocal about that, to people, they always want to know, what pushed us over the edge? It was absolutely that I was watching. A friend of mine had ... it was actually a consultant that works with us at MUSE. He's been plant-based for years and years and years. He kept saying to me, "Suzy, you got to watch Forks Over Knives." When somebody tells me to watch a movie or read a book, I get it. I have stacks of stuff, but I eventually get to it, so it sat in my office for about nine months. I grabbed it, I went down to the gym, I was on the treadmill watching this movie, and I literally had to get off.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I felt so betrayed. I felt angry that we had been advertised to our whole lives, that we need meat to be strong and healthy, and that we need milk and dairy to have strong bones. My mom has severe osteoporosis. I wish she would listen to me, but she won't. My whole life, she was saying to us, and especially the girls, "You girls drink your milk, you need to make sure you drink your milk." I grew up thinking that we needed all of that.

Rip Esselstyn:

Well, I think we all did. Then, you were so moved by Forks Over Knives that you, I guess you wanted Jim to watch it, right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah. What ended up happening was ... We both have heart disease and cancer in our family, and Jim's mom has a heart disease. My dad died of it two years ago, but they were starting to tell Jim that just prophylactically he needed to start thinking about that because it's genetic and blah, blah, blah. I just kept saying, "No, there's got to be something. I just had this gut feeling that it's something around food. It's like, whatever we're putting in our bodies, it's going to affect us. He would kind of say to me, "Well, babe, listen, you're human and you get older and then you take meds and then you feel like crap, and then you die."

Rip Esselstyn:

Just the way it is.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Just the way it is. I was like, "I don't accept that." When I watched this, it was like laah, it was like the heavens opened up, and this light started shining through, and This was the answer. My heart was pounding, but I grabbed this thing, and I went up to the DVD, and I went up to the house and I found him and I said, "I need an hour and a half of your time tomorrow." He said, "Oh, okay, cool. Where are we going to go?" I'm like, "We're not going to go anywhere. We're going to watch a movie." "Oh, okay, cool. I love movies. What are we going to watch?" I said, "I'm not going to tell you. We're just going to watch it and then let's have a conversation about it." He's like, "Okay." We did, and we finished it and from the time-

Rip Esselstyn:

Let me ask you this. While you're watching it, are you like going okay, what's he thinking? Are you checking him out?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Oh, you have no ... yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

Trying to read his body language.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

My heart was pounding. He had just come back from a big trip in Asia, so he was a little jet lagged. I sat really close to him, and I moved a lot to make sure he was staying awake, but he was. He watched every second of it. From the time we got from the TV room into the kitchen, he said, "We shouldn't have any more animal products in the house." 24 hours later, our kitchen was completely cleaned out. We had goats up at our ranch, and so we had goat yogurt and goat cheese and goat milk. It was really, really good. We shut down that production within 48 hours. We did that, and then we became born again, and we were up on our soap box telling everybody that they just needed to go cold turkey. That's what they needed to do, because they-

Rip Esselstyn:

Cold kale.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Cold kale. Oh, that's good. That's good. I'll start to use that instead. I know. I usually say like whole hog or cold turkey, you know what I mean? It's probably my Oklahoma roots coming out, but yeah, we were just telling everybody, "Just do it, just clean up your kitchen and do it overnight and you'll feel so great. You'll have all this energy. We haven't been sick in seven years.

Rip Esselstyn:

How did that go over with most people?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Oh, it was horrific.

Rip Esselstyn:

Okay.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

They literally would see us and turn around and go running the other way, really. We had a couple of holiday dinners, and family members would either not show up at all, or show up two hours later, not hungry because they'd gone off eating turkey somewhere else. We are coming up to Thanksgiving, so it's appropriate. One year, we did say, okay, fine, fine, we will have turkey, so please arrive, and arrive on time. What we had was two live turkeys in the living room.

Rip Esselstyn:

Awesome.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah. It was fun and it was great, and then we had all of the ... I don't actually typically eat, the family loves them. The kids love it and Jim loves it, but the plant-based turkeys and stuff like that. Nobody misses it. In fact, Jim got into an argument with his mom one year because, it was actually at his birthday, because we had one of the plant-based chickens, and his mom swore that it was real chicken. Jim kept saying, "Mom, mom, nothing here is from an animal." She was just adamant about it. "No, this is definitely chicken." People don't miss it. Those great things that they are so fantastic for transition, the plant-based meats and the plant-based cheeses and all of that.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. Now, you and Jim are big environmentalist. Right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

Not only did you have this wake-up call to, wow, I don't have to maybe have heart disease, I don't have to have cancer, I don't have to go down that path. But in addition, you guys were just blown away when you found out, I think, about animal agriculture and the impact that has? Right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Right.

Rip Esselstyn:

Is that, would you say, where you've put a lot of your efforts, is to teach people about the environmental impacts?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Well, at this point, it is my personal purpose in life. It absolutely is. After we watched Forks Over Knives, and I was coming at it only from the health side of it, I had no idea, even though I had been working with the largest environmental NGO in the United States, I won't say their name, but I learned all about deforestation and biodiversity loss and dead zones and ocean acidification and melting glaciers and climate change. I can go on and on and on. No one ever, ever mentioned a word about animal agriculture. It was not long after we went plant-based, Jim knew about animal agriculture, but he just thought, like we all did, well, you need meat and you need dairy, so sorry about your planet kind of thing. But after watching Forks Over Knives, he's like, "Whoa, so we not only don't need this, it's actually really bad for us."

Suzy Amis Cameron:

That's when he started educating me. There was not a lot out there, maybe two or three books, but he fed them all to me, and I started reading them. After watching Forks Over Knives, when I was so furious, this was like ... the other shoe dropped. I was like, what? How in the world could I've been in environmental circles for decades and never known about this? I felt, again, super bamboozled. Anyway Jim, as you know, is a doomsday guy. All of his films are about the end of the world and death and destruction, and we're all going to die. When we first started dating, we were actually on a walk in Oklahoma, and I said something about, "Well, I really hope that dah, dah, dah."

Suzy Amis Cameron:

He said, "I hate that word." I was like, okay. We were just started dating. I was like, okay. He said, "No, I just hate that word." I don't ever use it. I'm like, "All right, okay, fine." I will use it, but ... Anyway, so a couple months ... Not even, I think it was like maybe a month after we went plant-based, we were walking on the beach.

Rip Esselstyn:

Can I interrupt you for a second?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

One of the things in your book that I absolutely loved is when you talk about how you and Jim, you go on these walks on the beach, where you can just sort things out and connect and be like one heartbeat, but the word that you used was it's sacred composting.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Composting.

Rip Esselstyn:

I loved that, but so anyway.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah. Well, it's how we start our date nights, and we religiously have date night. We don't ever go out. We go hide from the kids.

Rip Esselstyn:

How often do you have date nights?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Well, when we're in the same state and country together, every Saturday night, no matter what. We've even actually been able to sort it out where we've had date nights over Zoom calls, because he's in New Zealand right now and we're here, so that's been challenging. Yeah, we always take a walk. We always take a walk and just download and breathe and talk and go through like all the kids and what's happening in the world and the business, dah, dah, dah. Then, by the time we get back home, it's like, yes, we're one heartbeat.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. I think where you were going with that story, and I interrupted you was, you were talking about hope and you were on this walk.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yes. He actually has a t-shirt that says "Hope is not a strategy." He wears it. He likes to wear it on the set a lot or on his big, deep sea expeditions. We were walking along, and said ... He was very quiet, but he stopped and he said, "For the first time in my life, babe, I have hope." I was so dumbfounded to even hear him say this. I literally almost fell into the ocean. He said, "The more people we can inspire to go plant-based, the more we can move the needle on climate change." I had already decided, after watching Forks Over Knives, that I wanted to make documentaries, I wanted to write books, I wanted to, not only for grownups, but for children as well. I was trying to find what the tone of the book was going

to be, what the theme of the book was going to be, and he said that, and I was just ... It's like everything else went away, everything in my sphere went away that wasn't seen through a plant-based lens.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I think the same thing happened for Jim, except for the Avatar films, which they're not about being plant-based at all, but they're definitely about the environment. His set is the first plant-based catered set ever. He did, and he sold it by saying it's OMD, it's one meal a day, which was really cool. They got all of the environmental savings of eating ... They were serving 220 plant-based meals a day, so they were saving an enormous amount of water and carbon. But that's really what put me on this trajectory of, I feel like it's my fourth career or fifth career just reinventing, but I used to come home from these meetings at this environmental NGO, just gutted. I would literally sit in the garage for 15 minutes before I went inside, just gathering like, oh my God.

Rip Esselstyn:

Super depressing.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Oh, it's horrific. It's horrific. Then I'd pull up my bootstraps and walk in and be the cheerleader, and it's all going to be, and we'll clean it up and all of those things, but it really wasn't until I started really getting educated about just how much plant-based eating can help move the needle. It's so empowering for the individual because not everybody can afford a hybrid or an electric car. Not everybody can put in solar or wind. Yes, you can go change your light bulbs and you can recycle, but seriously, how much is that really going to make a difference? I think the other thing that it changed ... Literally, it's just like our whole world, we just did a 180, and all of our businesses, so we divested in multiple businesses and headed into the plant-based world.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

We started investing in farms and seeds, and we built the largest pulse fractionation plant in North America to create plant proteins. I'm now taking the protein starches and fibers, and working with the food center at the University of Saskatchewan to create food products that will be under the OMD brand.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. Now, is that the Verdant Foods?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Verdient, yep.

Rip Esselstyn:

Verdient.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Verdient.

Rip Esselstyn:

Verdient, that's Verdient Foods. Wow. That's fascinating what you guys are doing. You've got the Cameron Family Farms, what exactly is that?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Cameron Family Farms is in New Zealand. Actually, we bought the farm in New Zealand in 2011. That was before we went plant-based. It had two dairies on it. When we went plant-based, we shut down both of the dairies and started an organic veggie operation and cropping. We crop hemp and Linseed and rye-corn, and then we have a big food forest, so we've got, I don't know, 124 different cultivars of apples and citrus. It's huge and amazing. That's Jasper's love child. Cameron Family Farms is ... that's out of New Zealand. Out of that, we opened up a little store called Food Forest Organics in Greytown, New Zealand. It only has plant-based products in it, so it's got a cafe plus a little market, like a little store.

Rip Esselstyn:

Wow.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, so we sell all of our produce there.

Rip Esselstyn:

You got the Cameron Family Farms, you got the Food Forest Organics, you've got the Verdient Foods, and where's that? Is that here in the States?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

That's in Saskatchewan.

Rip Esselstyn:

Okay.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

Okay. Then you've got the Red Carpet Green Dress.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

Right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

What is that right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Red Carpet Green Dress, it's a sustainable dress design contest. It was started in 2009 when we were going through the award season for Avatar. I was desperately looking for clothes that I could ... I don't wish that upon anybody by the way. I had probably three to four, mostly black-tie events, black tie, and then there were some cocktail events and maybe a couple of business events in terms of dress, in terms of attire that we had to show up to. But like three, four to five a week for about three months. I was like, okay, how do I do this in the most sustainable way? Well, I actually found someone who helped me. I'd just borrowed clothes and gave them back.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I did get a couple of pairs of shoes because I had been a mommy for about 10 years and hadn't had on any high heels or fancy things in a long time. I was in my tennis shoes and my little clogs. But I was really surprised that I couldn't find clothes that were made from natural fibers, and that sort of thing. So, when we knew we were going to be going to the Oscars, it's the largest, most watched red carpet in the world. The first thing that they do is they stick, as for a woman, they stick a microphone in your face and ask you what you're wearing. I could have just said Givenchy or [inaudible 00:31:43], or any of those. But I wanted to have story, and we had actually been looking for fundraising ideas for MUSE School because 50% of our children are on financial aid, and we're here at MUSE School actually doing this podcast.

Rip Esselstyn:

We are, and we need to talk about the MUSE School, and we need to talk about OMD.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Anyway, I wore the first dress and found out just how difficult it is to find sustainable fabric. We did find something called Peace Silk, which is a mixture of hemp and silk, but the companies were using children to harvest the silk and giving them slingshots to kill the birds trying to eat the worms. So, it turned into this whole, not only an environmental issue, but a social issue. I really was only going to do it for one year. I just could not continue because it was such ... Again, it's one of those you keep pulling back the peel of the onion, the skin of the onion, and you just keep finding things out. While animal agriculture is the second leading cause of greenhouse gases and climate change, fashion is the second leading cause of pollution on our planet. Not only on our planet, but the dyes that they use and the fabrics that they use ...

Rip Esselstyn:

I had no idea about that.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yes, they are toxic to our bodies. Endocrine disruptors, so they can cause infertility. I know that there was a big thing that happened with Victoria Secret years ago about women getting breast cancer because of the chemicals that were in their bras, and a lot of workout clothes. When you wear the workout clothes and you're exposed to the sun, it actually starts to break down the fabric and your skin is the biggest membrane on your body, your biggest organ on your body, so it starts seeping in and can really affect you.

Rip Esselstyn:

Wow. Yeah.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I know.

Rip Esselstyn:

Well, good.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Just keep digging.

Rip Esselstyn:

Red Carpet Green Dress.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

The first time that we met, you and Jim decided to basically form this summit right out at Hollister Ranch, your place out in Santa Barbara, and I came with my father. There were like 22 people you invited. It was just to have this full day of talking about how can we get the plant based message out to, not only as many people, but I think we were thinking countries, right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, oh absolutely.

Rip Esselstyn:

Just to make a huge-

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Go big or go home.

Rip Esselstyn:

Exactly. But that's when I met you guys. I realized how truly passionate you guys were. This was the real deal. I remember you came up to me and you said, "Rip, I'm going to write a book." I think the seed had

been planted but I was like, "Man go get them. Good luck with that." Here we are changed the world, by OMD changing one meal a day, came out about a year ago. Right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

It did.

Rip Esselstyn:

Wow. I'm telling you, I read this thing. It's a beautiful roadmap for anybody that wants to basically get healthier, do their part to be an environmentalist. The first is kind of the why, and then the second part is kind of the how, and you have the tricks and stuff like that. To me, you just had probably the best person in the world, just endorsing this book. You had Oprah.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yes. I did.

Rip Esselstyn:

Did she take the 30 day challenge, or what did she do exactly?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, the whole thing, I still pinch myself today that even all happened. She completely embraced it, and not only asked me to be on SuperSoul Sunday with her to talk about it, but I found out ... I was sending her an email, maybe it was about a month after I had shot the episode out in Maui. So, she had invited me to come out to Maui to do the episode. She said, "Oh, that's so ..." writing back to me, "Oh, that's so funny. I was just thinking about you today because we're going to transcribe part of the interview and put it in O Magazine and I'm going to be doing the 30 day challenge." Every step of the way, when she asked me to be on SuperSoul Sunday, I literally burst into tears.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I couldn't believe it. She talks about OMD as being graspable. I have such admiration for this woman. I did ask her, I said, "Would it be okay, would you mind if we used graspable because the paperback is coming out?"

Rip Esselstyn:

Oh nice.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

She said, "Well, I don't really endorse books anymore, but what I'd really like to do is take you on SuperSoul Sunday and talk about all of the things that you're doing." My knees almost buckled, and I just started crying, and then it happened. Then she decided to put it in the magazine. Yeah, she did a 30 day challenge. I ended up doing day 16 with her, but just the difference that she has made with all of her followers, just choosing to change one meal a day, and it's one of the things that, just for your listeners, one person changing one of their meals a day to a plant based meal for a year saves close to 200,000 gallons of water and the carbon equivalent of driving from Los Angeles to New York. So, when we get paralyzed about the environment, when we think there's nothing we can do, we look the other way, we stick our head in the sand, every single person has to eat food to survive.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

So, every you put something on your plate, you're either hurting the environment and your health or you're helping the environment and your health. I mentioned it as the second leading cause of greenhouse gases and climate change more than all transportation combined, every car, every airplane, every bus, everything.

Rip Esselstyn:

So, you say it's a second.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Second.

Rip Esselstyn:

What's the first?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Well, energy fossil fuels.

Rip Esselstyn:

As Victoria just said, animals are smart sentient beings who deserve the best treatment and an equal chance at a long vibrant life. In fact, just like a whole food plant based diet will help humans age in reverse, so too will the same diet for our dogs. Wild Earth is that dog food that's packed with clean fuel and environmentally friendly plant-based proteins for your dog. Try today, visit the episode page at plantstrongpodcast.com, and claim up to 50% off your order. You guys did your homework.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Oh yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

Big time.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Oh yeah. We're big. We're kind of science nerds.

Rip Esselstyn:

You can't find a bigger megaphone than Oprah to get this message out. How fantastic for you, how fantastic that Oprah saw the opportunity here to, I think help make a difference. I want to talk to you for a second about OMD and why is it called OMD? Let me string that together with, so I came to the MUSE School probably four years ago, maybe five years ago.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

It's been such a long time.

Rip Esselstyn:

I know. It's nutty. I met you, I met your sister, Rebecca co-founders of MUSE, right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Right.

Rip Esselstyn:

Then also Jeff, who runs a school.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Correct.

Rip Esselstyn:

Correct? You guys were, you wanted to be all plant-based, right?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

And you offer one meal a day, right? Lunch. Is that correct?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Lunch and snack.

Rip Esselstyn:

Okay. Lunch and a snack. What I learned when I came to speak is that just you doing something as simple as asking your staff and also kind of the students and the parents that you're going to be making this change to all plant based because it's completely in alignment with your philosophy, there was a bit of an uproar, a backlash.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Oh, yeah. That's putting it lightly No, it was huge. It was absolutely huge. There was a moment after we started finding out about all of the environment. MUSE is an environmental school. We have five pillars, so it's passionate, inter-spaced learning, and we've got a big communication piece that we use and self-efficacy, and obviously academics is at the top of the list.

Rip Esselstyn:

You founded this about 13 years ago?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

We're in year 14.

Rip Esselstyn:

Year 14, okay.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Year 14. We start at two years old and we go all the way through age 18 now. So, we have graduated four classes now. Anyway, so it was ... Rebecca and I looked at each other. She ended up going plant-based overnight the same way that Jim and I did, she and Jeff did. We looked at each other and we basically said, we can't call ourselves an environmental school and still be serving animal products. So, we made a plan. It was very, very, very thought out. We announced it in January of 14, that by fall of 15, we would be 100% plant-based. So, we took 18 months to educate. We had food committees with the children, food committees with the teachers, food committees with the parents. We created MUSE talks, which you so generously came in and spent the whole day with the children, talking to them in developmentally appropriate ways, and then at nighttime, we invited the grownups, gave them a glass of wine and some beautiful plant based food, and we did that every month.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

You were there, we had authors, we had athletes, we had chefs, we had climate scientists, we had ... I'm missing one, doctors. I just thought we were doing everything right. We still had questions from mommies about their children and their children's brains and their growth. We had like Neal Barnard, which is actually in the book, he actually wrote us a whole document to be able to give to the parents about all the benefits of raising a child that's plant-based. We thought we were doing everything right. We did lose a few teachers over it. They really pushed back and didn't think it was a good idea at all. There was a lot of cleansing going on actually, but fall of 15, when we finally announced it, we lost 50% of our families.

Rip Esselstyn:

50.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

50. There was a moment where I just thought, well, I guess we just killed this school, but at least we did it for the right reason, a good reason. Good news is we quickly regained our enrollment and we've now surpassed it, and people move from all over the United States to come here, to go to the school. And we've had a few families from Europe come in. Things have turned around, but there was a moment when Jeff got really frustrated with the families because they kept pushing back, pushing back, and he just said, "People, you can feed them what you want for breakfast and feed them what you want for dinner, it's one meal a day. It's OMD." That's where OMD was born, and we actually have a huge purple circle in the lodge over at [crosstalk 00:45:01].

Rip Esselstyn:

When he said that, were you like, "That's it?" Or did it [crosstalk 00:45:04].

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Not right away. It wasn't right away. First, what we did was we self-published a tiny little cookbook with our chefs recipes, food that she was making and feeding to the children. We already had a huge seed to table program. We have about 150 raised beds. Depending on what time of year it is, the kids grow up about 60% to 80% of the produce that they're eating every day. So, I've learned to plant it, grow it, harvest it, prepare it, compost it. Anyway, so we did that. I just kept thinking, trying to find the tone, and I had tried to start. You've been there, and you try to start to write a book and you're like, "Oh my God,

where do I start? Okay, my page is still white and empty." Anyway, actually, I went to Jeff because this was ... it was Jeff's brainchild. I just said, "I would really love to take that OMD and recipes and write around it, write about the health, write about the environment and take it to a publisher."

Suzy Amis Cameron:

He gave me his blessing, and that's what happened. The amazing thing, I think when OMD was born, we all of a sudden realized, standing up on your soap box really doesn't work at all. Seriously, people just ... they do run the other way. But when you start talking about, no, you don't have to be perfect. You can just dip your toe in, just lean into it, just try to change one meal a day. It's something as simple as putting almond milk on your cereal instead of cow's milk, or having a grilled bean in veggie burrito, or instead of a beef burrito or tomato sauce on your pasta instead of a meat sauce, or you can use the yummy beyond meat crumbles and put those in there and make yourself a bolognese sauce. But there are so many easy little things that you can do to change.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Before I went out on the road for the book tour, I was nervous. I'm sure you've been here too. The second you go out to start talking about people, about food, you become vulnerable to people poking holes in your science or whatever it is. I'm sure you've been there. So, I prepped myself, even though yes, I've been trained as an actress for many, many years. But I did additional media training, and we pick the book apart and we looked at what kind of difficult questions might they ask me? I've been around the world now. We have it in Portuguese and Spanish and Hungarian, and it's going to be out in French in a couple of months. I've been all around the world and I haven't gotten any of those questions, not one.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

It's because people are like ... What I do get, I show up and they've got their legs crossed and their arms crossed and they're rigid, and they're like, "Eeew, don't talk to me about my food. Don't take my burger away." After I start talking, you can see the body language just relax. It's like, oh, well, that's doable. Well, that seems easy?" Oprah said, "Well, that's graspable. I didn't wrap my brain around that one." That's what you get, because I think when people feel like they have to go cold kale, that if they happen to slip up or happen to fall off the wagon, or however you want to say it, then they just give up. It's like when people start a diet, I mean, it's not a diet, it's a lifestyle change.

Rip Esselstyn:

When I came to the MUSE school, I can't tell you how much I loved talking to all the children. I think my favorite was when I was talking to, I think it might've been like the six and seven year olds or something like that. I said like beans, what are some beans that you guys like? One of them said black beans, and one of them said pinto beans. Then some kid jumped up and he said, jelly beans. And I was like, wow. Then somebody asked me, because I was talking about plant-based milks. One of the kids asked me about, do you know where a baby whale ... does he suck on his mother's nipple? Something like that. I was like, wow, I've never gotten any kind of a question like that before, but that was ... but the kids, love the kids. OMD, I want to talk about some of the tricks that you suggest. One of them is ... So, you talked about nooch, all right? For people that don't know, what is nooch?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Nutritional yeast

Rip Esselstyn:

What do you use it for?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

It gives them ... I have a funny story. It gives, whatever you're eating, it can give it a cheesy flavor. Cheese, think dairy is one of the most difficult things to give up, and now we know why, because it has naturally occurring opiates in it. A piece of cheese is like a block of morphine.

Rip Esselstyn:

We call it dairy crack.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Dairy crack. Exactly. That's good. I might have to use that too.

Rip Esselstyn:

Please do.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, no, it is. It's total crack. It was my drug of choice for sure. When we went plant based and I discovered nooch there was one night where I opened up a brand new package of it and I was literally eating spoonfuls of it. My little girl at the time, she was five at the time, so she came over to me and she said, "Mommy, your face, it has all these red spots on it." Then she was like, "And your hands." My knuckles were red. All of my joints and my face was bright. My ears were on fire.

Rip Esselstyn:

You had an allergic reaction?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Well, it gets better because it's one of the top ingredients of nutritional yeast is niacin. I was having a niacin flush. I don't recommend eating five tablespoons at the same time. But I was trying to feed that craving for cheese. People talk about ... there is OMD I highly recommend leaning into it. The one thing I think that's really challenging to lean into is weaning yourself off of dairy because it is a drug. It's like saying, oh yeah, I'm just going to wean myself off of cocaine, or wean myself off of heroin. You don't do that. You stop. I would recommend, with dairy, and especially if it's your vice, just to stop for maybe a week or two weeks, and then if you want to, try it again and see how it makes you feel. Think about all of the pus and blood that you're consuming. This is what Jim loves to tell people, by the way, so I'm quoting Jim.

Rip Esselstyn:

No, but you have some ... for people that are having a hard time giving up meat and dairy, you have some little tricks. One of them you said is, I think with Jim, you said treat meat like cake. I think that that's brilliant. Can you tell me what you mean by that?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah. So, when we went plant based and he said, "Yeah, yeah, no, I'm all in. I'm totally all in." He said, "But I'm not going to be dogmatic about it, and if I want to have ..." His thing was filet mignon. He said, "I'm not going to be dogmatic, and if I want that ... I'm going to treat meat like birthday cake." I said, "All right." A month after we had been 100%, we went away for our anniversary and getting ready to order room service. He was looking over my shoulder at the menu and he said, "Yeah, yeah, so I'm going to have a filet mignon medium rare." My eyes kind of went up. He said, "What, what, what? I told you. I told you I was gonna treat it like birthday cake." And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm great. Perfect."

Rip Esselstyn:

Knock yourself out.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

That's right. Have fun with that. Anyway, the next ... he ate maybe, and a filet mignon is not huge, he ate maybe a third of it. For the next day and a half, he kept saying that he had a meat hangover.

Rip Esselstyn:

He paid the price.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

He paid the price. Because your enzymes change and then they changed so quickly. Your taste buds change, and your energy. There was one day where I walked in, I said, "Okay, this is going to sound really weird, but do things look brighter to you? Do colors look brighter to you?" He was like, "Yeah, there's this clarity that happens." There's this energy. You were talking about your dad and he's still traveling all over the world and biking all over the place and you do the same thing. I do the same thing. I just feel like ...

Rip Esselstyn:

And we're on, probably what? Zero medications.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Zero.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Zero.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I feel like I'm on fire all the time.

Rip Esselstyn:

I think you and I are roughly the same age, but I won't say that, but yeah.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah. 20 year olds can't keep up. Seriously.

Rip Esselstyn:

No, listen, yeah, I love knocking it, going hard against the 20 year olds, 30 year olds. One of the things you do with your kids in the morning is I think you slice up fruit and then you put out toothpicks.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I do. I was just doing that this morning, actually.

Rip Esselstyn:

Why do you do the toothpicks? What do you find that helps with?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I love to find fun utensils for kids to use. My kids are all teenagers now, and they still love them. So, I'll give them toothpicks. I also have some really fun cocktail picks that have their swords, and I get metal ones because I'm not gonna use plastic obviously, but I've got ones with skulls. I've got ones with horses on them. I've got chopsticks. They love to use chopsticks. Sometimes I'll just give them a bowl of grapes with some chopsticks and they'll eat all of them. They will eat them more than if they have a fork or spoon.

Rip Esselstyn:

That's great. I've got a five year old, a 10 year old and 12 year old, and I completely agree. You got to cut it up. You got to make it exciting, chopstick toothpicks.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, and dippies, they love to dip things, and they love interacting, to do interactive foods.

Rip Esselstyn:

Another thing that I love what you do with your kids is you have this strategy where you get them to try and come shopping with you, prep with you, cook with you. You talk about how you have these different nights. Like you have a pizza bar night, I think it's called.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

You've got a Mexican fiesta night, a pasta night, a spring roll night. I'm looking at this going, this sounds just like my house.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, it's really fun. You just put all the dishes out. Actually the spring rolls, that's what I ended up doing with Oprah of our day 16, is we did the spring roll thing. And you do, you cut up a bunch of vegetables and different things that you want to put in there. Make three to five different dipping sauces. Spring rolls really fun because the rice paper is hard when you start out, and you have to dip it in the water and do that whole thing.

Rip Esselstyn:

Don't do it too long, otherwise it turns into like glue.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, exactly. But yeah, taco night, we do burritos. The pizza's really fun, because you just make individual pizzas and put all of the ingredients out.

Rip Esselstyn:

And everybody can customize it.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah. They just make what they want. Exactly. Yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

I'm going to go to a different subject very quickly here, and that is you in the book talk about hot sex, cold planet.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I do.

Rip Esselstyn:

Can you reveal a little bit more about that?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

It's my favorite subject. Well, it came from ultimately the learning about the fact that erectile dysfunction is the Canary in the coal mine for heart disease. How many people, how many men run to the urologist and tell them that they've got this issue, and the urologist gives them a little blue pill, and they should be telling them to run to their cardiologist. So, it came from that. We ended up having this conversation, and I know we're going to talk about Game Changers, but we talked about this in a very, very early conversation, and you all ended up incorporating that idea into the film. It's been fascinating

to bring this up or just to show ... I've shown, I don't know how many rooms of men, rooms of women, couples together that little scene.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

It's fascinating to watch the reaction. Very often, you'll kind of see the wife elbowing her partner or her husband, and a week later, two weeks later bump into these guys and they're like, "Yeah, well, I'm going to try it. I'm just going to see if ... because I know it's going to make me feel better and I'm thinking I need to probably lose some weight." They never say why, that they're thinking about doing this, but it's definitely ... Jim has a saying, which I don't think I can really say on air, that vegans bleep all night.

Rip Esselstyn:

We liked bleeping. We like bleeping. Bleeping is a good thing.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

We do like bleeping. Bleeping is good.

Rip Esselstyn:

For people that don't know what we're talking about because we kind of been talking around the edges a little bit, you're referring to the scene in the Game Changers where they take the three kind of young college athletes.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Young, healthy ...

Rip Esselstyn:

Young, healthy. Right.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

... college athletes. Yes.

Rip Esselstyn:

To me, what's so brilliant about this move is that it ties in perfectly with your book and how one meal can make a dramatic difference. These guys, and really their erections, the size, the girth, the number you talk about in the book, how using this rigid scan that can measure all these things while they're sleeping. On average, between the three guys, they had a 10.4% harder and bigger erections, and 364% more erections than when they had the meat-based burrito.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, baby.

Rip Esselstyn:

Wow. Yeah baby is right. The Game Changers. That's the third time. The first time I met you was at the summit, the plant-based summit that you guys threw. The second time was when I got to come to the MUSE School and speak to all the kids. Then the third time was when we pitched you and Jim and Maria

on the Game Changers. Believe it or not, I had a small talk with Jim at the plant-based summit about it, but he just wasn't in the space to hear it. You guys were kind enough to take a meeting, and we brought Louie Psihoyos, James and Joseph, the producers, and we pitched it to you guys and you guys were like, you know what? This is a documentary that needs to be made. You guys got behind it full force, and now here we are, probably four years later from when we had that meeting. In your opinion, do you think the Game Changers is moving the needle and going to make a huge difference?

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Absolutely. Absolutely. I wish I would have written the statistic down yesterday, but it was a number one. I think it still is on Apple, or iTunes downloads.

Rip Esselstyn:

What I heard, it's the number one downloaded documentary in iTunes ever.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Ever.

Rip Esselstyn:

Ever, in a day, in a week.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, yeah. Ever. Then, since it dropped on Netflix, and Jim told me this yesterday, so he must be getting stats from Maria or something, but that the Google searches for plant-based products has gone up 350%. That's huge.

Rip Esselstyn:

It's huge.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I don't know. My nephew in Oklahoma, he took all of his ... He has a production company down there. He took all of his buddies, every single one of them has gone plant-based. One of them's lost like 35 pounds. I would venture to guess, and Jim showed it to everyone on the set of Avatar. It was mandatory. They showed it during the hours of shooting, and they went from serving a hundred meals, plant-based meals a day to 220 overnight.

Rip Esselstyn:

People wanted in.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

People wanted in. I would say that in the 90s, 90% of people after they see it are either going 100% right away or they're leaning into it. I'm just going to circle around because most of the time, when we've shown it, it's like, "This is great. How do I do it? And then I just ...

Rip Esselstyn:

OMD.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I hand them my book. OMD because it is, it's a guide for how do you do one meal a day? Change one meal a day. How do you change two? Or how do you blow up your kitchen? It's got recipes.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah, meal plans, recipes.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, and the recipes are easy. They're from family and my children and their shopping lists, but it's real food for real people, and it's easy.

Rip Esselstyn:

Going back to the Game Changers, the thing about the Game Changers is I just think the story arc the way it's told ...

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah, it's gorgeous, it's entertaining. You get to sit there and watch these specimens, gorgeous, amazing bodies.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah, Morgan Mitchell.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I was just going to say, and there are a couple chics in there too, but I think the great thing is men have been told their whole lives that they need meat to be manly, and it's killing them. The main demographic that it's targeting is men, for them to understand, yeah, fine, have some muscles and die young, or change what you're eating and have really great muscles and are really great sex and live a long time.

Rip Esselstyn:

And contribute to the cooling of the planet.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

And contribute to the cooling of the planet. I always tell people, I don't care why they go plant-based, whether they're doing it for the animals, whether they're doing it for their health, or their waistline, or their sex life or the environment, I don't care because everybody wins. It's like a silver bullet. My personal mission is about the environment, because if we don't do something about the environment, it won't matter if we have environmental schools or sustainable dress design contests, or electric cars. None of that. It won't even matter if we're healthy if we don't have a planet to live on.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah. It's got to happen pretty quickly that we get people on board with this.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

That's right. It's urgent, urgent, urgent, urgent.

Rip Esselstyn:

Well, I want to thank you and Jim again for jumping in and being executive producers for the Game Changers.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I'm so proud of that.

Rip Esselstyn:

Your investment in the Game Changers, because up until that point before you guys came on board, we were having some challenges raising the funds and making it happen, but then you guys came on board and all of a sudden, it's like, oh, Jim and Suzy are on board. You know what? We're going to join as well. So, huge. Look where we are now. It's like we were talking about. Is it fair to say that, are you as hopeful as you've been since you and Jim were on that walk on the beach and he said, "Hey, babe, I got some hope?"

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah. Probably more so, because back in 2012, you would even just go into the grocery store and there weren't a lot of plant-based options back then. People weren't really talking about it. They would run the other way. You weren't seeing things in the news. It is in the news every single day now, about animal agriculture and the environment. I don't know how many people I run in ... I met four business managers yesterday, and a third of them were vegan, and the other ones were talking about, they had just seen Game Changers. There is a tipping point, and I learned something today, that when you walked in about the 10% rule, you see. That, even if you have, I have to get this right, even if you have 8% of the population doing something, you're not going to have critical mass and massive change, and you have to hit the 10% mark.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

I think we're getting very, very, very close. It's not just here in the United States. Again, I landed in Madrid a month ago to sell the Spanish version. I was in a very high end hotel. I opened up the room service menu, automatically thinking, okay, I'll just look at the sides, the whole left side of the menu was a vegan menu in Madrid, Spain. Yeah. So, it's there, it's out there. People are talking about it.

Rip Esselstyn:

It's there, it's happening.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

It is happening. It is happening.

Rip Esselstyn:

Well, Suzy, I want to thank you for really having the heart of a hero and being a true game changer. As you said in your book, OMD, you are a woman on a mission, and you are doing amazing things to making

amazing contributions to the effort, to have people save their health, save their waistline and save the planet. So, thank you.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Thank you. Thank you. Very, very early on, when I started picking up books, yours was one of the first books I picked up and read. You inspired me. You inspired Jim. So, I have to thank you for that.

Rip Esselstyn:

Thank you very much.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Yeah.

Rip Esselstyn:

Yeah.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

We're just getting warmed up though, aren't we?

Rip Esselstyn:

We are getting warmed up to cool down the planet.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

That's right.

Rip Esselstyn:

All right.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

That's right.

Rip Esselstyn:

Peace.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Peace out, man.

Rip Esselstyn:

Engine two, keep it plant-strong.

Suzy Amis Cameron:

Okay.

Rip Esselstyn:

OMD, one meal a day. This one simple step helps you lose weight, reverse chronic health concerns, improve overall well-being and slash your environmental footprint in half. The sacrifice is small, but hey, the rewards are monumental. Just like Suzy Amis Cameron is moving the needle, so can you. Sure, our platforms and voices may not be as bold or far reaching as Suzy's, but don't ever let that stop you. The personal choices that you make are more significant than you could ever imagine, and we need more heroes, we need you. The Plant-Strong Podcast team includes Laurie Kortowich, Ami Mackey, Patrick Gavin, Wade Clark and Carrie Barrett. I want to thank my parents, Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, Jr, and Ann Crile Esselstyn for creating a legacy that will be carried on for generations, and being willing to go against the current and trudge upstream to the causation.