

Arnold's Way:

What Do You Want & How Badly Do You Want It?



Story and photos by Brian Rossiter

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At 6:30 the third Saturday night of every month, a crowd of 10 to 50 or more people gathers at Arnold's Way in Lansdale, Pennsylvania for potluck dinners and speaker presentations. Sometimes they completely fill the room, as was the case in July, 2011 when Harley Johnstone and Freelee of www.30BananasADay.com dropped in. The raw-vegan café, store and educational meeting space is one of perhaps just a few of its kind nationwide. Arnold Kauffman began hosting potlucks there 11 years ago, launching them during the final year at his original location, in Philadelphia's Manayunk neighborhood. Now located in the quaint borough of Lansdale, 21 miles outside of the city, folks have been gathering there ever since.

Every month, some new to the rawfoods world enjoy dinner with a cast of many rotating regulars. And every month, Arnold serves up spoonfuls of advice during his version of roll call, in which guests introduce themselves and explain why they're at each potluck.

"It all boils down to—it's not so much fruit and vegetables—what do you want and how badly do you want it?" Arnold says to Karen, who explains her challenges keeping raw to the dozen-plus who gathered on this late-January evening, hours after the region was blanketed by a meek snowstorm.

"What do you want and how badly do you want it?" has become Arnold's go-to catchphrase, replacing "Your body nev-



er makes mistakes." Arnold reveals during an interview earlier in the afternoon that by focusing on what people want, or a goal such as peak health or ramped-up energy, they are more likely to increase the amount of raw foods they consume.

After a few minutes we got to Bill, who expressed that he was here to explore raw foods after having been diagnosed with and undergone medical treatment for a brain tumor. Minutes beforehand, Arnold explained his approach to a rawfoods lifestyle, and Bill asked questions about Chinese medicine.

"I don't know how serious you are. Here's a bag," says Arnold, handing a large clear trash bag to Bill for him to empty the contents of his refrigerator, freezer and cupboards. "Give me a call Monday."



Arnold, who turned 65 in May 2012, once led quite a different life. As with many who radically changed their lives, he rose to go toe-to-toe with a health challenge, one that almost killed him. Married with four children and operating a junk-

food business, Arnold, who describes himself as unhappy at that time because he lacked purpose, suffered two episodes of a racing heart within a month in 1992 and wound up in the same hospital each time. In those days, he consumed a standard American diet with lots of chips, crackers, cookies, candy, coffee and no salads. To compound health matters, he didn't exercise.

Arnold's hospital stays gave him time to think about how he would change, and he bought a used rebounder upon leaving the hospital the second time. He says he recalled *Fit for Life*, which he read a decade earlier, touts rebounders as providing remarkable exercise results. He soon began studying shiatsu, an alternative medicine involving the use of pressure, massage and stretch techniques.

Arnold had opened his Manayunk shop, which sold mostly vitamins, only four months before suffering the racing-heart episodes. He decided to open the store while eating a cheeseburger at a fast-food chain restaurant and reading a newspaper story in which he says David Duke of the Ku Klux Klan was quoted as saying "Jews are a threat to the United States." A Jew, Arnold decided in that moment to fight back by opening 280 health-food stores, one for each million Americans estimated to be living at the time. He hoped each store could influence 100 people and that they'd influence 100 more.

"Somewhere, in my infinite wisdom, I felt if we can change one percent of the population, we can change the world," he says.

Arnold never opened more than one location at a time—except for a brief period in the late '90s when he operated a second location, in Glenside, Pennsylvania, but had to close it after his flagship Manayunk store needed major repairs. It would take several more years for the influence of Arnold's Way to shine through.



It wasn't until 1998 that Arnold, buoyed by a class he took in Natural Hygiene taught by the late Dr. T. C. Fry, went raw vegan. At that time, he began offering rawfoods classes and shifted the core of his shop to raw foods over the next four years, ultimately

deciding not to sell vitamins anymore. In spring 2002, he moved Arnold's Way to Lansdale's Dresher Arcade building and renewed his effort to encourage healthy living and win over rawfooder converts one person at a time. He's helped thousands learn to let their bodies heal themselves of cancer, diabetes and many other health challenges along the way.

"I've got to be a light—day in, day out, day in, day out," he says during the interview. "That's what keeps me on purpose. I believe in life we need a purpose. I think if I didn't have this store, I'd be meandering about."



These days, Arnold's vibrant mix of classes, potlucks, special dinners and movie nights, featuring documentaries such as "Food Matters" and "Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead" attract those curious, those transitioning and those seeking the company of other rawfoodists. Arnold's Way hosted a Raw Passion Seminar led by Dave Klein and Doug Graham several years ago. Arnold and his staff also record success stories and broadcast them to the world on his YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/ArnoldsWay) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/arnold.kauffman). More than 700 of them document visitors' stories, and many feature "Rocky" style comeback stories against all odds—a popular theme in the City of Brotherly Love and its environs.



One of those comeback stories belongs to Shaie Dively of Worcester, Pennsylvania who began working at Arnold's Way in July 2010 after volunteering for two months. She got into





a rawfoods lifestyle to help her heal from mental and physical exhaustion, which she attributes to extreme wi-fi signals she encountered while living in New York City. Learning from Arnold and her parents, who went raw in 2003, has helped Dively stay focused on her goal.

"Arnold's been there for me along with my folks, my friends and the community that I've met at Arnold's Way," she says. "To have somebody be excited that you've gone 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, and they're encouraging, 'Yeah, keep doing it! Keep doing it! Why do you think you want to stop? Why don't you just go for a whole year?' It makes you go, 'You know what? I can do this.'"

Dively's been 100 percent raw since May 2011 and exudes the energy of a "five-year-old," Arnold tells the potluck gatherers while a big smile washes over his face. She says the atmosphere of Arnold's Way is ripe for everyone to learn about a rawfoods lifestyle.

"It's a space where you can come in and there's no judgment," she says. "I tell people, 'It's a great experience. There are people who are at all different stages of the path. We're all there together.' And somebody who's just beginning has such insight about some things that you might have forgotten about being farther down along the road."



Tim Radley of Warminster, Pennsylvania has worked at Arnold's Way for three years and began learning about raw foods while accompanying to the store future *Easy to Be Raw* author and

part-time Arnold's Way employee Megan Elizabeth when she was seeking help a few years ago with adrenal fatigue, leaky gut syndrome, candida overgrowth and chemical sensitivity. Radley, who went mostly raw to enable himself to pursue biking and rock climbing—activities he had enjoyed as a child but found challenging as he aged—appreciates the tight-knit setting of potlucks and compares them with college. However, he says, "You don't graduate from raw foods."

"The thing about the potlucks is that they have a family environment," Tim says. "You get to know people and become friends with them, and you're all here for the same reason, and that's very important, creating that atmosphere."

Pat Smith of Cheltenham, Pennsylvania reveals she was "hooked" after enjoying her first banana whip, a raw-vegan version of ice cream using frozen bananas and other fruit run through a Champion juicer, at Arnold's Way in 2009. A vegetarian friend had taken her there when Smith suffered from high blood pressure and insomnia and was seeking dietary change. She began infusing more raw foods than ever into her diet and going to potlucks.

"I was impressed by seeing so many people living a rawfoods lifestyle," she says, recalling her first potluck experience. "I'd sometimes come in at odd times and see like one or two people having a meal or grabbing their groceries and going. But to actually have a full evening—there were 35, 40 people here—they really did a great job of explaining that 'I went raw and got rid of this' and 'I went raw and now have so much more energy.' That really made me feel like I needed to make it a regular thing so I could keep getting ideas from the dishes they would make to keep my food interesting and also just to remember why I was on this path."



Aaron Van Gossen and his wife, Marina Patrice, of Northeast Philadelphia sought out Arnold's Way, which he describes as "cozy," a few years ago after moving from Southern California, where they explored raw foods. Van Gossen says they've gotten to form and grow several friendships from attending potlucks and enjoy listening to the speakers' stories.

Van Gossen says they took home some tips January 21 from potluck speaker Dorothy Marie Francis, who explained how

juice feasting has improved her health markedly and fueled her creative ambition.

"We were thinking about juicing and were actually asking people questions about juicing and learned things we didn't know," he says. "That inspired us more to get prepared to do our own juice feast."

Emily To of Philadelphia's Grays Ferry neighborhood discovered a listing for the potluck on www.Meetup.com. She had spent time at the Ann Wigmore Institute in Puerto Rico and sought a support group upon her return. Emily had gone partly raw only two months prior to January's potluck.

"It was a good learning experience, and it was very comfortable knowing there are people trying the diet," she says. "I liked how the place itself has a lot of books and information, and I think it's very helpful that Arnold knows a lot. And the fact that he knows the page numbers really is convincing in terms of how this can really benefit you."



Arnold's extraordinary photographic memory serves him well in establishing himself as a knowledgeable resource to those who come through the doors of Arnold's Way. But more than any quality he exudes, it's love that floods the room and

embraces visitors.

Dively says: "Arnold's intention comes from his heart to help people get well and to do it naturally and to let their bodies heal themselves and to not have food interfere with that healing process. And so anybody who walks in the door is likely to hear, 'Yes, I have five minutes,' 'Yes, let me look at your eyes and let me look at your face and let me see where you're at' and 'You can do this.'"



Eight years after reporting on the opening of Arnold's Way in Lansdale for the local daily newspaper, Brian Rossiter found his way back to Arnold in spring 2010 while experiencing incredible health improvements from drinking green smoothies after a lifetime of SAD eating. The Philadelphia resident has been raw since January 2011 and is completing a guidebook on raw foods and healthy living that traces his path to a mostly fruitarian lifestyle and simultaneous recovery from chronic physical pain via The Egoscue Method. His website is www.Fruit-Powered.com.

