

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

## You're bananas! That's nuts!

'Absolutely!' say proponents of raw vegan diet who subsist on uncooked fruit, veggies and seeds

By: **Shamona Harnett**

Posted: **09/25/2012 1:00 AM** | Comments: 0g



[Enlarge Image](#)

*Jeff Golfman, president of Prairie Pulp and Paper Inc., buys fruit and vegetables at St. Leon Gardens on St. Mary's Road. (MIKE DEAL / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)*



[Enlarge Image](#)



Jeff Golfman felt like he was in some crazy secret society when Oscar-nominated actor Woody Harrelson first introduced him to raw vegan eating 14 years ago.

The pair were in business talks together when the Winnipeg entrepreneur stepped into the office of Harrelson's California lawyer, who, like the actor, also happened to follow a raw vegan diet.

"I've never been to a lawyer's office like this, but it was full of sprouts and juices and blenders and all this stuff, says Golfman, 44. "It was really bizarre to me, because, typically, lawyers -- the lawyers that I know, the lawyers that everybody else knows -- are in some office tower with a suit and a tie.

"They're not working in a room where they're sprouting and they're juicing and they're blending."

Meanwhile, his new pal Harrelson -- best known for playing not-so-swift bartender Woody on the '80s hit TV sitcom Cheers -- always seemed to be nibbling on seeds, nuts and vegetables.

Golfman's foray into the surreal went a step further when Harrelson took him to a raw food eatery.

"All of the sudden, I'm here in San Francisco in the Haight-Ashbury area with a movie star at this raw food restaurant," says Golfman, who, even though he was a vegetarian at the time, still found the raw food diet strange. "I thought that I was on another planet. I thought everybody around me were aliens. It was bizarre."

He was too flustered to pay attention to what he was eating. All he knew was the restaurant was packed with customers who couldn't seem to get enough of the uncooked, lukewarm menu fare.

[Enlarge Image](#)

(MIKE DEAL / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)



[Enlarge Image](#)

Fast-forward to today and someone looking at Golfman consume his lunch might think he's the bizarre one.

On a recent sunny day, the founder of Winnipeg's blue box recycling (which he sold to the City of Winnipeg years ago) and Prairie Pulp & Paper, his business with Harrelson, sits on the patio at Fresh Café, a Corydon Avenue restaurant known for its smoothies and salads

Golfman orders his meal, the Green Machine, with apple instead of carrot. The waitress brings him what looks like a glass of thick, grass-green sludge -- a concoction of liquified fruits and vegetables -- that Golfman sucks back hungrily.

Later, he consumes a drink that looks more appetizing. It's a deep purple smoothie made of blueberries. Along with that, he munches on some raw, unsalted macadamia nuts that he's

brought with him.

This is just the type of fuel, he says, that keeps his mind clear and his body energized so he can tackle his current project. Recently, it's his environmentally friendly, mostly straw-based Step Forward Paper, which has made it to Staples stores across Canada. Harrelson is a partner in the project, which has been 14 years in the making. Golfman hopes the next milestone in their business will be the building of a manufacturing plant in Manitoba. (Currently, a factory in India makes the paper.)

His other passions are also health-related. He took up running as a hobby three years ago. ("I started running because I had all this energy and I wanted to use the energy," he explains.) It was during a race in Toronto that the University of Western Ontario business school graduate met Thomas Omwenga, the Kenyan runner whom he helped bring to Winnipeg to win this year's Manitoba Marathon.

Golfman, who grew up in Tuxedo, lives mostly out of suitcases. He's renting out his Exchange District condominium, so he's usually bunking with friends and family when in Winnipeg -- he spends the rest of his time travelling among India, Africa, where he runs a charity, and North America.

Golfman also operates The Cool Vegetarian, a blog he started two years ago. Its posted videos -- many of which he produces -- have surpassed one million views.

The blog offers insights, tips and interviews with experts -- even medical doctors -- about raw vegan living. It inspired him to write a self-published book, The Cool Vegetarian Nation: A Complete Guide for a Veggie, Vegan & Raw Life, which he plans to release soon.

Harrelson wrote the book's foreword, in which he calls Golfman "the most dedicated, inspiring and pure 100 per cent raw foodist I know. The guy has become raw discipline incarnate."

Golfman delved into vegetarianism at age 22 and went raw about seven years ago, with Harrelson's help.

Golfman starts his day with lemon water and a litre of smoothie made with a banana, berries, greens - - and often cinnamon with sprouted granola.

"Then from there I'll go on to fruit and just graze on fruit for several hours," he says, noting that he takes in about 3,300 calories a day.

Raw veganists such as Golfman do not eat animal products -- no eggs, fish, meat, butter or dairy. And the foods they do eat -- fruit, veggies, nuts, seeds, sprouted grain and beans -- are not heated to

temperatures higher than 118 C or 48 F.

"You want food that's alive. You want food that's going to give you life. You want food that's going to give you energy," he explains, noting that he doesn't drink coffee or even tea, unless it's in the form of herbs from a friend's garden steeped in water.

"Fresh, uncooked fruits, vegetables, seeds, and nuts is a high-vibration, high-energy diet, because it's not cooked. The food hasn't been killed."

It's been a long ride to where he is now.

He started his journey into meatlessness at a London, Ont., boarding school, where he didn't exercise, binged on fast food and was feeling the effects of what he calls his standard American diet.

"I was flat on my back in bed and couldn't get out of bed," says Golfman, who at five-foot-eight weighed about 175 pounds. "Here I was, 22 years old and just couldn't move. I thought I was going to have to drop out of school and I thought that I wasn't going to finish."

He decided to give up red meat. Years later, he gave up white meat. And then fish. And then dairy.

Along the way, he says, he wasn't always healthy even though he gave up meat: he lacked nutrients, consumed too much soy and even too much fat.

At 140 pounds today, Golfman says he's finally found the right balance.

Dressed in dark blue jeans and a white shirt, Golfman looks less thin in person than he does in photos. His sun-kissed skin appears radiant and he exudes boundless energy.

He says his loved ones, who now look to him for nutrition advice, once thought he needed psychological intervention. "Your friends and family and everybody thinks that you're just bananas until you get into it," he says.

Mainstream nutrition experts might worry that raw vegans couldn't possibly get enough protein, vitamin B12, iron and other nutrients. Golfman says it's a myth that people can't get such nutrients from plant sources and swears his latest blood-test results prove his nutrient levels are perfect. (Although it wasn't always that way until he added more greens to his diet and supplemented it with vitamin B12, he says.)

Golfman admits his way of eating isn't for everyone, but says everyone can cut some meat and incorporate more plant-based food into their diets.

"I think everybody should be high raw, high vegan. I really do. I think that is the best diet for humans," says Golfman. "I believe that the world would be a better place."

Have an interesting idea you'd like Shamona to write about? Contact her at [shamona.harnett@freepress.mb.ca](mailto:shamona.harnett@freepress.mb.ca)

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/life/health/youre-bananas--thats-nuts-171112871.html>