

The Queen of Vegan Cheese

Celebrating International Women's Month with CEO and founder Miyoko Schinner

At the dawn of the new-age vegan food movement, plant-based cheeses on the market reflected less of a dairy alternative, and more a tasteless, soy based floppy disc. Meat alternatives were few and far between, but the world of cheese was a whole other vegan oyster the food industry had yet to crack. It's taken years of continued interest, and the passion of trailblazers like Miyoko Schinner, to dedicate time and research into creating comparable, delicious options for the plant-based community.

Miyoko Schinner grew up a vegetarian with an affinity for French cuisine and gourmet cheeses. Her compassion for animals and sustainable activism had her questioning the dairy industry but, as a "self-professed cheese-a-holic" she knew the transition from dairy based cheeses would be a difficult one. After becoming vegan in the 1980s, she was set to create plant-based alternatives that would appeal to cheese lovers everywhere. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Miyoko taught vegan cooking classes, published the cookbook *Now and Zen*, opened a vegan restaurant, launched a number of vegan food brands, and she even co-hosted the PBS cooking show *Vegan Mashup*. Miyoko's third cookbook, *Artisan Vegan Cheese*, published in 2012, became a best-seller, making the demand for plant-based dairy products abundantly clear.

Through combining groundbreaking proprietary technology with age-old creamery methods, Miyoko launched Miyoko's Kitchen in 2014, later renaming it Miyoko's Creamery. By 2016, Miyoko's Creamery had grown over 300% and quickly became one of California's fastest growing food companies, igniting a multi-million-dollar plant-based cheese flame that keeps burning brighter. Today, Miyoko's Creamery offers over 20 products from soft cheeses to butter made with whole food plant-based ingredients, sold online in more than 10,000 retailers nationwide, and is the most awarded vegan creamery in America.

Schinner is not only an entrepreneur, CEO, 5-time cookbook author, TV host, animal activist, and award-winning chef, but as of August 11th, 2021, she also became the winner of a lawsuit over the use of the words "Butter" and "Dairy" in product labeling. Fighting a years old battle with the dairy industry, the outcome of the lawsuit, prompted by the Food and Drug Administration, was a triumph for the plant-based food industry. "Using words such as 'butter' and 'milk' in the context of even products made from plants and not from animals is common parlance among consumers in the modern world," said Schinner. "Food is ever-evolving, and so too, should language to reflect how people actually use speech to describe the foods they eat. We are extremely pleased by this ruling and believe that it will help set a precedent for the future of food."

Miyoko balances her love of food and animals, whether she's getting her hands dirty at Rancho Compasión, her nonprofit animal sanctuary, or leading charge at Miyoko's Creamery. In the kitchen or on the farm, Miyoko makes her mission of feeding the world with delicious, compassionate food the drive behind everything she does. The "Phenomenally Vegan" Miyoko Schinner has pioneered the plant-based food industry and paved the way for women in a male dominated world of CEOs.



Miyoko and Tessa



