

The power of plants SUZY'S TITANIC DREAM

The actress loves her bit of Kiwi paradise

She has been a top international model and a Hollywood star, is married to a movie mogul and is a mother-of-five. But at 56, Suzy Amis Cameron feels like she has found her true purpose in life.

"My personal mission statement is to make the world a better place for all our children," she explains.

Suzy has appeared in hit movies like *Titanic*, where she played Lizzy Calvert, the granddaughter of Rose, and *The Usual Suspects*. She and her husband, *Avatar* director James Cameron, now own a 5000-hectare farm in the South Wairarapa, where they grow organic fruit, nuts and vegetables. Nearby in Greytown, they run a café and grocery store, Forest

Food Organics, selling produce from their land.

Both have been devotees of plant-based eating ever since they watched documentary *Forks Over Knives* six years ago. It told of the impact, on the wellness of our bodies and the planet, of diets high in meat and other animal products.

"I was blindsided by the whole thing," recalls Suzy. "And I was angry. I felt like I'd been lied to my whole life."

James was just as strongly affected. Within 24 hours, they had cleared every bit of meat and dairy out of the kitchen of their Malibu home, including the organic goat cheese from their own herd. They closed down the dairying operations on their farm, even though everyone told them they were mad, and went instantly 100% plant-based.

"That's kind of how we roll," admits Suzy with a laugh. "We have a motto we joke about – 'Go big or go home.' We don't go halfway on anything."

The whole family felt more healthy and youngest daughter Rose stopped complaining of stomach aches. "There was even a day when I said to Jim, 'This is going to sound weird, but do colours look brighter to you?'" recalls Suzy.

As she learned more about plant-based diets, she became convinced they are the answer to preventing heart disease, obesity and diabetes, and reducing inflammation in the body.

Even more important is the impact what we put on our plates can have on the planet.

"My personal journey is all about the environment," Suzy tells. "It's what wakes me up in the morning with a pit in my stomach – what kind of planet are our children going to grow up in?"

She worries about the amount of water and land that farming animals requires, and about how it contributes to deforestation and global

warming. However, Suzy learned early on that no-one wants to be preached at and most of us aren't prepared to switch instantly to a plant-based lifestyle the way she and James did.

So she has come up with a clever concept, described in her new book *OMD: Change the World by Changing One Meal a Day*. "Just one person eating one plant-based meal per day for a year saves 200,000 gallons of water and the carbon equivalent of driving from Los Angeles to New York," she explains.

"If enough people did it, we could help shift the needle on climate change. You don't have to be perfect – you

can have your eggs in the morning or your burger at night. It's very doable and easy, and it's a way everyone can help to make a difference."

Her book is packed full of recipes, ideas and eating plans. Of course, Suzy's hope is that one meal a day will become two and eventually we will transition to being fully vegan. She has already convinced other people to make the change, including New Zealand's Governor-General Dame Patsy Reddy and her husband David Gascoigne.

"When we bought our farm, they were our next-door neighbours and they were the first people who invited us over," recalls Suzy. "She's become my girlfriend. When we went plant-based, they were curious about it."

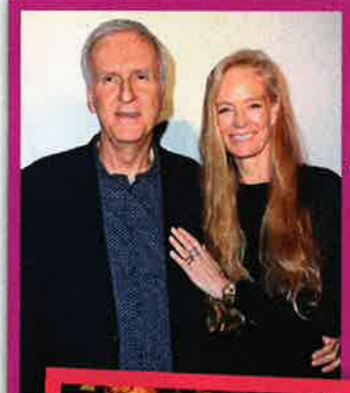
Suzy and James have a gift they like to give. Known as "the bag", it is stuffed with DVDs, books and vegan snacks. They gave one to Patsy as a Christmas present. ▶▶

Since changing to a plant-based diet six years ago, Suzy even sees brighter!

Suzy's book targets healthy eating and how you can personally alter climate change.

TEXT: NICKY PELLEGRINO, PICTURES: ROBERT TRATHEN, HAIR: MAKE UP & STYLING: JULES ARMISHAW, SUZY WEARS ELLE & RILEY, JULIETTE HOGAN, TRELISE COOPER, WORKSHOP, ZOE & MORGAN.

She met husband James on the set of his movie *Titanic*. Their amazing journey together has led them to becoming farmers and café owners. Below: With *Titanic* co-stars Bill Paxton and Gloria Stuart.



◀ “Immediately they switched the way they were cooking and eating.”

Having retired from acting 22 years ago to focus on her children – Jasper (now 28), Josa (25), Claire (17), Quinn (15) and Rose (11) – Suzy never expected to be back in the limelight. As a young girl growing up in Oklahoma, she had no clue she had star potential.

“I was painfully, horribly shy,” she recalls. “I knew I had a brain, but I didn’t have any confidence about the way I looked. All my girlfriends had beautiful dark lashes and brows, and skin that tanned easily. I was as fair as could be, with long red hair and white eyelashes.”

Suzy’s plan was to be a flying vet. She only started modelling to earn the money to buy a saddle for her horse. But then her modelling coach sent shots of her to the legendary agent Eileen Ford and at 17, Suzy found herself being hailed as “the face of the ‘80s” and living in Paris.

She met James when he cast her in his hit 1997 film *Titanic*. “People always ask if it was love at first sight. It wasn’t, but he was really cool. We’re both thrill-seekers, and love scuba diving and flying planes.”

The family now has NZ residency and is looking forward to living here next year once shooting on the two *Avatar* sequels begins. “I’m really excited we’ll be here during the winter months so I can go skiing.”

There won’t be much time for relaxing, however. Suzy is the co-founder of alternative school Muse. She is also working on a range of OMD food products and is promoting the one-meal-a-day movement all around the world.

“The kids are always saying, ‘Mom, you work so hard,’ but I don’t think of it as work,” declares Suzy. “I want to spread this message and do everything possible to make a difference. And since I’m plant-based, I have lots of energy!” **WD**

Loading up on goodness: Suzy’s café and grocery store focuses on plant-based produce.



After cooking over 12,000 meals and talking to customers, Food Forest Organics chef Gayle Wilson has developed over 25 different basic meal options that are popular with meat-eaters and plant-powered people alike.

These burgers can be spiced or flavoured in many different ways. For example, add 2 teaspoons of Cajun seasoning, a splash of hot

sauce and a dash of cayenne if you like a little extra kick. Alternatively, add 1 teaspoon each of cumin, garlic powder and smoked paprika for a Southwestern twist.

Hearty and fibre-rich, these burgers are a great way to use up leftover rice and lentils. They’re also gluten-free. For best results, make sure your grains and beans are chilled or at room temperature.

Food Forest Organics Burgers

Makes 12 servings
 1 teaspoon ground flaxseed
 1 tablespoon warm water
 2 cups cooked brown rice
 1½ cups cooked lentils
 1½ cups hulled sunflower seeds
 1 x 425g can red kidney beans, rinsed, drained
 ½ cup rice flour
 ½ cup olive oil
 1 teaspoon salt

1. Preheat oven to 180°C. Line a rimmed baking tray with baking paper.
2. Place the flaxseed in a small bowl and pour over warm water. Set aside.
3. In the bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade, combine rice, lentils, seeds, beans, flour, oil and salt. Add flaxseed mixture and pulse until combined but with some bean chunks still visible.

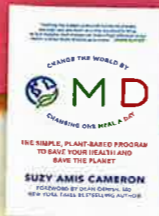


Scoop 1/3-cup portions of burger mixture and shape into patties. Place patties on the baking tray. Bake for 25 minutes or until lightly browned, flipping halfway through. Serve with your favourite burger toppings.

Per serving: 310 calories, 18g fat (2g saturated fat), 30g carbohydrates, 7g fibre, 10g protein, 0mg cholesterol, 250mg sodium.

Swapping out 1kg of beef, you save about 124 kilometres of driving, 260 square metres of land and 14,896 litres of water.

Extracted from *OMD: Change the World by Changing One Meal a Day* by Suzy Amis Cameron. Published by Murdoch Books/Allen & Unwin, rrp \$36.99.



We love baking for Christmas

