

My childhood is preserved in Alabama on rural route thirty-one. Frozen in time are the weeping willows, hay fields, Black Angus, and the blue diesel truck of my memories. With parents working fulltime, I was left on the farm until age five, and every Summer thereafter, in the care of my stay at home aunt and uncle. My uncle would be up before the sun to tend to the cattle, but my aunt long before him to lay out his clothes and prepare his food, like any good housewife would do. Mornings began with the smell of sausage and coffee busting through the house, a soulful fuel to take on the heat of the day and challenges of the farm. After Uncle would eat and leave for the field, my aunt and I would take to the thick Summer garden where ants would infiltrate my shoes. After our morning raid, the day consisted of shelling peas and shucking corn on the wrap around porch together; for years, I was too little to do well, but always too determined to not try.

Ideologies affect our perception of the world around us, experiences forever shaping how we go about our daily routines. Foer argues in *Eating Animals* that “within a culture, even within a family, people have their own understanding of what an animal is. Within each of us there are probably several different understandings” (Foer, 2013). In my rides around the farm, I developed an attachment to heifer number 108 that I affectionately named ‘Blackie’. My bond with Blackie is an experience that lead me to view animals as pets, potential friends. These conflicting experiences created a complicated understanding of animals in my mind that I battled with for years. This battled ended with the choice have a greater compassion for all life, to become a vegan.

Foer’s writing focuses on the importance of food to the family unit. He says that “our decisions about food are complicated by the fact we don’t eat alone...food, family, and memory are primordially linked” (Foer, 2013). My family’s initial response to my announcement that I

was vegan was one of confusion followed by a long list of “well can you eat this?” foods. Not consuming any animal products was a conundrum for my aunt who was taught from childhood, “if you don’t know what to cook, a casserole works for any occasion”. A casserole could not fix this, and there was no food I could eat with the family my first Christmas vegan. I sat trying to talk as everyone ate, but the disconnect was evident and only existed because I was not eating an animal.

The next Christmas, I wanted to create food that would unite my family at the table once again, this time in seats of understanding. I found myself standing at the same counter, this time no chair needed, mixing biscuits and placing them in the same skillet my family has used for so many years; however, this time the ingredients did not include lard or butter. These biscuits were vegan.