

GAME CHANGERS

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-Film summary: <https://gamechangersmovie.com/>

Game Changers is one of several food documentaries promoting vegetarianism or plant-based eating over the last 2 years. The movie was released by Netflix on September, 2019 and examines the rise of plant-based eating among professional athletes. James Cameron (the producer) argues that eating any animal products, including meat, fish, eggs, and dairy, can hinder athletic performance, wreak havoc on your heart, impair sexual function, and lead to an early death. James Wilks, former MMA fighter, narrates his personal journey of switching from a non-plant-based diet to one that has no animal products



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Why the buzz?

When it comes to animal products and their effects on human performance, Game Changers makes some pretty big statements with regard to cause and effect. What makes this film different than others is that the driving force behind the film are key Hollywood A-listers. The film's executive producers are Jackie Chan, Louie Psihoyos, James Cameron, and Suzy Cameron. James Cameron is an Academy Award winner known for movies like the Titanic and Avatar. Cameron is also a founder of Verdiant Foods, an organic pea protein company (this is not disclosed in the movie). Many people in the film have financial links to Verdiant Foods or other products mentioned throughout the film. The film heavily interviews vegan experts but fails to bring in an array of nutrition experts. This combination of funding and the people highlighted in the film make it seem credible and trustworthy, which is why so many people are drawn to the film's findings.

Positive attributes of the film

- There are valid, supportive resources to help people incorporate more plant foods or even become a vegetarian.
- The film highlights studies that show vegetarians and vegans are at reduced risk for many health conditions, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, certain types of cancer, and obesity. So, the film brings some awareness to plant-based diets that viewers might otherwise not have.
- Whole-foods, plant-based diets are rich in vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, and fiber, while being lower in processed saturated fat and preservatives. So, research for plant-based diets is supportive in many ways as long as the consumers are taking advantage of these benefits and versatility of plant-based meals.
- Performance outcomes are highlighted throughout the film.
- Plant-based foods are considered better for the planet from an ecological and ethical perspective compared to eating a high quantity of poorly-sourced meat. However, the film focuses more on nutritional and personal aspects of the plant-based diet than the ethical or ecological aspects. The film highlights benefits of eating a whole-foods-based diet.



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Concerns and flaws about the film

- When the film shared some correct data and findings, the information was biased and exaggerated. The film avoids the reality that whole-foods-based diet can reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of disease.
- The data throughout is cherry-picked from poorly-selected studies. Wilks shares terrifying information about the compounding dangers of animal products, which focuses on inflammation and cancer development.
- In today's culture, it's easy to demonize a specific food or food group, but the truth is that it's what you do consistently in choosing your foods (quality and quantity) that matters most. This fact is ignored throughout the film.
- There are several studies that show humans are equipped to eat meat. This is based on our evolution and physiology, including things as basic as the structure of our teeth. We evolved as hunter-gatherers, which combines animals and fruits/berries. The film focuses on meat generally having negative effects on humans, but it fails to mention that the quality of meat is a huge factor.
- Celebrity endorsement increases believability in people's minds. Netflix used this in Game Changers to bring people in and build the hype. The more extreme the film, the more people want to watch it.
- Humans need to consume approximately 20% more high-quality plant protein to consume the equivalent amount of protein found in animal proteins. Game Changers does not address this, so viewers may not realize their nutritional needs change when they switch to a plant-based diet.
- Vegans often have specific nutrient risks of low vitamin B12, vitamin D, iodine, and calcium (all of which are concerning for athletes and high performers in the business world). Again, the film doesn't address this, so viewers may not realize they need to find alternative ways to get these specific nutrients.-



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Gaps in the film

- Cameron's financial ties to Verdiant Foods is not mentioned throughout the film.
- 84% of vegetarians and vegans return to meat eventually. 43% of ex-vegetarians and ex-vegans said it was too difficult to keep up with a pure vegetarian and vegan diet. The film highlights athletes throughout the film. It does not discuss the effect genetics has on these all-star athletes' performance. There is no mention of other lifestyle habits these athletes have outside of vegetarianism or veganism, such as sleep quality, training program, stress levels, ANS balance, and mindset strategies.
- There is minimal discussion about what the highlighted athletes ate before they switched to a vegan diet.
 - Part of the film highlights boxer, Bryant Jennings, who primarily ate fried chicken and fast food before he switched to a vegan diet. He didn't even know about most of the vegetables in the world until he gave up meat. Of course he feels and performs better after switching his diet because of the poor quality his diet was before. It likely has more to do with shifting from fast food to whole foods than shifting from animal products to non-animal products.
 - The film didn't compare the performance of vegetarian/vegan Olympians with non-vegetarian Olympians; it simply focused on the vegetarian/vegan athletes.
- Protein quality in animal products is superior to plant proteins when considering bioavailability, digestibility, and amino acid content (according to well-documented, sophisticated food science labs).
- Studies emphasize the importance of personalized medicine and the need to evaluate individuals on what their unique needs are. One diet does not work for all, and this film doesn't address this important factor when it comes to nutrition.

