

HumanEcology

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MULTI-DISCIPLINARY IMPACT

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Cornell University



Lisa Drayer '96 built her love of communications and nutritional counseling into a career as an on-air nutritionist and author.

Big Time SMALL SCREEN

Lisa Drayer creates her own path as an author and television nutritionist

It was something of a quandary.

Lisa Drayer '96 was at the top of her class in Cornell's Nutritional Sciences program. She was nailing her coursework, digging into the research, and loving every minute of it. She graduated with distinction and headed to Boston for a clinical internship that would give her the skills she needed to pass the registered dietitian exam. But there was a problem.

"Basically, I realized that I loved science but I couldn't stand the sight of blood," Drayer says, with a laugh.

It was a disappointment. After driving through her academic program and working hard, Drayer had to change gears. But she hit upon a way to create her own path – and did it with great success. That early let-down led her to New York University's Science, Health, and Environmental Reporting Program, where she received her master's degree in 2000.

"It really allowed me to combine what I loved in nutrition with communications and learn how to communicate nutritional information in a way that consumers could understand," she says.

Drayer hasn't looked back. She started by offering one-on-one nutrition counseling and building the communications side of her career. Her first full-time job after NYU was as the editorial director of a nutrition-focused website. There, she realized she was talking to people who could help lift her career higher – so she started pitching them.

"CNN would call, and I'd pitch them stories," she says. "One day I pitched 'Breakfast with Daybreak.' They weren't ready for it then, but a year later it became a reality."

"CNN Daybreak" was the network's early morning show, and Drayer's idea was to fold in a nutrition segment. "Breakfast with Daybreak" became a regular spot, and Drayer found herself heading to CNN at 5:00 a.m. to do the show before going to her job at the website.

Today, Drayer has built her brand. She contributes health segments to CNN and its sister network, HLN. She also writes feature articles as a health contributor to CNN.com. She's written two books, *The Beauty Diet: Looking Great Has Never Been So Delicious* (McGraw-Hill) and *Strong, Slim, and 30! Eat Right, Stay Young, Feel Great, and Look FABULOUS* (McGraw-Hill).



In 2005, Drayer was awarded the American Dietetic Association's Media Excellence Award.

Even more than two decades out, Cornell remains a strong presence in her life. "To this day, I call upon the professors that I had 20 years ago, and they remind me of the science they taught me," she says. "They're my go-to experts. Who knows nutrition better than them?"

Drayer stays active as an alumna, currently serving on the board of the Human Ecology Alumni Association. She previously served as a member of the President's Council for Cornell Women and has hosted student-alumni dinners as part of Cornell's Women's Network.

"Cornell is really where my adult life began," Drayer says. "I always say I found my own at Cornell."

– Wendy Hankle