

Dine of the times

A Cook's Tour: Vegetarian Dining Comes of Age
By Brian Rubenstein

Not too many years ago, ordering a vegetarian meal in a restaurant resulted in an earnest nod from your server and little more than a salad and baked potato on your plate. But as fast as changing tastes in the growing number of veggie, vegetarian, and veg-friendly restaurants that now populate our landscape. Even in areas not fortunate enough to have their very own dedicated dining scene, plentiful veg options are readily available in ethnic restaurants such as Chinese, Thai, or Indian. In addition, more traditional establishments are offering more vegetarian-friendly dining scenes (see page 42). In most restaurants, however, "veget" is still not part of the vocabulary, so choices are the vegetarian options may be laden with cheese or otherwise contaminated by dairy products. But the paradigm is definitely shifting, and more major cities now boast at least one veggie restaurant.

Today's veg restaurants are anything but meager imitations of each other. The variety in ambience, cuisine, and

service items can be deliciously staggering. The new generation of meat- and dairy-free eateries runs the gamut from cozy ethnic and family dives to the haute, fine-dining establishments, as well as the increasingly popular raw food restaurants. Many are decidedly upscale.

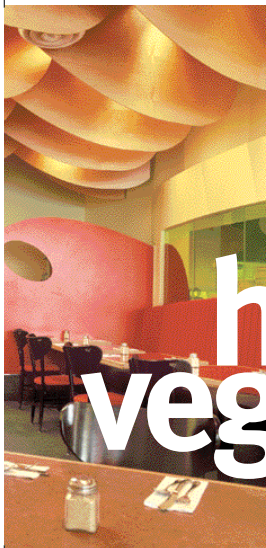
In the past, vegetarian restaurants usually hovered beneath the mainstream radar screen, but these days they are creating more than a blip in the popular culture dining scene. Increased numbers of celebrities going veggie or raw, in addition to public concern about health and disease—like every other trend of conscience and the treatment of farm animals, have helped to generate attention and interest. One very recent book of society. Whether it's a casual lunch at a health club or an intimate meal in a posh dining room, it's the great food that keeps people coming back. These new, innovative, and daring restaurants are winning over reviewers thanks to their intriguing, creative menu offerings, skillfully prepared with flavorful, fresh, and often organic ingredients.

The following 14 profiles are a sampling of some of the finest places to

dine veg from coast-to-coast. The restaurants were chosen to spotlight a cross-section of North America's great veggie restaurants, and should not be viewed as a definitive or "best of" list. They highlight current trends including the organic plant-based establishments such as Millenium, Fabiano, and Pizzeria, casual country food "chairs" such as Native Foods and Bites and Daily, and raw inspiration—places that are getting noticed and getting veggie food on the culinary map. Not surprisingly, some of the more well-known veggie restaurants can also be found in unimagined locales, such as Ft. Lauderdale, Columbus, and Fort Worth. Now that's progress.

Hopefully this "cook's tour" of veg restaurants will whet your appetite to do some restaurant exploration on your own. Next time you want to dine out, perhaps you can bypass that tired old baked-potato-and-plate and treat yourself to a restaurant meal at a modern vegetarian restaurant. Bon appetit!

13 Veg/Dine Photo: Kenzie Hurdle



VegInDepth/Cover Feature

14 hip veg places to dine

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