



TODAY'S SPECIAL IS VEGAN

Trend fueled by baby boomers, senior citizens' health concerns

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Food

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DEFINITIONS

VEGAN: a person who does not eat or use animal products and follows a strict plant-based diet.

VEGETARIAN: a person who does not eat meat, and sometimes other animal products.

Asksed to cater a vegan dinner prepared without oil for 48 survivors of heart disease, diabetes and obesity last month at Heitzman Traditional Bakery & Deli, chef Shawn Broadway did not know his own life was about to change.

The 286-pound chef toyed with spices. Then he wielded the power of slow-baking and quick searing. He absorbed the latest research; reading "The China Study" by Colin T. Campbell and "Prevent & Reverse Heart Disease" by the Cleveland Clinic's Caldwell Esselstyn.

The first course was simple: Oil-free "Dave's Bread" from Lucky's Market with a green salad. Main dishes coaxed flavor from long-roasted vegetables: portobello mushroom risotto, pasta primavera and four potato hash. Butternut squash tapioca topped by grilled peaches and fig compote finished the early September feast.

Eating his own whole food, plant-based recipes for the last two-and-a-half weeks, Broadway stepped on the



Portobello mushroom risotto, pasta primavera and four-potato hash with oil-free "Dave's Bread" from Lucky's Market are served to a vegan support group.

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PHOTOS BY PHILIP ANDREWS/SPECIAL TO THE COURIER-JOURNAL

TOP: Vegetables undergo an oil-free sear for a plant-based, whole foods dinner Sept. 2 at Heitzman Traditional Bakery & Deli on Shelbyville Road.



PHILIP ANDREWS/SPECIAL TO THE COURIER-JOURNAL

A plant-based, whole food feast Sept. 2 was catered to about 50 members of a vegan support group that follows health recommendations from the Cleveland Clinic.

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scale Tuesday to discover 22 pounds had slipped away. Now the 47-year-old chef is stocking Heitzman's take-out case with his own tomato kale soup, black bean burgers and salads thick with hearty quinoa or beans.

"The proof is in the pudding," Broadway said, adding the lifestyle beats any diet regimen. "It's not like I am working out every day. I do have a little more energy. It is crazy some of the results you get."

Heitzman, the 124-year-old homegrown bakery that invented the butter kuchen and the strawberry whip cream cake, has joined the ranks of local restaurants catering to the growing vegan movement.

While hardcore vegan eaters comprise less than 5 percent of diners nationwide, local restaurants are responding to increasing demand for menu items without meat, fish, eggs or dairy, and sometimes oil.

Vegan dishes sprouting up include the faux hot dog at the Dairy Kastle, better known as the best excuse for diabetes in Germantown. You can also snap up Najla's vegan Breakfast Wraps with faux chorizo sausage, potatoes and black beans or vegan Philly sandwiches at some Heine Brothers locations or sample the wide array of vegan desserts showcased daily at Highland Coffee.

Fueled by baby boomers and senior citizens worried about their health, vegan eating is a trend with legs.

In Louisville, it picked up speed last summer when a vegan potluck group branched out to book catered events at local eateries. Unlike stereotype vegans, animal welfare or concern for the planet are not their primary motivators. Rather, many are veteran patients of the Cleveland Clinic, having shed weight, life-threatening conditions, and medications for cholesterol and diabetes by following the diet regimen preached by Esselstyn.

Local "Esselstyn Support Group" restaurant dinner organizer Mary Krider made a simple request of restaurants: If cooks furnished whole food, plant-based meals without added oil, she promised to fill seats.

On July 20, the group descended on Whole Foods' "Meatless Monday" buffet, bumping attendance up from the usual 30 customers to 92. Menu items included lasagna

roll-ups with almond milk cream cheese and a simple marinara sauce. For dessert, Whole Foods chefs baked an oil-free carrot cake from the just-released "PlantPure Nation Cookbook," a product of the recently released movie that followed "Forks Over Knives."

At Whole Foods since then, the Monday \$8 per plate buffet special (instead of the regular \$8.99 per pound price) averages 50 to 60 customers each week, said Whole Foods Healthy Eating Specialist Amanda McDonley.

"This is a thing. It is a big thing," McDonley said. "The food as medicine movement is really taking off."

Some diners are patients of Esselstyn, who has been reversing heart disease and diabetes at the Cleveland Clinic since 1995. Some are like Kentucky State Rep. Tom Riner (D-Louisville) an acolyte of Campbell, whose 2006 book was hailed by The New York Times as the "Grand Prix of Epidemiology." Campbell surveyed the diets and health of 6,500 adults in 65 counties in China to reveal statistically significant correlations between meat and dairy consumption and mortality rates for more than 48 types of disease, including the seven most common cancers.

Still others are inspired by Dean Ornish, the plant-based medicine doctor who designed KentuckyOne Health's new Ornish Reversal Program producing remarkable results through diet combined with meditation and traditional cardiac rehabilitation in Louisville.

"I realized we really have some consumer power here," said Krider, 69, adding her arthritis and neuropathy (numbness in her extremities) have disappeared while her circulation has improved since moving to an oil-free, vegan regimen. "People deserve to know they can have power over their pain and ailments."

Johnny V's, an Italian restaurant in Jeffersonville, catered to 51 vegans in July with a custom veggie pizza topped with almond milk cream cheese, penne with vegetable sauce, and linguine with texturized vegetable protein, a meat substitute made from soy chunks. A few weeks later, the group packed Roots on Bardstown Road for grilled vegetables in lettuce wraps, butternut squash soup and Forbidden Black Rice Risotto with black cherries. Other restaurants that served the group include Simply Thai in Middletown, Genghis Grill in Springhurst, and Shiraz in the Holiday Manor shopping center.

In the wake of hosting 60 vegans in August at Ramsi's Cafe On The World on Bardstown Road, chef and owner Rhona Kamar is retooling

the menu this fall with two new oil-free, vegan recipes. Oil has been eliminated from quinoa and black beans used throughout Ramsi's, she added, to help adapt other entrees to vegan needs.

"Our customers need it. They appreciate it," Kamar said, adding new oil-free, vegan entrees she is playing with include smoked tofu. "We don't want to make any judgment. We just want to provide options for people."

For chefs unaccustomed to vegan cuisine, it can be a challenge to wrest traditional tastes and textures from a vegetable-centric diet, she said, adding good food "depends on oil for so much flavor. Without it, it is hard to get caramel, or that sear, or that crunch."

Back at Heitzman on Shelbyville Road Wednesday, Broadway pulled his first vegan meatloaf from his oven: an invention fashioned from rice and lentils topped with a gravy made from roasted mushrooms and onions. It's his attempt to tackle his personal weakness, the best-selling Heitzman's regular meatloaf.

The vegan meatloaf gravy, he said, "actually tastes better."

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HEITZMAN'S TOMATO KALE SOUP

1 medium yellow or white onion chopped (about 2 cups)

6 ½ cups of water or vegetable broth

1 ½ cups of cooked white beans (navy or great northern beans)

¾ cups of uncooked whole grain rice

2 (16-ounce cans) diced tomatoes

2 ribs of celery, chopped

2 carrots, peeled and chopped

2 tablespoons chopped garlic

1 ¼ cup of chopped fresh parsley

2 cups of chopped fresh kale (rinsed and stems removed)

2 teaspoons salt

1 tablespoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Add 1 tablespoon of water into a soup pot over high heat. When the water begins to sputter, add the onion and cook, stirring for 3 to 5 minutes until the onions become softened. Add the water, beans, rice, diced tomatoes (including juice), celery, carrots, parsley and chopped garlic, and stir. Bring to a boil, and then reduce heat to a simmer. Cover and cook for 25 minutes. Stir in kale, salt, pepper, coriander and cook, covered, for 30 more minutes.

Source: Chef Shawn Broadway, Heitzman Traditional Bakery & Deli