

JUST GOOD BUSINESS

Why venues should add vegan options to their menus

BY GREG MCFARLANE, VEGAN AUSTRALIA

There is a growing trend for consumers to opt for healthy and cruelty-free fare. By providing a vegan menu, clubs and pubs can tap into this expanding market, and show innovation and forward thinking.

From the local cafe to national chains, more and more eateries are now catering to the increasing demand for vegan food options: vegan pizzas at Domino's, Crust and Pizza Hut; vegan Mexican dishes at Montezuma's, Zambrero and Guzman y Gomez; vegan burgers at Grill'd and Hungry Jacks; vegan subs at Subway; and even vegan items at Hog's Breath Cafe, including a crispy vegan schnitzel burger. Vegan options like these can easily be incorporated into pub or bistro menus.

High-quality vegan food is a great solution for caterers because it appeals to just about everyone – it's tasty, healthy, ethical and planet-friendly. Having good vegan options on the menu will broaden the customer base, and means that the restaurant is automatically ready to cater for practically any customer who comes through the door. Vegan food is inclusive, and is suitable for:

- vegetarians, including lacto-vegetarians who don't eat eggs
- people trying to reduce meat consumption out of concern for farmed animals
- people concerned about the environmental impact of the production of animal products

- those cutting down on meat for specific health reasons, such as those with special cholesterol needs or people trying to lose weight
- lactose-intolerant diners
- people with religious dietary requirements (for example, vegan foods are kosher, and if the meal does not contain alcohol then vegan food is halal; it is also suitable for those who don't eat various types of meat for religious reasons, such as pork and beef)
- vegan food is often more suitable for health-conscious consumers. This is backed up by the Australian Dietary Guidelines: 'Australians need to eat more vegetables, legumes/beans, fruits and wholegrain cereals'
- those with certain allergies who may prefer vegan meals
- athletes
- customers looking to try something a bit different.

In addition, restaurants that cater for vegans are more likely to win the custom of group bookings where some members of the group are vegan. If a restaurant does not provide good vegan options, then they may lose the entire group via 'the veto vote'.



Bhavani Baumann, Co-founder,
The Green Lion – Australia's first vegan pub

It often takes just a few small changes to make vegan food available and, in the process, improve business. In addition to bringing in new customers, most vegan food has the bonus of being cheaper, with larger profit margins. Although you may start with small changes, there is little doubt that the more effort you invest, the more likely you are to end up with some fantastic vegan choices.

Vegans represent a loyal customer base and are appreciative of vegan options being provided – word of mouth spreads quickly in the vegan community.

Vegan Australia is running a Vegan Dining Campaign to encourage restaurants to add more vegan items to their menus. This will increase the convenience, acceptability and accessibility of being vegan and, in doing so, make it easier for people to become and stay vegan. This will mean less suffering and death for animals, better outcomes for the environment, improvements to people's health, and, hopefully, reduced pressure on food resources worldwide.

The number of Australians who, at times, eat vegan meals is huge and cannot be ignored by food businesses. A Roy Morgan research study in 2016 found that there

were more than two million Australians whose diet was all or almost all vegetarian. This represents more than 11 per cent of the population and a 15 per cent rise on the previous four years. The study also found that almost 10 million Australians are eating less red meat. Commenting on the study, Roy Morgan's Industry Communications Director, Norman Morris, says, 'If they have not already, supermarkets and eateries would be wise to revisit their vegetarian-friendly options to ensure that they are catering adequately for this growing, and potentially lucrative, consumer segment'.

According to market researcher Euromonitor International, Australia is the third fastest-growing vegan market in the world. 'An increasing number of companies are expanding their consumer appeal by staying away from animal ingredients whenever possible,' says Ewa Hudson, Head of Health and Wellness at Euromonitor International. **C&PM**

If you would like some assistance with modifying your menu to be more vegan-friendly, please contact Vegan Australia at food@veganaustralia.org.au. We will put you in touch with a vegan menu consultant in your area.

CRUMBED PORTOBELLO MUSHROOM BURGER

1. Salt and pepper a whole portobello mushroom.
2. Dip mushroom in batter* and roll in panko (Japanese bread crumbs, available in all major supermarkets).
3. Deep fry until golden brown.
4. Toast a burger bun and spread a vegan aioli (easy to buy at any major supermarket) on the top and bottom of the bun.
5. On the bun, stack baby spinach leaves, sliced soft-roasted peppers (shop bought is fine), avocado and the crumbed mushroom.

It's so easy and delicious!

*Note: To make the batter, mix 200 grams of flour with salt to taste in a bowl and then slowly add mineral water. It is important to dose the water carefully to obtain a consistency that is smooth and fluid but not liquid: the batter should completely coat the pieces of food, but the amount in excess has to drip off. **C&PM**



continued on page 88



continued from page 86

PAVLOVA

Pavlova is a signature dessert for The Green Lion Pub. It is a dessert that a lot of Australians have grown up with. It is usually made with egg whites, but this version has been made vegan-friendly.

This recipe will serve 12.

MERINGUE

Ingredients:

- 1 can of chickpea water (cold)
- 3/4 cup of sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon of cream of tartar

Method:

1. Pre-heat oven to 150 degrees.
2. Whip one can of chickpea water (from a can of chilled chickpeas) in a food processor until it has soft peaks.
3. Add 3/4 cup of white sugar and 3/4 teaspoon cream of tartar.
4. Whip until sugar is dissolved and mixture has stiff peaks.
5. Cover a baking tray with baking paper and dollop mixture into 12 portions.
6. Turn oven down to 100 degrees and put tray in oven.
7. Cook for one hour.

COCONUT CREAM

Ingredients:

- 4 cans of coconut cream

- 1/2 teaspoon guar gum
- 100 grams of sugar
- 2 teaspoons of vanilla
- 25 grams of agar-agar (agar gum)

Method:

1. Put two cans of coconut cream, sugar, vanilla and agar-agar in a pot over a medium heat on the stove and bring to a simmer to melt the agar-agar.
2. Transfer into a plastic container and cool in the fridge until set.
3. Once set, take out of the fridge and chop into pieces.
4. Put all pieces into a high-speed blender and add the two remaining cans of coconut cream. Blend until it resembles thick cream.
5. Transfer into a metal bowl that is sitting in another bowl of ice water.
6. Hand whisk until the cream has fluffy peaks.
7. Layer cooled meringue with coconut cream, berries, passionfruit pulp and dark chocolate shavings. Serve straight away. **C&PM**

About these recipes

These recipes are from The Green Lion Pub, the first vegan pub in Australia. The pub serves anything that would normally be on a pub menu, but in a vegan style, including burgers, chips, pies and pizzas.