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Very veggie — Salt Lake called a great town for vegetarian restaurants

By Valerie Phillips

Deseret Morning News

Salt Lake-area restaurants are more vegetarian-friendly than one might guess, says Andrea Mather, the author of "VegOut," a vegetarian restaurant guide for Denver and Salt Lake City.

In addition to meatless meals, they also offer many vegan options (made without meat, eggs or dairy products).

"The vegan consciousness in Salt Lake far surpasses the Denver-Boulder area," Mather, a Colorado resident, said by phone from her home. "It's a great food town; it's easy to eat your way through it, which is what I did."

Her food finds included roasted veggie tacos at the Blue Iguana; acorn squash linguini at Oasis Cafe; crisp fried bean curd simmered in tomato sauce at Cafe Trang; potato gnocchi at Caffe Molise; lentil soup at Cedars of Lebanon; Kung Pao Tofu at Ever Green House Cafe; a creamy Greek feta and tomato sandwich at Frank Granato Importing Co.; hummus and baba ghanoush at Mazza; spaghetti squash Florentine at the Singing Cricket; and dark chocolate mole at the Red Iguana.

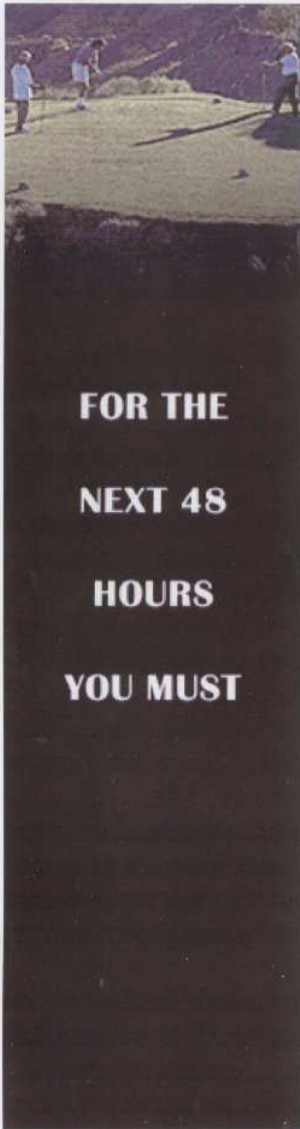
But her four stars she saved for Sage's Cafe, 473 E. Broadway, the only Salt Lake restaurant to earn that honor.

"To get four stars, it had to be pretty extraordinary, something that I would talk about more than a month later," Mather said. "It's a full-scale vegan restaurant, but you could take your grandmother there, it's a nice place, with a homey feel, and the food is mostly organic," she said.

The four-star rating was great news to Ian Brandt, owner of Sage's Cafe. "We were really excited to hear that. It was really special to be honored that way," said Brandt, who opened the restaurant the last week of 1999, "which is



Ian Brandt of Sage's Cafe
Laura Seitz, Deseret Morning News



kind of unique because we think our food is the food for the new millennium."

In line with Brandt's ideals, the restaurant serves no animal products and uses food products that are both organic and "fair trade," where the company's workers are given fair wages and living conditions. Organic food costs twice as much, and there's about 20 percent more waste, since it contains no preservatives and thus spoils more quickly, he said.



Sage's Cafe's Carrot Butter Crustini

"The only way we could afford the organic food is to add more gourmet characteristics to the cuisine, so we can charge a certain price," Brandt said.

Mather gave high marks to the carrot and macadamia nut butter, served with toasted seven-grain breadslices.

Another house favorite is the Philly Cheeze Steak — a nod to Brandt's hometown of Philadelphia. It has grilled onions, peppers and either portobello mushrooms or seitan, a wheat-based protein that mimics chicken. The "cheeze" is a nutritional yeast-based sauce.

The guidebook, which sells for \$12.95, is part of a "VegOut" series published by Gibbs Smith of Layton. The company started with a Southern California guide in 2003 and followed up with guides for New York City, San Francisco,

Washington, D.C., and Seattle/Portland. Authors are recruited from the specific region for each book, said publicist Laura Ayrey. Mather seemed a good fit. She's a former staffer of *Vegetarian Times* and now freelances for Gaiam, a company that makes natural living products like yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi DVDs and yoga mats.

Curiously, for all Mather's praise of Utah's vegetarian offerings, the book gives Colorado nearly twice the space. Only 37 Salt Lake City/Park City restaurants are listed, compared with about 100 for Denver/Boulder. When asked, Mather said it was because Denver has a bigger population than Salt Lake City and said that future editions may add more Salt Lake eateries.

Besides strictly vegetarian restaurants, the book also includes restaurants that offer a significant amount of meatless or vegan options.

"If we only listed vegetarian restaurants, the book would have been about 10 pages," said Mather. "I did a lot of Googling. I checked Citysearch, Salt Lake Magazine and newspaper ratings, because I wanted to get the restaurants that were really good. And I included Granato's, because even though they have a small menu, they had the store with so many different kinds of pastas and olive oils."

She also sought out ethnic restaurants known for vegetarian cuisine, such as Bombay House and



Denise Cerreta of One World Cafe
Laura Seitz, *Deseret Morning News*

Bangkok Thai. "American vegetarian cuisine is often just meat substitutes, like Gardenburgers or tofu hot dogs or fake bacon," she said. "But with cultures such as the southern part of India, they have a different approach to vegetables and how to serve them. Their cuisine has been around for thousands of years, and their recipes are handed down as a heritage."

One of the few chains included in the book is the Boulder-based Noodles & Company, "because of the sheer amount of vegetarian items — more than 70 percent, and they will accommodate a number of food issues."

One of the most unusual local eateries listed is One World Cafe, 41 S. 300 East, which makes up its menu daily based on what's fresh and in season, and lets customers pay what they think the meal is worth or what they can afford. Instead of getting a bill, customers drop their money in a large wooden box, where owner Denise Cerreta has taped a sign with her goal to serve all organic food, to eliminate world hunger and wasted food, to feed all members of the community, and to trust people to be honest. If people can't pay for their meal, they can work for it. Some of the food is organically grown in a donated garden plot.

"We'll be open two years in June, and many restaurants don't make it through the first year," Cerreta said. "But we're vision-driven, so it's the incentive that keeps us going."



Denise Cerreta, second from right, talks with customers in 2003 at One World Cafe, where diners pay what they think the meal is worth.

Laura Seitz, Deseret Morning News

Based on her success, Cerreta is setting up a nonprofit foundation with a goal to put a similar eatery in other cities.

"Supposedly we're the only ones in the country doing something like this, and my hope is it will catch on," she said. "Part of the reason I'm on the planet is to eliminate world hunger."

Although organic food costs more, she can get a better price on it by buying in season. When customers choose the portions and price, "there's no psychological incentive to take more than they need, so we can serve another portion of that food to

someone else. That eliminates waste. All our kitchen scraps are composted."

A house favorite is The Everything Cookie, made daily with available ingredients — cranberries, coconut, cashews, raisins.

Jennifer Russell-Fenus, a vegan and chairperson of the local EarthSave, agrees that local vegan and vegetarian options have expanded in the past few years. "Ten years ago, you could only have a baked potato or a salad," she said. "Even with pasta, a lot of it has eggs in it."

While a guidebook is helpful, Russell-Fenus warns that restaurants often change their recipes. "Something what was once vegan, now might have egg whites in it, so it's good to ask every time," she said.

A 2003 survey done by the Vegetarian Resource Group showed that 4 percent to 10 percent of the population call themselves vegetarians. Over half of those could be classified as vegan. But Mathers said there's a growing number of "flexatarians," who eat meatless meals part of the time, and this has helped

to bring items like soy milk and veggie burgers mainstream. "Even Burger King has a veggie burger," she notes. "When I first worked for Vegetarian Times, we used to beg Starbucks to carry soy milk. Now it's a no-brainer."

EVERYTHING COOKIE

Part I:

1 pound (4 sticks) organic butter,
softened
2 cups organic sugar
2 cups organic brown sugar
5 cage-free eggs
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 teaspoons baking powder
4 cups organic flour (any kind)
5 cups oats (instant or raw)

Mix softened butter, sugar, and eggs together until creamy. Add soda, powder, flour and oats



One World Cafe's Everything Cookie

Part II:

Add a few handfuls of 3-4 of these ingredients to your cookie dough:

Natural chocolate chips
Organic coconut
Dried sweetened cranberries
Organic pumpkin seeds
Organic cashews
Organic pecans
Organic walnuts
Organic sunflower seeds
Organic raisins

Mix by hand. Place into two 9-by-11 baking dishes or drop by large heaping tablespoons onto a cookie sheet. Bake at 325 degrees until light golden brown (about 20 minutes). Remember a slightly wet dough will make a moist cookie!

We make our cookies at the cafe in baking dishes so we can cut the exact portions our customers want. — *One World Cafe*

► Top-rated S.L. restaurants listed in 'Veg Out' dining guide

Sage's Cafe was the only Utah restaurant to earn a four-star (outstanding) rating from "VegOut," a restaurant guidebook for vegetarians.

Those earning three stars (excellent) are:

- **Bangkok Thai**, 1400 S. Foothill Drive
- **Blue Iguana**, 155 S. West Temple
- **Bombay House**, 1615 S. Foothill Drive
- **Cafe Shambala**, 382 E. 4th Ave.
- **Caffe Molise**, 55 W. 100 South