

3 predominately vegetarian and vegan eateries in the south peninsula and southern suburbs

By  Shellee-Kim Gold

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Cape Town is arguably the continent's capital when it comes to choice and the sheer number of vegetarian and vegan eateries. Full 'raw' restaurants rival both of these. Then there are venues neither vegan nor vegetarian, but who still cater to them - with sometimes astounding creativity.

The Whole Earth Café, Scarborough

Before you enter Scarborough's [Whole Earth Café](#) you'll see evidence of compassion. A large Brazilian pepper tree has had a wooden platform built around its branch growth to protect it and accommodate children at play. Care extends to and infuses the cuisine, its presentation and the service at this superlative establishment.

Housed in a typical wooden beach cottage the colours of the Scarborough Sea in spring, the interior is decked out in dove greys, blues, and greens with interesting artworks splashed around the walls.

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Vegan black bean taquitos with caramelised onions, vegan cheese and all the trimming! #yum #vegan #mexican #taquitos #wholeearthcafe #scarborough #capepoint #capetownrestaurants

A post shared by [whole earth cafe](#) (@wholeearthcafe) on Nov 1, 2018 at 1:25am PDT

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Our corner table extended to a cosy courtyard with nooks and crannies. Perusing the menu was helped along by my fruit boost: a jar of pink liquid -watermelon, pineapple, apple, and orange juice. It hit my sweet-craving spot to perfection. My companion ordered the green machine: spinach, cucumber, apple, celery, and mint juice which she enjoyed. They were brought with unique cardboard drinking straws.

Around 70% of the menu is either vegetarian or vegan. Vegans can choose between pumpkin and sweet potato gnocchi, veggie summer rolls in rice paper parcels and a beetroot falafel wrap, amongst others.

I ordered the vegan veggie burger with cashew cream cheese and half portions of chips/sweet potato wedges. My companion opted for the cider batter Tofish (tofu rubbed in seaweed) and salad. Both dishes arrived beautifully-presented. My pesto-smothered burger easily scored as my top vegan and vegetarian burger on texture, taste, and moisture. I had it with a sourdough roll – sourced from a Scarborough baker.

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Vegan Tofish and chips. Finally available in Cape Town at whole earth cafe only! Come enjoy this unbelievably delicious meal complete with your choose of chips or sweet potato wedges and a side salad and vegan tartar sauce! #tryit #vegan #tofish #capetown #wholeearthcafe #treatyourself #scarborough #veganfishandchips #instafood #capetownrestaurants

A post shared by [whole earth cafe](#) (@wholeearthcafe) on Aug 4, 2018 at 4:00am PDT

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I'm a sauce-y person, so my moreish side of sweet and spicy tomato chutney was especially appreciated. Though it came with my companion's Tofish, I also filched some of her sublime soya-milk based vegan mayonnaise - for purposes of chip-dunking. Ditto, her Yuzu salad dressing that had both of us in altered states!

Red cappuccinos helped us digest our desserts. It takes a lot to beat my late grandmother's cheesecake recipe, but the chai and chocolate variety here could just be it! Every mouthful of the generous portion was akin to a sacred experience. Having coconut fudge vegan ice cream with it helped keep me grounded.

The flourless chocolate cake with a side of salted caramel ice cream was my companion's choice. She looked like she was in equal raptures. Both large platters came dressed in artistically-splattered blueberry coulis.

'Good coffee, good vibes, and good company' announce the surfboard signage outside. With food this good, I'd also keep it a secret.

Moksh, Kenilworth

No self-respecting vegetarian restaurant reviewer would miss the opportunity to include an Indian venue. Because eating Indian doesn't only mean consuming a curry to keep you warm in winter.

For new(ish)-kid-on-the-Indian-block, the focus at [Moksh](#) in Kenilworth is on north Indian fare. I've never been to India, though my fantasy of riding across the Rajasthan landscape's never faded. Moksh surrounds you with enlarged images of Rajasthani life: camel-trekkers in the Thar desert, regional people in colourful clothing and the Golden Temple.

This place is a paneer (Indian cottage cheese) obsessive's dream. Yes, I am. There are seven paneer mains, 16 vegetarian dishes and vegans can choose from eight dishes. The latter includes mushroom Mutter (mushroom with peas in a coconut and cashew sauce) and Dal Tadka (black lentils and tomato in cream and butter).



Image sourced from www.facebook.com/MokshIndianRestaurant

My daughter and I ordered the cheese garlic naan to start – deliciously cheesy! We washed it down with our favourite, salty Lassis. Made correctly like these with yoghurt produces the creamier finish.

Raised vegetarian, my daughter ordered the paneer methi malai and me, the kadai paneer. Brought to the table in attractive copper pots, our dish colours of yellow (the methi) and red (the kadai) contrasted in a beautiful visual feast. Basmati rice is included, but sambals and poppadoms are extras.

Both of our dish flavours excelled: the coconut cream, cashew nuts, and fenugreek leaves of the methi were rich and creamy, while my kadai with its ginger, coriander and cream in a tomato sauce was more piquant and spicy. Our paneer was well made - it didn't crumble.

High backed mock leather chairs, wine-coloured walls, luxurious curtaining and chandeliers added touches of elegance to the small venue, we decided over our masala chai. With it, we shared the gulabjamun – mini, cardamom and syrup-infused soft koeksister-styled balls – and the kulfi ice cream. This rounded our meal off well, which was accompanied throughout by slick, unobtrusive service.

It's hardly surprising Moksh has opened six other branches in 10 months across the city. Because, I guess, the dining experience is true to the meaning of Moksh: 'to attain the highest level of satisfaction.'

O'ways Teacafe, Claremont

It took a couple of minutes to penetrate my awareness as to why [O'ways Teacafe](#) in Claremont had an odd atmosphere. It wasn't the French Oak or Sleeper wood tables, the facebrick walls or the display of glass and cast iron teapots. The haven of tranquillity here is due to the sweet silence inside this establishment. Unusually, music is not played here.

Set between the concrete office blocks of corporate Claremont, it's obvious why O'ways is as popular amongst the 'suits' as it is amongst students and shoppers. Owner Lisa Tsai blends the absence of noise with the café's renowned tea-drinking ritual as "a means to slow down". But whether drinking or eating you imbibe the peaceful 'vibe' here.



Image sourced from www.oways.co.za

Order breakfast or a main from the bamboo-backed menu and you'll receive tiny surprise tasters to start. Mine was a deep fried crumbed mushroom in teriyaki sauce and a tiny pot of honey-and-mustard infused cream cheese for the rye bread brought in a bamboo steamer.

Lisa and her family are vegetarian and the menu is a mix of vegetarian and vegan (mostly) oriental dishes.

Vegan choices include vermicelli and pan-fried tofu, potato salad and tofu curry. While vegetarian selections include the Crumbed aubergine, creamy spinach ravioli and the 'pretty' egg noodles stir-fried with soya balls dish.

After sampling a soya ball smothered in homemade tomato sauce and a dumpling from the dim sum dish – both of which were excellent - I was almost sorry I ordered the Korean-styled kimchi risotto with seared tofu and green pesto. Though it was good.



Image sourced from www.oways.co.za

Lisa paired my food with the green boncha hojicha, a Japanese roasted green tea, which went down well. The café's signature dish is the hargau (potstickers/mini dumplings) filled with minced vegetables, glass noodles, and mushrooms. Not something you want to stop eating just because you're full.

One of the nicest raw vegan cheesecakes I've tasted was the O'ways blueberry. Visually pleasing, the purple topped slice with its cream-coloured centre and chocolate brown date base consisted of cashew nuts, coconut oil, blueberries, cacao nibs, and coconut sugar.

Patrons also come here for spiritual nourishment – ask Lisa about O'ways meaning. While inspirational quotes for personal growth outside change daily.

ABOUT SHELLEE-KIM GOLD

A long-time globetrotter, Shellee-Kim spent seven years travelling through 43 countries.

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