

Miami Restaurants Embrace Plant-Based Cuisine

Written by Geoffrey Anderson Jr. and Dianne Rubin, BT Contributors
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Food news we know you can use

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When you go out to eat, you want to leave feeling satisfied. A meal should leave you full -- not so full that you hate yourself, but full enough so that you don't need to keep eating afterward.

For many diners, a true meal involves red meat or some other hearty protein. Plant-based cuisine? That might as well be a foreign language to them; it's just not filling to some people.

But it can be. Miami restaurants have been embracing vegetarian and vegan dishes that are comparable in size and flavor to their meat counterparts. There is plant-based food beyond tofu -- it just takes some searching. And your search should start in Brickell.

Over there, **Zuuk Mediterranean Kitchen** (1250 S. Miami Ave., 305-200-3145) is catering to carnivores and herbivores alike. Customers can't resist the array of tasty spreads that can be

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added to any meal: roasted red pepper hummus; feta, mint and lemon; and tzatziki -- to name just a few. Paired with falafel, roasted vegetables, or one of the restaurant's other vegetarian options, these dips make for an appetizing lunch or dinner. We suggest spicing things up with Zuuk's signature red harissa sauce.

Out in Wynwood, **Charly's Vegan Tacos** (172 NW 24th St., 305-456-8202) is doing its part in getting patrons to eat more veggies. The restaurant is 100 percent vegan, which may be an instant turnoff for some. But don't judge a book by its cover; tacos with grilled seitan steak and porkless cracklings have the taste and texture of the real things. Here at Charly's, it's hard to tell you're not eating meat; if you want a glimpse into how good plant-based food can be, this is the spot.

In a hurry? Empanadas are always good for grabbing and going, and **Fufi's Empanadas** (4600 NE 2nd Ave., 305-576-7444) in Buena Vista serves up a ton. Alongside their steak, pork, chicken, and pizza options are creative plant-based takes like eggplant curry and vegan chorizo and beans. Get the berry guacamole for the road, too; the cranberries and pomegranate seeds elevate an already delicious dip.

In Sunny Isles Beach, **Saffron Indian Cuisine** (18090 Collins Ave., #T-22, 786-899-5554) is busy filling a few big neighborhood niches: Indian food and vegetarian food. There's a whole menu section dedicated to vegetarian dishes; you'll find items like channa masala (chickpeas, dry spices, onions, and herbs), paneer tikka masala (onions, bell pepper, cashew, and fenugreek leaves), and fried okra available to satisfy your appetite.

OPENINGS

In between all these plant-based bites, make sure to get your fill of new South Florida restaurants. The summer lull is long gone, and new spots are starting to pop up in time for the season.

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One of our favorite new additions is **Silverlake Bistro** (1211 71st St., 786-803-8113) in North Beach, from the team behind the wildly successful Hialeah French restaurant, La Fresa Francesa. Forget about your diet at this California-inspired bistro, as decadent -- and delectable -- options like the Napa grilled-cheese sandwich and the duck fat-seared gnocchi mac and cheese will knock it into 2019.

Pizza, pasta, wine, and spirits are plentiful at **Amarone** (15400 Biscayne Blvd., Ste. 107, 305-440-0766), a recent addition to North Miami. The menu is huge at this Italian restaurant, so pace yourself. While it's tempting to scarf down Amarone's carbonara and ravioli to your stomach's desire, save room for some pizzas, too. They're the usual ones you can find at other Italian restaurants, but these classics are done right -- even the margherita pizza is worth writing home about.

CLOSINGS

In downtown Miami, **Jon Smith Subs** closed as quickly as it opened. The sub shop, known for embracing the local Cuban culture in its menu, lasted only a few months before calling it a day.

Up in the Upper Eastside, several eateries have also gone dark. Neighborhood staple **Mina's Mediterraneo** abruptly shut down after five years; the restaurant announced its final service with only a day's notice. We'll miss that Shashuka.

Not too far away, **Balans** on Biscayne also bid the neighborhood farewell. Slow business was cited as the reason for the departure; the brand plans to double down on its other locations in Brickell and Miami Beach.

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Geoffrey Anderson Jr. and Dianne Rubin are co-founders of Miami Food Pug, an award-winning South Florida food blog that fuses the couple's love of dogs and food.

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