

3 City Bowl and Atlantic Seaboard veggie-loving restaurants

 By [Shellee-Kim Gold](#)

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Vegan and vegetarian cuisine in the Cape can bowl you over with its sheer creativity. This includes contemporary twists on traditional foreign foods and re-creating flavours for vegans in dishes that easily rival that of their carnivorous counterparts.

Plant, Loop Street

“It’s written all over your face,” said head Chef Angela Nodoro, smiling in response to my silent wide-eyed ecstasy. I’ve just tasted her sour cream that accompanies the carrot lox wrap at Plant in Loop Street. It’s the closest to animal-derived sour cream I’ve ever had - made from apple cider vinegar, lemon juice, and cashew nuts.

Plant is to vegan dining what Lindt chocolates are to the chocolate industry. Not least due to owner Pierre Lambret’s ongoing kitchen experiments.

It’s around 5pm when I’ve settled at this 100% gourmet vegan venue. Yet there’s hardly a rustic wooden table to be had.

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Thursday special at Plant : 2 💎💎 for the price of 1 !! You have the choice between 💎💎 Plant burger, 💎💎 Happy salmon 💎💎 mushroom burger Served with a bouquet of crudités and corn on the cob ! 💎💎 Please book via Feastfox in the evening :)

A post shared by [Plant](#) (@plantcafe) on Nov 29, 2018 at 12:11am PST

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Concocting cuisine creations that come so close to the carnivorous versions takes a special type of commitment and mastery. Evidence of this is in the parmesan (cashew nut-based) and other cheeses made here, as well as the popular shwarma dish. If I was blindfolded, I would swear I was eating meat. Made from tempeh (soya bean) and seitan (gluten powder), the shwarma's grilled, smoky, meaty flavour is almost precisely like its animal counterpart. Other popular dishes are the mushroom burger, nachos, and quesadillas. Plant's flatbread - made from lentils and gluten - is light in texture, though appears the opposite.

Imitating the 'meat' of the meal is exactly the point for Pierre who's lived all over the world and 'has always been a good cook'. It also means using numerous key ingredients including tempeh, seitan, cashew nuts, soya milk and maple syrup in many dishes to replicate textures and flavours.



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

Shellee-Kim Gold 27 Nov 2018



There's even cauliflower 'scrambled eggs' and tempeh 'bacon'. "I created and developed all the savoury dishes here. Inspiration comes from many places," said Pierre, who reveals the addictively-flavoured lox's secret. "To create the smoky taste close to salmon we use seaweed and liquid smoke."

A lot more preparation's involved when a restaurant refrains from using processed products, yet orders are still served timeously at Plant. Waiter Frank, who took care of me with professional aplomb, is all abuzz at the juice and smoothie bar.

A café latte with almond milk was deliciously creamy, yet light. Highly recommended with that, is the delectable fudge. Made with maple syrup, cocoa powder, and vanilla, the dairy-free, dark chocolate truffle was a melt-in-the-mouth experience. Other desserts options include the highly-rated gluten-free brownies and milk tart.

If you're toying with the idea of converting to veganism, Plant will undoubtedly become your inspiration. For vegans and vegetarians, it already is!

Maria's, Dunkley Square

Cleon Romano, owner of Maria's, repeatedly tells me his wife, Kate, is the artist and 'what she does with food is phenomenal'. This is not just the usual public relations talk, I realise. Especially when a bowl of warmed, smoked almonds doused in Turkish chilli, origanum and paprika are deposited dangerously on our table at Maria's restaurant.





My companion and I nibble on them compulsively like starved squirrels - even when fiery orange-coloured (vegan-friendly) soup is set before us. Roasted baby tomatoes and red pepper are an unknown to me. But it turns out to be liquid bliss. Decorated with avocado pear, it's drizzled with olive oil and topped with a blob of yoghurt.

In existence since the 1950s, then-owner Maria would lock herself in when business was done for the day and retire to her residence upstairs. A few things have changed between the walls of this national monument since. For one, the Romano's version of traditional Greek dishes now includes all types of intriguing contemporary twists.

Around 80% the menu's good for vegetarians, while vegans can enjoy plenty of the same, adapted. Vegan mezes could include komesko (tempura), dolmades, or a main such as yiouvetsi (mushroom and orzo).

Our vegetarian meze board arrived laden with spiral-styled spanakopitas (spinach, onion, cheeses in phyllo pastry), samosa-like tyropitas (cheese and leak in phyllo), puffy, light pita and marinated melizanes (brinjal) which was heavenly. Mujzer (marrow and feta) balls and a pink-tinged skorthalia (potato dip) were equally delectable. Outsized falafel balls, deep

fried in sesame seeds, were fabulous – soft, moist, and uniquely-flavoured.

“They’re based on a celebrity chef’s recipe, so they’re kind of green inside with cumin, coriander, and other herbs,” said Kate, a one-time art director. Her uber-creativity extends to the colourful presentation.



We ate on unusual brass tables framed by ash wood, while ‘moveable’ copper lighting hangs overhead. They reminded me of giant versions of Swiss cowbells, complete with colourful string.

I had one disappointment. There weren’t any stubbly-faced Greek men fiddling with their worry beads or playing backgammon over ouzo under the trees on the square outside. A typical sight at cafes in Greece. Maria’s serves Plomarion ouzo and Metaxa brandy on traditional Turkish trays.

Having Greek coffee again got me all nostalgic. Having it with the baklava ‘cigars’ (crushed nuts, honey, and lemon zest) soon rectified that. It was outstanding. My companion had the Kataifi, a Greek vanilla custard-mousse on a phyllo base. Not too sweet and perfectly light.

Maria’s is Greek food with flair: Inventive and artistic with original combinations and flavours worth savouring. Village yayas (grandmothers) don’t have a patch on it.

Twelve Apostles Hotel, Oudekraal

You’d be forgiven for thinking you hear a leopard’s roar emanating from the Twelve Apostles Hotel’s Leopard Bar. Though surrounded by the big cats immortalised in print and life-size sculptures, it’s more likely you’ll have heard a cat’s meow. Or even a dog’s bark.

Which canine wouldn’t be happy chewing on the tasty morsels from their bark-a-licious menu? It’s not unusual to see a dog joining its owner for breakfast here, comfortably seated on a plush lounge chair while both tuck into their respective meals.

Your furry friends are not the only ones welcomed at the Leopard Bar. A wide range of special dietary menus includes the vegetarian and vegan high tea.



Twelve Apostles introduces vegan high tea

Ruth Cooper 15 Feb 2018



Positioned at the best table, we're overlooking the terrace and its uninterrupted views over the Atlantic Ocean. I order a frappe with cream to match the sumptuous surrounds. Made to perfection, it cools me down without filling me up. While my companion has a glass of orange and Spice rooibos, proclaimed as 'divine'.

Interiors are decked out in the colours of the bush at sunset: comfortable couches in oranges and green velveteen upholstery are punctuated by the occasional leather armchair.

Three-tiered, elegant black slate trays arrived carrying our high tea, decorated with edible flowers and fruit slices. My vegan version of the delicately sweet and savoury edibles included roast vegetables and pesto and vegan cheese and tomato sandwiches. There was also hummus and crudité, but the surprise was the Waldorf salad made with homemade vegan mayonnaise. My companion and I almost fought over the last bits of that, it was so good.



I nicked as much of my companion's New York-style cheesecake as I could – the best of her vegetarian tray for me. Other sweets included the passion fruit and almond Madeline and the forest berry puff - interspersed with decorative chocolate pearls. The vegetarian savoury spread was similar to mine but included cheese scones and egg sandwich fillings. You can choose between 15 flavours of tea, four black and three green varieties to wash down your feast.

We befriend the resident cat before leaving. She looked extremely satisfied – and likely had loads of her own high tea stories to share.

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