

Plant-powered in Lamorinda

By Jenn Freedman



Kabab Burger's sampler platter
Photos Jenn Freedman

Plant-based eating has become a global trend that is here to stay: from millennials to elite athletes to corporate workplaces to mainstream health organizations, veganism – a diet that excludes all animal products (meat, dairy, and eggs) – has emerged from the fringes and is verging on mainstream. In fact, according to a report by research firm Global Data, the U.S. has seen a 600 percent increase in people identifying as vegans in the last three years – or 6 percent of American consumers.

Using that statistic, Lamorinda could have upwards of 3,500 vegan residents, and while that may not be the case (yet), it's a safe bet that we have plenty of plant-hungry locals. But whether you follow a strict plant-based diet, want to decrease your meat/dairy intake, or are just a passionate and curious foodie, there is good news: Lamorinda has more options than ever before!

Sure, vegans can find some-

thing to eat at almost any restaurant by omitting a few ingredients of a menu item or just ordering side dishes ... though more and more, chefs are intentionally crafting delectable dishes using only plants, and this is something to celebrate. Here are a few of my favorite discoveries:

Baagan Plant Grill is a vegan Indian food truck that recently joined the Moraga farmers' market every Sunday, with a full-page menu that offers burgers, teas and more. The spicy mung burger is satisfying to the taste buds and the eyes ... piled high with a rainbow of veggies and an herbal cashew spread, easily washed down with a refreshing blackberry sage lemonade. And don't miss the vida potato cakes served on a chana salad with a cilantro-lime cashew dressing and one of the best tangy tamarind sauces I have ever tasted. Just the other day my omnivorous friend told me that she had just tried a burger and tea from Baagan ... and her verdict: "It was filling and delicious, without the same heavy feeling after from my typical choice."



Town's veggie and farro bowl

Also in Moraga, **Town Bakery & Cafe** features an incredibly fresh organic faro bowl with assorted seasonal vegetables and mushrooms that taste like they were just picked from the garden ... and they were – the seasonal produce comes from Moraga Garden Farm just down the road. One of the new spots in town, **Noodle Theory**, has a spinach ramen miso bowl with

roasted mixed mushrooms and truffle oil that is delicate yet decadent – sure to hit the spot on a cooler day. And do not miss the spicy dry sautéed green beans ... those gingery, slightly sweet bites are additive.

Lafayette has some solid options as well. **Roam Burger** has



Roam Burger's veggie burger

been impressing me for years with their shockingly delicious homemade vegan burger made with beets, quinoa, black beans, dates and more, that even my omnivorous friends order regularly. For a hearty feast order on a bun with fries (russet, sweet, onion, and zucchini are all vegan), or for a lighter meal, order over the farmers market salad or next to the seasonal veggies. **Kabab Burger** offers an entirely plant-based sampler platter, which includes hummus, Turkish salad, baba ganoush, spicy eggplant, pickles, tahini, dolmas and my favorite, their falafel balls. **Paxti's** is the go-to pizza joint with their signature vegan deep dish pizza with spinach, garlic, red onion and Daiya cheese on a whole wheat crust. Kale salad lov-



Sideboard's fiesta bowl

ers should check out **Sideboard's** fiesta bowl, which includes black and white beans, tomatoes, quinoa, and brown rice with a tangy jalapeno cilantro vinaigrette. For a healthy grab-and-go vegan meal or snack, **Urban Remedy** has dozens of options – salads, bowls, protein bars, juices, soups, and snacks. Try the Japanese inspired black rice

umeboshi bowl, a satisfying balance of textures with the crunchy rice and seed blend next to the silky avocado and miso flavored dressing. For a unique flavor profile, check out the veggie chopped salad with sweet potato, smoked vegan cheese, and eggplant "bacon" bits with a tangy lemon dressing. And consider stocking up on my current snack addictions while you're there: the sour cream and chive kale chips and the carrot curry crackers.

Important to note, most Asian/Indian cuisines naturally have vegan choices, and Lamorinda has over a dozen such eateries. I am still working through these tasty options and look forward sharing more plant-based highlights soon. Bon appetit!

Rheem easement will reopen

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Another neighbor, Nancy Brown, was visibly upset as she addressed the council. "This land is our land," she said, "and we would be wonderful partners and friends."

"This isn't new," she added, "we shook hands on it."

But Terry Murphy, former chair of the planning commission, said that the easement had not existed since the city rejected it 10 years ago. He argued that the DeSpains bought the property with only a sewer easement.

"The convenience of neighbors

should not outshine the property rights of homeowners," he concluded.

Several neighbors spoke kindly about DeSpain, but agreed that the easement has been in existence for decades and supported it being open to the public. The meeting concluded with a continuance of the matter for two weeks when it would again come before the council, which intended to accept the easement on Oct. 16. That meeting occurred after this publication went to press.

experience

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Issues that Matter in Lafayette

Vote for **Susan Candell**, the **City Council Candidate** with the right perspective, the needed expertise and a record of standing with citizens

- Vote for hiring a City Manager who supports balanced development
- Vote to uphold the Commissioners' Conflict of Interest Ordinance
- Vote for public involvement and transparency in city decisions

Issue #1: City Manager & Balanced Growth

In his retirement letter Mr. Falk included a statement, with which I completely agree: "Elections have consequences, and one is that Lafayette residents deserve a city manager who is better aligned with their priorities." Mr. Falk and his now publicized pro-growth agenda have been one of the reasons that many of the new housing developments were pushed through the approval process quickly. Many of the projects do not include any affordable housing units. None of them come with any significant infrastructure improvements to reduce the adverse traffic and parking impacts. Many of us believe we need a more balanced approach.

Lafayette needs to hire a City Manager who will focus on all the important elements - residents, services, schools and traffic, particularly for downtown in-fill developments. We also need a City Manager who will hire experienced, capable land-use attorneys to protect our city's open space, hillsides, ridgelines and recreational areas.

Susan's Position:

I support OPEN and PUBLIC discussions during the interview/hiring process of our next City Manager to ensure we select the best candidate to represent the needs of our citizens and protect the rights of our city.

Be an informed voter!
Understand the most pressing issues facing Lafayette!

Issue #2: Lafayette Must Support the Conflict of Interest Ordinance

Two Questions:

1. Is it ok for a Commissioner to be hired by a developer for a project in Lafayette?
2. When that project is on the agenda at the Commission meeting, is it ok for that Commissioner to recuse him/herself, then stand up and to present that same project to that Commission?"

If you answer "No", you are in agreement with almost all the residents I have spoken with over the past year. This practice is illegal, according to the the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), and yet for years, more than six Commissioners from both the Planning Commission and the Design Review Commission did so more than 15 times. The law is clear, yet our City Attorney wrote a statement that defended the Commissioners, when she should have clearly recommended stopping this practice. I have heard from residents, who witnessed this practice while presenting their own home-improvement projects, and I believe that our residents deserve the same level playing-field as developers.

Susan's Position:

Lafayette must maintain a fair, legal and ethical process for approving development projects. **Only 2 candidates – Susan and Ivor - support the new Conflicts Ordinance. Be informed on this issue before voting in November if you support fair and transparent government in Lafayette.**

Issue #3: Downtown Specific Plan Must Involve Citizen's Input

Our Downtown Specific Plan ('DSP') took over six years to sign. The reason it took such a long amount of time was because Steve Falk and staff went against the residents and homeowners associations requests for downtown planning.

The final Downtown Specific Plan is far better because of resident input, but it isn't anywhere near what residents and homeowners requested. The new DSP should consider the changes to the Housing climate with the recent passing of more than eleven new State Laws including AB2923, the BART bill that takes planning control over the BART parking lots away from the City of Lafayette. The retail climate has also fundamentally changed, and we need to ensure our zoning is updated to allow new, desirable retail to come to Lafayette.

Susan's Position:

We need to deeply understand these new laws and be proactive to ensure that our local policies are sufficient to prevent negative impacts from these projects. **Housing will be built, growth will happen, so let's make sure that we minimize negative impacts and preserve our welcoming and vibrant downtown.** I also intend to reopen the plan for the East End of Lafayette, the more service-oriented end of Lafayette from First Street to the Lafayette Park Hotel.



Read the facts or email Susan with questions
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Paid for by Susan Candell 2018 City Council, FPPC# 1410191

SUSAN CANDELL