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Special Feature: 40 Years McDonald's in Europe





Hiltl



tibits



Swiss veggie pioneers: The Frei brothers Christian, Daniel and Reto (left to right) with Rolf Hiltl (r.).

# Out of the Eco-freak Corner

Although things looked different some years ago, vegetarian and vegan restaurants are still a niche market – primarily because most ‘normal’ restaurants have upgraded and increased their range of meatless dishes to cater for mixed groups. Although the number of (part-time) vegetarians is increasing, there is still not enough of them to counteract the veto of the omnivores. However, the idea of going without meat is shifting out of the eco-freak corner into mainstream society, thanks chiefly to food scandals and greater nutritional awareness. Restaurateurs wanting to promote a vegetarian lifestyle must attract meat-eaters with creative and, first and foremost, tasty recipes. Part 1 of our pan-European overview.

### Switzerland

Europe’s oldest vegetarian restaurant, **Hiltl** ([www.hiltl.ch](http://www.hiltl.ch)), was founded in Zurich 113 years ago. Since 1998, the family business – now in its fourth generation, has been run by Rolf Hiltl and his wife Marielle. In 2007, the venerable restaurant was fully renovated and extended with the seating capacity being

increased from 250 to around 550, including 120 on the terrace. Rolf Hiltl’s main objective is to make the company name relevant for future generations. The former completely full-service concept has given way to a more varied and flexible blend of offers for which the cook & chill solution previously used has been supplemented by an increasing range of fresh dishes cooked à la minute. The ground-floor lounge is aimed specifically at younger target groups. The multi-optional, all counter-service section with a separate entrance accounts for around 70% of receipts and, depending on the time of day, is also a café, bar, club and take-away zone – from 6 in the morning until 2 or even 4 at night, depending on the day of the week – in other words, a place for breakfast and snacks, for a quick lunch, aperitif or a nightcap. The buffet, an island with a circumference of around eight metres, is positioned at the interface between lounge and restaurant. A choice of around 50 vegetarian and vegan dishes –







fet. As in the restaurant, food is charged by weight. And, of course, there is a range of fruit juices, iced teas and 'home-made' soft drinks.

The influence of Rolf Hiltl also extends to another vegetarian concept – a fast-food formula called 'tibits' by Hiltl ([www.tibits.ch](http://www.tibits.ch)), which is now to be found at five locations in Switzerland (in Zurich (2x), Basel, Winterthur and Bern) and one in London. All are places where lovers of vegetarian food can find tasty, uncomplicated and, above all, meatless dishes.

With their idea for a fast, fresh and attractive restaurant, brothers Daniel, Reto and Christian Frei won Venture 98, a business-plan competition organised by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) and McKinsey, with their concept for a high-class, fast-food vegetarian restaurant. Rolf and Marielle Hiltl heard about the brothers and got in touch with them. Together, they implemented the plan and opened the first outlet in

of London-based designer Tricia Guild. Although the concept is highly successful in Switzerland, the move to Britain with two restaurants in London was not easy. The outlet in Westfield White City opened in 2008 and had to be closed shortly afterwards. Subsequently, all efforts have been focused on the city-centre unit near Regent Street where smaller plates and lower prices are matched to guests' needs and expectations.

Ten years after the launch, the Frei brothers are forging new plans for expansion. They would like to open outlets in St. Gallen or Luzern, as well as new locations in London, and make a move into Germany.

## Germany

Thanks to the food scandals of the last few years plus a greater awareness of the problems posed by the growth in the world's meat consumption, the vegetarian lifestyle in Germany is gaining

Apart from this, more and more Germans have a critical attitude to meat consumption. Just on two thirds (65%) of all women and 38% of the men even now claim to be part-time vegetarians, making around 42 m 'flexitarians' altogether. Their number is evidently on the rise, and already accounts for the majority of the German population.

Many caterers' assortments and menus are now reflecting this trend more strongly. There is scarcely a restaurant that does without vegetarian offerings. After all, in heterogeneous groups, it is usually those who refuse to eat meat that decide where to eat. In most of the bigger towns and cities, there are rather few exclusively vegetarian restaurants, but thanks to a loyal regular clientele, these few restaurants have been well-established for many years. Altogether, the theme is still a niche. Truly innovative concepts that raise vegetarian dining to new epicurean heights remain the exception.

A restaurant that deservedly attracts a great deal of attention is 'Chipps' ([www.chipps.de](http://www.chipps.de)) in Berlin. The young casual concept featuring greens as its culinary leitmotif addresses many more diners than a mere niche clientele. By offering meat and fish as optional side orders to vegetables, it stands out as a creative and intelligent contrast to its competitors in Germany's vegetarian capital, where meatfree restaurants have long since been a familiar part of the cityscape.

The 'Chipps Plates' mix & match system offers guests a choice from among five basic components (pasta sheet, potato rösti, mashed potatoes, dumpling or rice roll) as the basis for their meals selected from one of four categories ('The Gardener', 'The Bowl', 'The Sun', 'The German'). For each category there are dishes priced at €6.50, €8 and €9.50. Fish or meat such as zander with horseradish sauce or roastbeef with tomato-caper butter can be ordered in 80g portions, served on a separate plate. In the 'Chipps Select' section, guests are free to create their own compositions to their own taste from basic components and vegetables/toppings. They can put together their own salads, which come in three sizes (€4.50, €8.50 and €10.50). The lunch menu including starter (soup or salad) and main course costs €8.50. The average tag comes to around €10.50 at lunchtime and €16.50 in the evening.

For more than three years now, chef Stephan Hentschel has also spent time



Heinz 'Cookie' Gindullis, Stephan Hentschel (Chipps)



Chipps

Zurich's Seefeld district on 6 December 2000. Others followed in Winterthur, Bern and Basel. The London restaurant opened in 2008.

Subtitled 'Vegetarian Fast Food', the concept comprises a restaurant, bar and take-away with counter service (soups, sandwiches, patisseries) in a casual atmosphere and open daily from 6.30 to 24 hrs. The bestseller is the buffet with 40 homemade salads hot dishes and snacks for CHF4.20 per 100 g. There are also desserts on the buffet boat. They are also charged by weight (CHF3.30). Take away is cheaper and everything costs CHF0.50 less. Food is weighed and paid for at the counter. Incidentally, 60-70% of the 6-7,000 daily tibits guests are women. The interior design is modernised every two years and is the work

ground. In 2010 alone, the membership of the German Vegetarian Society (Vegetarierbund Deutschland – VEBU), an association whose aim is to promote a vegetarian way of living, went up by 20% to 3,400. VEBU puts the number of vegetarians in Germany last year at 6 m, which would be equivalent to 8% of the population. According to the society, around 600,000 people are vegans and do completely without foods of animal origin.

As far as a meat-free diet is concerned, the rule is also: no trend without an event. The first 'VeggieWorld', a trade fair dedicated to meat-free living under the aegis of VEBU, was held in Wiesbaden from 11 to 13 February this year. With around 40 exhibitors, it attracted more than 20,000 visitors. There are plans to repeat it in February 2012 at the latest.



Yellow Sunshine



Yellow Sunshine

cooking in the **Cookies Cream** sister restaurant ([www.cookies-cream.de](http://www.cookies-cream.de)) run by the father of the concept, Heinz 'Cookie' Gindullis. Here, however, it is purely vegetarian, with Hentschel cooking out of conviction but with understanding for people who do not share his view: "We do not want to exclude anyone. We are no fundamentalists when it comes to vegetarian cuisine! For us, however, it is the healthier and also more sustainably reasonable diet. But we are not going to make a dogma out of it."

Just serious eating: this is the claim of the formula that sees itself as belonging to the fast-casual genre and which serves mainly non-vegetarians from 8 in the morning to late at night. – Hentschel reckons that around 80% of the guests are not per se part of the anti-meat faction, but like to do without it from time to time.

The food components are presented behind a glass counter and produced in the open kitchen in the middle of the dining

room, which can seat 60 people. The pilot location, opened in April 2010, was soon followed in February 2011 by a second unit with seating for 75 people on the Friedrichstrasse, a popular tourist haunt. Here the emphasis is mainly on takeaway options marketed under their own takeaway brand. Recently, Gindullis also teamed up with the Clicquot champagne label to send the Clicquot Rolling Diner out onto the streets for the Berlin Fashion Week and serve star-quality gourmet streetfood ranging from vegetarian doners to curried sausage with truffles.

Also opened in Berlin in 2004, **Yellow Sunshine** ([www.yellow-sunshine.de](http://www.yellow-sunshine.de)), which claims to be Germany's oldest organic fast-food restaurant and can seat just about 30 guests in an area of 100 sq m, is proof that even a traditional snack can do without meat. The self-service diner offers its guests traditional fast food ranging from burgers to curried sausage to gyros made of soya, seitan and vegetables. Prices range from €3 to €7. 90% of the range on offer is certified as organic.

And Berlin can provide yet another innovative example: '**Veggie No 1 – die Grüne Mensa**' ([www.studentenwerk-berlin.de](http://www.studentenwerk-berlin.de)) was opened in January 2010 and is Germany's first exclusively vegetarian university canteen. A canteen of the Freie Universität Berlin that in need of rehabilitation has been turned into a modern campus restaurant where vegetarians, and those who are so inclined, can enjoy food in a pleasant atmosphere.

The menu features dishes like carrot and ginger soup, celery with chickpeas, kohlrabi patty with herb sauce or bread dumplings with mushroom-apple ragout – some of organic standard – that are proof of the possibilities of vegetarian



Zest

food. Since 2004, the student-service canteens have been certified under the EU organic label. On the Veggie No. 1's first anniversary at the beginning of 2011, canteen manager Eva Grundmann was very positive: "The response to the offer is excellent. At the beginning we had 600 meals a day and now it's already 1,000. The location is more than working to capacity." This promising experience has prompted people in the capital to take a further step. Since mid-April 2011, all larger canteens have been offering a so-called 'climate meal' in addition to the vegetarian dish on their daily menus. The climate meal is completely vegan, because the production of foods of animal origin like meat, butter and cream is responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions in the food sector.

One positive side effect is that the daily, purely plant-based, dish also satisfies the needs of the growing target group of people with lactose intolerance.

Ethically motivated, enjoyment oriented and profitable on a modest scale: this is the approach on which the vegan restaurant **Zest** ([www.zest-leipzig.de](http://www.zest-leipzig.de)) in Leipzig's dynamic Connewitz district is based. With seating for 32 people in an area of 60 sq m indoors plus 24 on the terrace, the restaurant owners have every reason to be pleased about a fully booked house almost every evening. At 6 pm, the daytime menu makes way for the evening menu. Both menus are changed twice a month. With few exceptions, all offers are vegan. Imaginative cross-over creations bring together influences from Southeast Asia, North and South America, and Central and Eastern Europe. To give just two samples: bramata polenta roulade with onion seed crust and nettle cream filling, bellpepper chipotle confit and sauteed May turnips for €14.80 or puff pastry with olive oil pistachio potato puree and king oyster mushrooms, pimientos de pardon and sage Madeira jus for €15.80.

It is part of the philosophy of the four founders of the concept to ensure that all dishes are as fresh as possible, including the handmade production of sauces, bread and patisserie. And a great deal of creative thought has gone into the drinks menu as well: the melon-pepper-smoothie, pineapple-spinach-soya yoghurt-shake or kumquat-star-aniseed lemonade leave no room for boredom.

To raise vegan food to new heights of culinary enjoyment was the ambition of the **Coox & Candy** restaurant



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([www.coox-candy.de](http://www.coox-candy.de)) when it started up in Stuttgart in February 2011. Located in an old listed building, the restaurant has seating for 60 guests on two storeys and a further 16 places outside for people taking a break at lunchtime or enjoying a relaxed dinner. The green upholstery inside is not the only indication of the owners' love of nature; there is also a 4-m-high tree in the hall. All dishes are completely vegetarian and are suitable for vegans. The kitchen's philosophy is good plain traditional food newly interpreted and influenced by international vegetarian cuisine. There are also raw-vegetable dishes and macrobiotic food on the menu. In the evening the menu includes dishes like herb-polenta-slices on ratatouille or veggie 'chicken' on a bed of vegetable rice and is offered from Wednesday to Sunday from 5 pm onwards. Tuesday is Pizza Day with six different offerings; the restaurant is closed on Mondays.

## France

In France, it would seem that there is no single well-established chain of vegetarian restaurants. No reproducible concepts defined by any kind of 'charter', as one sees in other European countries or in the United States. Vegetarians and vegans pass on the names of favourite restaurants by word of mouth, get advice from community web sites and exchange tips. To get information about the subject they have to keep their eyes and their ears open!

At the Veg Festival on the Place des Innocents in the centre of Paris, a square with a very symbolic name, vegans were demonstrating recently against the slaughter of farmed animals. Many of the people there were followers of non-consumerism, 'Goths', seemingly pretty radical non-omnivores. That is probably one of the explanations as to why this sort of restaurant is not widespread in the French market. In their absence, these consumers give the impression of operating



in a closed world. Vegan patissiers, vegan caterers and vegan bakers provide food for them, discreetly, and for the most part as a side line. According to Sébastien Kardinal who writes on vegan restaurants and products for [www.vg-zone.net](http://www.vg-zone.net), "there are thirty or so vegetarian restaurants in Paris, four of which are suitable for vegans, as well as one bed and breakfast, which also provides an evening meal."

Located in the Boulevard Beaumarchais in the 11th arrondissement, **Loving Hut** (48 seats) seems to have found a consensus amongst the vegan community. The restaurant is 100% vegan. Hugues Rivard gave up his job as a specialist engineer in green building in Canada to devote himself to food, which is, according to him "the most immediate lever in the fight against climatic warming". He opened this restaurant two years ago with his Vietnamese wife, Thi Huong Rivard, and other associates. There is another establishment of the same name located in Menton in the South of France. Two hundred Loving Huts exist worldwide. The franchisor, based in Taiwan and who styles herself as 'Master', purveys a message of ecological redemption through the food we eat. The restaurateur has adopted the logo and the basic colour scheme from the franchisor. Hugues Rivard serves 70 to 80% organic produce, since some proteins are not yet available as organic. "I also want the prices to remain affordable," he explains. The soya protein, extruded at high speed and fast dried, is the central ingredient on



Guenmai



Exki



Exki

his menu. Imported from Taiwan, this is what replaces animal proteins. When cooked, it is found in the garnish for the burger (one of the restaurant's best sellers) and in the breaded escalope... The menu's composition gives an insight in-

to the current state of the food producing and processing industries where vegan products are concerned. There are no set menus; all dishes are sold à la carte and are very good value: from €5 to 7 for starters, €8 to 13.50 for main dishes and €5.50 to 9.50 for desserts. On the drinks front, there is no alcohol and Hugues Rivard provides water micro-filtered by reverse osmosis for his customers. "Veganism is a way of life. There is a lot of potential in this market; it's food

that you need to get people to discover," says the owner. At lunchtime, the restaurant has around thirty customers and more in the evening. "They are vegans but not exclusively. Some people appreciate being able to eat lunch and not to feel heavy afterwards. They come once a week," Hugues Rivard also points out. In France, where 'good' local products – cheese, milk, meat, butter – are favoured, farmed animals are an essential part of traditional cuisine. The fact is that a

# France

meal is a celebration and its composition varies depending on where you are. Even more so nowadays when reduced food miles are all the rage. To sum up: "you eat your region". Indeed, vegetarians are considered rather sad people, vegans even more so. Against this background, it is not easy for a chef to take advantage of this gap in the market. Whilst lots of vegetarians and vegans are unhappy about the absence of vegetarian, not to say vegan, restaurants. There are concepts that focus on vegetables, but they are 'omnivore'. **Exki**, created ten years ago, promotes the organic vegetable of the month (celery in April, courgettes in May...) which they offer in salads, soups and sandwiches; in addition to which, they provide information on ecology and the environment.

In a few months, all the recipes will display a new item of information: their water footprint – i.e. the cost of their production in terms of water used. Which gives rise to some confusion for vegetarians as to how they can nevertheless find something to eat among the various kinds of food on offer.

Will the young generation of chefs take up this challenge? Tom Dauniac has opened a rather up-market organic fast-food restaurant in Paris, which he has called **Crock & bio**. His patisseries contain no eggs, butter, sugar, or dairy products. He serves grain coffee. It was a natural step for him. He does not eat meat,

but his menu offers several Spanish charcuterie items – the result of a 'compromise' reached with Sandra Rexach, his 'omnivore' Spanish girlfriend. He has completely come to terms with this mix on the menu. The young chef is the son of Sophie Dauniac, who has run the **Guenmaï** in the Saint-Germain des Prés quarter for the last thirty odd years, one of just two macrobiotic restaurants in Paris. On the restaurant's façade the message is clear: 'Health through food'. 80% of the clientele is made up of regular customers. "At the moment, I'm seeing a new clientele keen to eat organic produce. They're not particularly familiar with macrobiotic food but just want to eat healthily," observes Sophie Dauniac. "I make organic recipes but don't advertise them as such. I don't want to be stuck if I can't get a particular ingredient."

Sold at €12, the dish of the day (on weekdays) consists of a plate of cereal products, cooked vegetables, pulses, raw vegetables, seaweed and a protein. No meat, but oven-cooked fish which is not organic, as the restaurateur does not want to use farmed fish which she considers "too close to the consumer."

With an average bill of €17.50, the restaurant, open only for lunch and with 20 seats inside and eight outside, serves 60 or so covers per service. A range of take-away dishes, a grocery section and beauty products round off their business activities.

Convinced of the necessity to promote French cuisine and the pleasures of food, Stéphane Seebaruth and Peter Aigner opened the **Potager du Marais** in the centre of Paris in 2003. "We provide meals based on French cuisine and using the names of traditional dishes," explains Stéphane Seebaruth. The vegetarian menu, which is 100% organic, offers mushroom pâté, chile sin carne, nut roast with mushroom duxelles and saffron cream...

The menu costs €25 for a starter, main dish and dessert. A year ago, the owners increased the size of their restaurant by buying the neighbouring shop, a former... butcher's-cum-charcuterie! According to Stéphane Seebaruth, the 40-seater restaurant is full for at least one service per day. Those in the know ring to book. Their range has expanded to include gluten-free dishes and vegan recipes, particularly when it comes to their patisserie. The owners have taken on an American specialist pastry chef. "There are several cross-currents to be negotiated," the restaurateur continues, "there is health, ecology; vegetarianism gives direction to the way we eat."

Italy

According to statistics and estimates, there are between 6 and 7 m Italians (that is, one in ten) who profess to be vegetarian and 600,000 who are vegan (ie, one in a hundred). In any case, 'vegetarian' in Italy has a wide meaning: some think that it is enough to omit red meat and eat fish... Anyway, the vegetarian diet is undoubtedly gaining followers especially among the younger generations, both for ethical, health and environmental reasons. 70% of vegetarians are women, mainly aged between 25 and 54 years (62%) and mostly living in the north and in the centre. Projections estimate that in 2050 there will be 30 m vegetarians in Italy.

Despite these numbers, wholly vegetarian restaurants are still far and wide apart. Most of them are either ethnic (Indian, etc) or macrobiotic or annexed to yoga centres, organic shops, health spas or gyms an the like.

The truth is, to cater to the 6 m vegetarians an increasing number of 'generalist' restaurants have veggie menus or options – and without much trouble too, as Italian cuisine naturally has a lot of vegetarian and even vegan dishes to choose



Alice Nero



Joia



Il Margutta Vegetariano





Montali



from -, so that vegetarians can eat out with non-vegetarians. For the same reason, mainly vegetarian restaurants may offer non vegetarian dishes.

It's a thorny issue and even the web site of a vegan association carries a link to a site recommending "places where you can eat vegetarian, too" (but not exclusively). The **Montali** country house in Umbria ([www.montalionline.com](http://www.montalionline.com)) is 100% vegetarian. It is the brainchild of a vegetarian couple, Maria Lucia Simoes da Cunha and Alberto Musacchio, who in the 90's decided to open a gourmet vegetarian resort in the countryside. "We try and cook a colourful, intriguing vegetarian cuisine, natural and fresh," says Maria Lucia, "with lots of flavour and taste. We want to show that vegetarian cooking can be fun, too. My main inspiration is traditional Italian regional cuisines, which I mix with spices and flavours from other parts of the world. In fact, we mix vegetarian and Mediterranean cuisine, that's why we've coined the term 'vegetarranean' cuisine and have published a book of our recipes under this title". At Montali they produce their own olive oil and herbs, and vegetables, fruit and cheese are sourced locally. More than 90% of resident clients come from abroad, mainly from Northern Europe, but in the last few years Italians are increasing. Montali also organizes cooking courses and specialist vegetarian courses for other cooks.

In Rome we find one of the first Italian vegetarian restaurants, **Il Margutta Vegetariano** ([www.ilmarguttavegetariano.it](http://www.ilmarguttavegetariano.it)). Opened in 1979 by vegetarian owners, it sits in a street famous for its ateliers, craftsmen workshops and art galleries, in a very popular tourist district (the Spanish Steps are a few minutes away). The

restaurant is rich in art itself and regularly hosts exhibitions and live music. Here, too, the accent is on fine food. No bland vegetarian options here, but colourful and tasteful dishes, here too directly inspired from Italian tradition. 70% of the ingredients used are from organic production. For instance, fresh egg pasta is prepared with organic flours and cakes, bread and desserts are also made on the premises. At lunch the focal point is the buffet with over fifty different dishes prepared with organic products and cooked in technological ovens to preserve their nutritional qualities and exalt their taste. Prices vary from €12 on weekdays, €15 on Saturdays and €25 on Sundays and public holidays. Dinner menus change seasonally and always carry vegan options. There are a few set menus, from €26 to 60, and many a la carte dishes.

Milan boasts **Joia** ([www.joia.it](http://www.joia.it)) the first and still the only vegetarian restaurant in Italy to gain a Michelin star. Joia is the brainchild of Swiss chef Pietro Leemann, a serious scholar of antroposophy, ayurveda and Chinese philosophical doctrines which he has digested and assimilated into his own highly personal idea of natural cuisine: healthy and well balanced food, made with the freshest ingredients, either raw or cooked according to its nature, to maximise their "vitality" and nutrition for our body. Above all, his food must be honest: he considers it as his mission to respect the sacrality of food and to cook it in the best possible way for his clients so that in eating it they can both feel pleasure and be healthy and maybe even glimpse the beauty of life, the natural world and the spirit. Despite his serious philosophical approach, Leemann likes to play in the kitchen, and his dishes are never boring

but always surprising as well as well constructed. Reading the menu requires a bit of imagination, for dishes carry puzzling names such as "Under a coloured (snow) blanket" and "On the left bank of the river".

Joia opened in 1996 as a wholly vegetarian restaurant, but Leemann was ahead of his time and to stay in business he added a few fish dishes to his menu. Two years ago, finally, he was able to get back to the origins and now no fish is to be found in his kitchen.

In Milan vegetarians have many other options to eat in restaurants and cafés that have banned meat and fish. One of these is the **Biobar** opened in April 2010 inside one of the shops of the Centro Botanico organic food shop chain ([www.centrobotanico.it](http://www.centrobotanico.it)). The Biobar has about 30 seats and is open during shop hours o the focus is on lunch and take away. Here the approach is fundamentally vegan and raw, though, as explains restaurant manager Marcello Rohrwasser, "we also include milk, cheese and honey in some recipes for our vegetarian clients." The biobar kitchen, though, is a "raw food workshop", where they experiment with ever new recipes with raw food (which is not always really raw but cooked under 45°C), such as the 'semi-cold' and 'raw' soups, hummus, and a raw lasagna made with apples and zucchini. Prices vary from €29 to 33 per kilo for the buffet and take away food, and there is a 'botanical dish' for €10.50. On the drink side, one can choose from organic fruit juices and squashes made at the moment and tropical fruit juices sourced from a farm in Sicily.

Apart from wholly vegetarian restaurants, there quite a few chains specialised either in organic or green food that cater to vegetarians and vegans too.

**Insalateria** is a chain of salad restaurants with outlets in urban hotels in Milan ([www.insalateria.it](http://www.insalateria.it)), specialized in salads of all types, mainly vegetarians but also including meat, cold cuts and fish.

**Alce Nero** is a chain of organic and fair trade food shops with a couple of cafés in Bologna and Cesena ([www.alcenero-caffe.com](http://www.alcenero-caffe.com)), mainly vegetarian but serving also fish and honey, as the chain has strong ties with organic farmers and bee breeders.

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