

# How (and Why) You Should Become a Vegan Regular

By Tanya Flink



Find your home away from home and leverage support for plant-based options by frequenting your favorite eateries.

Despite New Year's resolutions to cook at home more often, by this time of the year, many of us have discovered that we don't have the time to roast winter vegetables or simmer a hearty vegan soup. Still, we need to eat, which means our hectic schedules often find us sitting in a booth at our favorite cafés and restaurants. And although there are a few reasons (money, health, you can eat in your pajamas) why home cooking is preferred to dining out, being a restaurant regular comes with its own advantages.

Not only will you enjoy a delicious plant-based meal and loyal customer rewards, but you will also help promote the cruelty-free movement through your frequent patronage.

So don't fret if you can't find time to make dinner at home. Instead, use our helpful advice to satisfy your hunger while increasing the demand for vegan options in your community.

## Find Your Spot

Similar to almost everything in life, **location** is important, as the ideal venue should be close to your home or job. Once you've found an eatery that's **convenient** for you to visit, consider **price, consistency, quality, and service**.

Now, with these factors in place, ask yourself if you could patronize this establishment a few times a week. If the answer is yes, pack your laptop or a good book, stake out your table, and treat yourself to a satisfying vegan meal.

**Another tip:** if becoming known to employees is important, you might want to consider choosing a restaurant that is small and minimally staffed so you won't be forgotten in the crowd. Cafes are great options, as they tend to meet many or all of these requirements, but small, table-service restaurants can work as well.

**Another tip?** Don't forget vegan food vendors at farmers' markets. These small-business owners also need your support because many of them are working their way toward opening a storefront. So go ahead and schedule a weekly cupcake run—it's for a good cause!

## Practice Regular Etiquette

**Politeness** should be practiced every time you dine out, regardless of how many times you frequent a restaurant. However, **proper etiquette** is especially pertinent for restaurant regulars because you're going to see these people on a regular basis.

Furthermore, you can do your part to **dispel any negative stereotypes** the staff might associate with rude vegan customers. For example, we've all seen a fellow vegan (or, perhaps, ourselves) roll their eyes and begin hostile negotiations over the cost of substituting or adding plant-based milk. Yes, this extra charge can be annoying, but unleashing your frustration upon the employee won't change anything. However, if you are a friendly and consistent customer, they might occasionally compensate you for having to pay "**the vegan tax.**"

With this in mind, make sure you're **kind and courteous** to those who serve you. Ask them how their days are going or for their favorite menu items. Try their suggestions (as long as it's vegan) to show you actually care about their opinions. You never know—they might introduce you to a new favorite (or even be vegan themselves). If you develop a strong rapport, the server can let you in on the staff specials unknown to the inattentive customer.

In regard to **tipping**, throw your excess change into the tip jar for counter. For sit-downs, you don't have to over-tip, but be sure not to slight your server by consistently leaving the bare minimum.

Remember, positive emotions and actions are often reflected in those with whom we interact. Being a polite and respectful regular will enhance your dining experience, because the staff will likely reciprocate your kindness.

## Reap the Benefits

Now that you're on a first-name basis with the server or cashier, be sure to capitalize on the benefits of your frequent patronage. Ask the staff if they have a **loyalty program** because you might get a free meal later. Also, be sure to **follow the venue on social media**. Many businesses post special, limited-time only deals on Instagram, so keep an eye out for discounts on their social media accounts. Your online support will also help the business boost their social media presence and attract more customers.

Why not take it a step further and **write a positive review on Yelp** to bring more attention to the plant-based offerings? Ask to speak to the manager/owner, or send them an email of appreciation. Mention that you are a regular and compliment them on their vegan dishes.

If you would like more vegan options, these are ideal circumstances for making your request. Owners are more likely to be accommodating and receptive to input when suggestions are paired with a positive message.

In essence, the key to supporting the plant-based movement is to be friendly and familiar. You will enjoy all the advantages of being a loyal customer while contributing to the cause!

*Source: VegNews - Tanya Flink is an Orange County-based vegan, foodie, certified Master Personal Trainer, and a regular at four different vegan friendly OC eateries.*