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## Great food, smart living



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Preethi Sukumaran, a Chennai-based entrepreneur, has been vegan for year and a half now. As someone who has been experimenting with the concept for several years, she sighs as she ruefully declares: "When you become vegan, you can almost never eat out. You tend to eat more at home, the upside of which, is that it is healthier."

That might sound a bit of downer for vegans, but things are surely turning better. Restaurants, cafes and eating joints in almost all major cities are waking up to the concept of veganism—a diet and lifestyle that eliminates the use of animal products. Restaurants now cater to orders that ask for no dairy products to be used; bakeries make eggless, milkless cakes and Cafe Coffee Day has even introduced a vegan shake.

Himani Shetty, a campaign coordinator for Peta India in Bangalore, has been a vegan for almost two years. "There are plenty of options here. Fry's makes mock meats, and most restaurants serve vegan food, if asked. Popular choices for vegans are Southindies, Kamat restaurants, MTR, Konark, Nagarjuna, Luo Han, Urban Herbivore, Ramana's, Mynt and Emgee's," she says. Chittaranjan Hegde, director of Time Traveller, a smoke-free, alcohol-free, meat-free restaurant in Hotel E-Inn, agrees: "The demand for vegan dishes is increasing. Foreigners love the concept; so do some NRIs." The restaurant experiments with a wide range of cuisines ranging from Chinese to Mediterranean.

Hyderabad, too, is catching up. While the city does not have as many vegans as Bangalore, its supermarkets are a haven for vegans who find soy milk, soy flour and tofu easily available. Monica Bansal, a vegetarian transitioning into being a vegan, says, "Most restaurants are willing to make food according to your specifications." Pizza Hut and Italian restaurants in the city, too, make pizzas and pastas sans cheese.

Chennai is not far behind. It may not have vegan-specific outlets, but there are quite a few where dishes can be customised. Preethi, who also started a Facebook group for vegans and those interested in the philosophy, says, "Flower Drum, a vegetarian Chinese restaurant in Prince Plaza, Little Italy and Ox and Tomato are places we have gone to and recommend. Ox and Tomato does a vegan pesto-based pizza."

Vegans say they are far healthier and happier than ever before. With the rising popularity of vegan food, it may not be long before vegan-only restaurants come up.

*Inputs from Ponnu Elizabeth Mathew, Bangalore; Varsha Bansal, Hyderabad and Zubeda Hamid, Chennai*

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“ We have come a long way since we started the Indian Vegan Society in 2004 ([www.indianvegansociety.com](http://www.indianvegansociety.com)). It is heartening to note that veganism is really growing in India where the principles of veganism have been practised since time immemorial. Small and large vegan groups are sprouting all over, great going. ”

By **Shankar Narayan**  
5/29/2011 9:39:00 PM

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