

VEGAN restaurant options

in the **New London** area of **Southeast Connecticut**

updated **Jan 4, 2012**, this mini-guide is posted at:

www.markbraunstein.org/veganvegetarianism.htm



in NEW LONDON (& Groton):

© **Mangetout** (mostly OG & 3/4 locavore & 1/4 vegan) www.mangetoutorganic.com

Organic Mangetout is spelled *ManGetOut*. Even more ill-conceived than its French name is its illegible logo, both which hardly foster commercial success, yet thankfully it indeed has succeeded commercially. Open only to 4pm (and briefly was open for dinner on Friday and Saturday nights, but no longer), it is the only restaurant in the New London area that places the word *vegan* very clearly on its menu. It also is the only restaurant in hick town New London that serves brown rice, rather than white. One-quarter of its standard menu is vegan, half its desserts and muffins are vegan, its one daily soup usually is vegan, and Elisa the chef/owner is especially attentive to “catering” to vegans. So Mangetout deserves an A+ for effort, garners A for results, but gets C for Cramped quarters, especially when it had a well deserved crowd at 7pm on Friday or Saturday evenings. Parking is always a problem on State Street, but you can count on finding parking just around the corner on Eugene O’Neill Drive. Still, no matter how far you park your car, it’s well worth your trek, and well worth your patronage.

© **Jasmine Thai** (no website, but its menu is listed in the Yellow Pages phone book)

Of the two Thai restaurants in New London, stay far away from the older one on State St, which long has been the most anti-vegetarian Thai restaurant in the world, though as of 2009 it added a *vegetarian* section to its menu (took them only 18 years!), which i however have yet to try. The newer one, Jasmine Thai on Bank St, is comfortable and spacious and sunny and offers easy parking. Its menu has an entrée section labeled *Vegetarian*, but beware the 3 sauces: Amazing Sauce is amazing in how much sugar is contained in its syrup posing as sauce, Volcanic Sauce sounds too hot for me to dare to try, and the Garlic Sauce has fish stock, which you learn only by interrogating the right waitress, as most of the other waitresses as well as the hostess will placate you by telling you what they think you want to hear (in other words, they lie to you). All the curry sauces on the rest of the menu have fish stock too. While i wish i could recommend this place, in the end the little food that *really* is vegetarian is only mediocre, so go there only if you want a nice cozy place to enjoy the company of and engage in intimate conversation with your dinner companion (which you cannot do at cramped Mangetout). And nope, no brown rice (nor do i know of a single Asian restaurant in the area except for the short-lived **Kong Foo** in Norwich that offers such an option, which speaks volumes about the nutritional wasteland in which we reside).

Before leaving the subject of meals at Asian restaurants, please indulge my digression and perhaps xenophobic condemnation, but I have learned not to trust the wait staff at Asian restaurants. Both a cultural chasm and a language divide separate American vegans from Asian wait staff. Identifying yourself as a vegetarian is literally meaningless (meaning, they do not know what the word means) to most of them. They seem not to understand that clams and oysters and lobsters and shrimp and squid and octopus and fish all are animals (and that eggs are products of animals). You often can find these animals listed right on their menus in their so-called vegetarian sections. I shudder to guess at the ingredients that are not listed. Years ago, when I still attempted to eat at Asian restaurants, too often the food I was served failed my sniff test. I smelled something fishy in their sauces, and so never ate at that restaurant again. And then never again at another restaurant, and another, and another. Asian restaurants are no more a “vegetarian safe house” than compared to any other ethnic cuisine. Hoping otherwise is fooling only yourself.

VEGAN restaurant options in (& beyond) Southeast Connecticut 2

© **Mirch Masala** (Asian Indian) <http://www.mirchmasalaus.com>

Of several Asian Indian restaurants in the area, i highly recommend only **Darbar's** located on Branford's town green, but Branford is 40 miles away, so not quite SE CT. Closer to us in Groton, Mirch Masala is worth a try. It has really nice ambience and easy parking, but you must ask the waiter a lot of questions, as you'll learn that milk is even in the (alas not brown) rice. If you beg, they will prepare rice just for you without milk, as they do try to be very accommodating to veganism, though i suspect that was mostly because the waiter mistakenly interpreted my aversion to dairy was due to allergies.

© **Northern Indian Restaurant** (really Tibetan) menu at www.letsseethemenu.com

It is with sadness that I must report that the vegan or made-to-be-vegan dishes here are terrible. I first ate here years ago, when it first opened, and the several dishes I ordered all were inedible. After several years during which it expanded to twice its size, I assumed it surely must have improved, else how could it have remained in business, so I gave it another try, but with the same dismal results. The several dishes I ordered all were inedible. Baffled, I later queried non-vegan friends who ate here regularly, and they confirmed that its veg dishes disappointed them too, but that its meat dishes were superb, hence their repeated patronage. So go there only if you are a meat eater, but in which case you would not be reading reviews here.

© **Two Wives Pizza** <http://2wivespizza.com> & **Pizzetta** www.pizzettamystic.com

Two Wives offers a *vegan cheese* option, because one of the co-owner wives is a lapsed vegan. Her cooks are even trained to wipe clean the cutter before slicing vegan cheese pizzas! It recently added a partly whole grain crust as an option at an additional expense, yay! Still, the oil seems motor grade as are most, and the tomato sauce likely contains white sugar as do most. After the restaurant had been open for several months, I finally succumbed to curiosity (not temptation!) and in the interest of donating my body to science, I tried their pizza with vegan cheese. It evoked distinct memories of the pizza shop pie I ate as a reckless teenager before I became vegan in 1970. If such standard fare is good or bad, you decide.

Pizzetta in Mystic also offers vegan cheese, specifically Daiya brand, along with unsubstantiated claims about being environmentally and nutritionally conscious, the latter manifested by their not adding sugar to their sauce. Pizzetta's heart is in the right place, as they hosted a free vegan pizza party, which I attended, so can attest that its thin and crunchy white flour crust is not quite glop, and being thin and therefore scant it did not as much paste up my digestion. I do not understand others' praise for Daiya cheese, though, as I shun salt, and its overwhelming taste is only of salt.

Both **Two Wives** and **Pizzetta** are enjoyable and friendly places to eat, and both have their own lots for easy parking, a big plus for the downtowns of New London and Mystic. If you patronize Pizzetta, when you place your order, please plant the seed that you would much prefer a crust comprised at least one-half of whole grain, as Two Wives now does.

in MYSTIC:

© **The Pita Spot** www.thepitaspot.com

Contrary to its name, its dining room is much larger than a tiny spot and its food deserves dining time longer than a quick stop. Traditional American-Middle Eastern food, with all the expected vegan dishes such as hummus, baba ganouch, stuffed grape leaves, and falafel tucked inside a pita, or not. The baba ganouch and stuffed grape leaves (albeit with white rice) are especially good, indeed as good as such simple fare can be. Another excellent dish that is surprising vegan is the collards greens, though sometimes way too heavy on the garlic. Another very worthy very vegan dish includes the mousakaa (which you might know by the French name ratatouille). While not stated on the menu, whole wheat pita is available upon request, so do request it. And note that the prices are moderate and therefore quite uncharacteristic of Mystic. Also uncharacteristic of Mystic, it offers ample parking. The always adorable waitresses boast some vegetarians among them, and the owner's brother Tony, there only on weekends because on weekdays he lives in Manhattan, speaks "fluent vegan," so ask of Tony any questions you may have regarding ingredients.

VEGAN restaurant options in (& beyond) Southeast Connecticut 3

In addition to [Pizzetta](#) and [Pita Stop](#), there must be as yet undiscovered other worthy candidates in Mystic. [Bartleby's Café](#) is a friendly coffee house that offers soups and snacks occasionally labeled vegan, but begs the full meal experience. Upon the suggestion of a reader of this mini-guide, I tried [Rice Spice Noodles Restaurant](#), but alas, though Thai it offered only a few veg dishes, none which appealed to my inner vegan.

in NORWICH:

☉ **KONG FOO Vegetarian Restaurant** menu at www.letsseethemenu.com

Darn!, A great loss to the (obviously small) vegetarian community of SE CT, **THIS RESTAURANT CLOSED DOWN LATE AUGUST 2011.**

I love(d) this restaurant, not just its food, but also its decor. Its spacious interior is beautifully furnished and further adorned with a mountainous landscape mural in the style of the progressive art scene in China today (though painted by a Caucasian American). The tables are brightly lit, so you can fully appreciate the contents of your meal. Open the menu, and you might think you are seated in a typical American Chinese restaurant. Beef, Pork, Chicken, Fish, Seafood, and finally the Vegetable section, sometimes erroneously labeled Vegetarian, despite fish in the garlic sauce or oyster in the oyster sauce. But wait. At Kong Foo, like its many role models in Boston, Philadelphia, and NYC (in fact the owner already runs two similar restaurants in NYC, one right in Chinatown, where competition is fierce, so only the best restaurants stay in business), all these are mock meats, made of either wheat gluten or soy tofu. But such mock meats make a mockery of vegetarianism. I would prefer to eat meat that tastes like soybeans, than soybeans that taste like meat. (Of course I eat neither.) Remove the fiber and oil from wheat, and you produce white flour. Remove the starch and fiber from cane, and that's white sugar. Further remove the starch from white flour, and you've got gluten. Do the same to soy: tofu. Gluten and tofu are junk foods. So what if they are vegan foods too. You can fool your mind, but not your body. So better to confine your menu choices to the Vegetable section, same as you would do at any typical American Chinese restaurant, except here you need not fret about any hidden forbidden ingredients. If you wish to seek further assurance, ask Silvio (though I have not seen him there for some time now). He runs (or ran?) the show and speaks excellent English, and will elucidate all the contents for you.

With Silvio's generous guidance, I have sampled nearly all of the all Vegetable dishes, and I can attest that the food is excellent. Their Asian vegetables are both excellent and exotic, so exotic that I never before had heard of or seen some of them, whereas here I now order them repeatedly. A big plus is the option of brown rice, yay! But vegans beware, the food here is not solely vegan. While the few entrees containing egg are clearly labeled egg in their names, in addition to white sugar some cow milk lurks in the tofu cheese cake! Speaking of sugar, be prepared even here for standard Chinese American restaurant sauces comprised of motor grade oil, corn starch, salt, and sugar. At home, where I eat most of my meals, I never eat motor grade oil or white flour or salt or sugar (or tofu). Never. But in certain vegetarian restaurants, I do lower my standards, and my guard. I confess, I eat Kong Foo sauces. (And I can attest that I have survived!) Indeed the ginger sauce is excellent, and not too sweet, and the garlic sauce is superb and comes with the added benefit for me of actually not being made with any garlic, which I personally avoid.

Be advised, if you are an adherent of whole foods, you still have much here from which to choose. **So do make the trip to Norwich. And make it soon. It opened in November 2010, and now ten months later as of this writing in August 2011, I fear it will close by year's end. (SEPT 2011 – "famous last words," indeed it did close at the end of August.)** While it attracts a respectable crowd for lunch, during dinner I seldom see anyone else dining there but for myself and my dinner companions. **I did wonder about the financial wisdom of opening such a heterodox restaurant in Norwich, and surely now the proprietor, too, is wondering the same. (SEPT 2011 – neither of us need not wonder any longer.)**



Obviously SE CT is a dismal desert for vegans and vegetarians alike. Chinese and Thai restaurants are seldom safe havens, as both language and cultural barriers make it difficult to convince waiters that fish and other sea animals in the sauce disqualify the meal as vegetarian. Despite waiters' avowals, their brown sauces and garlic sauces rarely pass my sniff test, so experience has taught me simply to avoid Asian restaurants. Two noteworthy exceptions was the recently closed [Kong Foo](#) (above) in Norwich and is [Chang's Garden](#) in distant Storrs, as the co-owner of Chang's is a lapsed vegetarian, and bless them, though not advertised or even listed on their menu, if you ask for it, they even serve brown rice!

VEGAN restaurant options in (& beyond) Southeast Connecticut 4

Other places may be worth a try, but I simply have not tried them, because when I “eat out,” I prefer to “go out” of my way ...

elsewhere in Connecticut:

Middletown – 40 miles northwest of New London:

© **It's Only Natural (ION)** <http://www.ionrestaurant.com>
ION is a true gem and 99 percent vegan (of three cheese options, one is cow cheese). I rank ION as the best vegetarian restaurant in all New England, and feel blessed to have it somewhat nearby. Expensive yet well worth the expense, but if cost is a factor for you, then skip the desserts and order mostly appetizers and sides. (Really, omit the entrees, because who the heck needs to eat brown rice or steamed greens or salad greens at a restaurant, if that's what you eat all the time at home.) I highly recommend the sweet potato fries (I confess, it is one of my only three dietary or lifestyle indiscretions, the other two being maple syrup and marijuana), tempeh dishes, thick soups ... and that's just from among the appetizers. Among the side dishes, you will be amazed to find that elsewhere usually boring potato salad or elsewhere usually bland hummus can be so good. I dare venture to state that theirs is the best potato salad and best hummus I have ever tasted, anywhere. While I do not recommend the pasta (because all whole grain pasta still is paste-a), the wholesome and nourishing dishes otherwise never disappoint me, and my nutritional standards are high and hard to please. Bring a hearty appetite, because there's so many unique vegan choices here, you'll regret you'll feel too full to try them all. Worth the trip, regardless of distance.

Branford – 43 miles west of New London:

© **G-Zen** <http://www.g-zen.com>
After 22 years at It's Only Natural (ION) Restaurant, its masterful head chef Mark Shadle sought new challenges, so he and his wife Ami opened G-Zen, a sort of Neo-ION, as half its menu is same as ION's, but with new and more imaginative names. Rather than dwell on the politics of opening a vegan restaurant merely 25 miles from ION, instead let's rejoice in the expanded choice for the vegan community of two stellar restaurants. What could be better than ION? Two ION's!

Yet who can refrain from making comparisons? Not I. Many new dishes do distinguish it from ION, for instance one entree at G-Zen presently is all raw, with more to come. Decor and dinnerware here are more elegant and opulent than at hippie artsy ION. You can decide which better suits your personality. I do prefer the “vibes” (yeah man, am a hippie) of ethnically-diverse and middle-class Middletown to that of New Haven's predominantly Caucasian and affluent bedroom community Branford, and prefer the trip to Middletown on scenic and lightly traveled Route 9 rather than to Branford on bland and truck choked Interstate 95. Similarly, G-Zen's street parking is far less predictable than at ION's adjacent parking lot, and G-Zen's steep entrance stairway presents a forbidding obstacle to cripples such as I. Yet these are all trivial objections and minor inconveniences. The food at G-Zen is outstanding, and it is primarily for the food that one chooses any restaurant, even if to get there one must confront the traffic perils of I-95, and if to get out of there I, for one, must grovel on hands and knees. The food makes it all worth it, so what other accolades might I bestow upon the food? It is delicious, nutritious, wholesome (no white flour or white sugar here), mostly organic, beautifully presented, graciously (and gorgeously) hosted (the hostess is gorgeous), and (except for calf milk offered as an option for creamer for coffee, for which the reason remains unexplained, but must be compelling) totally vegan. This may very well be vegan heaven!

New Haven – 50 miles west of New London:

© **Ahimsa** <http://www.ahimsainc.com>
Darn! **THIS RESTAURANT CLOSED DOWN OCT 2009**, a great loss to the (obviously miniscule) vegan community of New Haven.

Despite its misleading Hindu name, only one-third of its menu is Indian. All vegan, half raw, very expensive, and very very small portions, so order two dinners to feel like you've actually eaten one. Still well worth trying if only once, because the most memorable meal of my life was the “chef's special” New Year's Eve dinner. So hurry, because Ahimsa is likely to close down soon, as all four times in the past year I've eaten there, their spacious dining area remained nearly empty. NEWS FLASH: my prophecy unfortunately proved true. As of Oct 2009, hidden under its *Hours* webpage it discloses that it has “Closed for Construction,” which a restaurant patronized by the Yale community might do in Aug or Jan, but not in

VEGAN restaurant options in (& beyond) Southeast Connecticut 5

Oct. A website is paid for annually, but a phone line monthly, and its phone number has been disconnected. And In December I've twice driven to its location during early evening, only to find it dark and closed. All the tables and chairs and fixtures remain as before, like a museum piece, looking like the owners fled in a huge hurry, or simply were locked out by their landlord. Now August 2011, its ill fate was sealed, as a new business, not even a restaurant, has opened in its place. So why the hogwash about construction? Wishful thinking maybe, the same wishful thinking that prevents me from deleting this listing, at least not yet. Farewell, Ahimsa, yours is still my most memorable meal!

also in New Haven:

© **Edge of the Woods** (no website, just a blog)

A vegetarian health food store that carries meat only in the dog and cat food (same as the wonderful **Willimantic Food Coop** www.willimanticfood.coop), Edge offers a good bakery and an even better hot take-out buffet with everything clearly labeled either vegan or dairy. Seating is available upstairs, but is hardly comfortable, so it's a stretch to call this place a restaurant, which it is not.

With Ahimsa closed down, you'll do better to eat at **Edge** than at New Haven's **Claire's Cornercopia**, which is mostly lacto-ovo-vegetarian, and only barely is on a street corner as alluded to in its name. Claire is not herself vegetarian, and she even opened a meat restaurant right next door. Indeed, Claire's used to offer tuna, as in real tuna, not un-tUNa, but has removed it from its menu, maybe upon opening her really real meat restaurant. While a chef need not be veghead to creatively cook veggies, still it's unsettling that Ms. Claire is a carnivore at heart. Trying to find parking near Claire's is often futile, so you're better off not even trying. Indeed, you're better off heading to **Red Lentil**, where parking is expensive, but assuredly available.

also in New Haven:

© **Red Lentil** <http://theredlentil.com>

Open since July 2011, **Red Lentil** is truly a vegetarian restaurant (and truly a restaurant!), long needed in and overdue for New Haven. Its menu is more eclectic than ethnic, but with a leaning toward Asian Indian, and with a generous helping of dishes lifted from the menu of It's Only Natural (ION). Portions are generous, cost is moderate, and food mostly is good. Exotic dishes are excellent, and the more extraordinary the dish the better it is likely to be. But more conventional dishes do tend to fall short of my expectations. For instance, in the category of fried food (true confessions! though I hardly hunger for it, in my feeble old age I have relinquished abidance to my usually high nutritional standards, and I have been eating fried foods, but only at vegetarian restaurants, because you never know what else has been fried in that oil), their Gobi Manchurian (fried cauliflower) is outstanding, but their Sweet Potato Fries are disappointing, especially when compared to those served at nearby ION or G Zen. In Red Lentil's favor, theirs are half the price. On account of a multiplex movie theater directly across the street, even at night the metered street parking, in a word, sucks. You usually must resort to the cavernous parking garage directly overhead (really!) where parking is even more expensive than on the street. At least the cost of the meal, which is moderate, compensates for the cost of the parking. So be reconciled to feeding meters in addition to feeding yourself. After your long walk from your parking space, you'll be happy to find that seating here is spacious and comfortable, especially if you are seated at a booth. The wait staff does not rush you out of the place, not even when nearing closing, so you leisurely can sit and enjoy your company and the food, except for potential fiscal angst caused by that dang parking meter.

Guilford – 33 miles west of New London:

© **Shoreline Diner & Vegetarian Enclave** (really, that is its subtitle)

<http://www.shorelinediner.com> (be patient, this interesting website is worth the long wait to download)

I give them much credit for advertising the word VEGETARIAN in their name's subtitle, and for that they deserve a dozen thank you's. Thus being lured into the place, I give them credit for an entire column on the menu labeled vegan, not merely vegetarian, and for that they deserve a hundred thank you's. So far, so good, until you find that the menu offers conventional white and greasy American diner fare. An exception is the hummus platter, with its accompanying pita bread of whole wheat, but you must know to ask for whole wheat, strangely not listed on the menu as an option. The previous owner was a vegetarian, but the present owner is not, so you must be VERY vigilant. That whole wheat pita on one occasion was warmed on a grill that cooked meat and so absorbed its smell, if not its grease. The waitress defensively denied the possibility, impugning my olfactory nerves, until she smelled the pita too. Beware also the uninformed and incompetent

VEGAN restaurant options in (& beyond) Southeast Connecticut 6

high school student waitresses who work evenings and weekends, and who neglect to inform you of any vegan specials, unless you ask them. (Specials used to be written on a blackboard by the entrance, but lately come printed on a separate menu, smaller than the regular menu, so still easily overlooked.) While I do not go out of my way to eat here, I do stop here late night (open every night until 11pm) after a long haul from NYC on i-95, as it is just off the easy off/on exit.

Willimantic – 25 miles north of New London:

☉ **Café Live (Café Live is now Café Dead)**

Darn! **THIS RESTAURANT CLOSED DOWN MARCH 2011**, a great loss to the (obviously miniscule) vegan community of central eastern CT.

Opened December 2009, everything WAS very promising about this new restaurant in town, except for its town. Willimantic hosts many outstanding features, such as my beloved vegetarian Willimantic Food Coop, a community arts center, the (now disbanded) commune-like Wrench in the Works, an indispensable head shop, for three years until January 2010 a hemp clothing shop, and an intermittently open used bookstore. Nevertheless Willimantic is a pizza and burger town, and i wondered about the wisdom of opening an all-raw and all-vegan café in Willimantic, as not even New Haven was able to support Ahimsa, an all-vegan though only half-raw restaurant. As her gourmet style of raw foods was very labor intensive and time consuming and therefore relatively expensive for Willimantic, the owner/chef, to survive financially, sorely needed to expand to cook foods too. She indeed did start out offering roasted coffee, a nod to drugs, because after all this is Willimantic. And even if she had added dairy for the café to survive, a lesson exemplified by the longtime vegan It's Only Natural, then i would have wished that she added dairy too. But my lament is too late. The cafe offered promise to be the most nourishing and, if your taste buds had not been corrupted by salt and sugar and oil and vinegar (the four staples of even vegans in America), the best tasting (except for some dishes with excessive salt) vegan food provided by any restaurant east of the Connecticut River. (ION along its shore is on its west bank.) But as of early March 2010, a mere 3 months after opening, it closed. I confess that i forecast its doom from the start, but i was generous and predicted it would last only one year. Yet during its third month it already was closing for the day several hours before posted, and closing entire days seemingly on whim. All new restaurants open shop with great risks, as nearly half fail within two years. Owners of restaurants expect this risk. But no customers expect to risk finding a restaurant closed several hours earlier than posted. During its third and final month, I twice had hoped to meet friends for dinner there only to find it closed early or closed for the day. The third time it was closed when I had hoped to eat there I at least knew to phone ahead, so did not waste my time going there for naught. While those who are wise can be fooled only once, I can be fooled only twice.

My and other customers' disappointment verged on vegan vexation. The owner lost not merely her customers, she lost also her credibility. Had she simply shortened her hours to fit reality, her enthusiastic and faithful customers would not have lost their enthusiasm and their faith. Closing the café was of course at great economic loss for the owner, but also a heartfelt loss for the vegan and raw foods and natural foods communities. And a great loss for me, who hailed and promoted her café possibly more than any of her other customers. My comments may seem intended more for Marie, the owner, than for you, my dear reader, so why the heck do i lament so much about the closure here? Because Marie was so unapologetic about the inconvenience she caused by her early closings on whim. And because she was so unwelcoming of suggestions and constructive criticisms from her customers, which she deflected by providing only excuses rather than solutions, or by simply ignoring, not even politely. In fact she not only alienated her business partner, who abandoned her after only two months, she alienated even me, who tried to be her best customer. Little wonder that her customers began to ignore Café Live. And then little wonder that Café Live closed so soon. Indeed its closure after a scant three months may very well set some sort of apocalyptic speed record. Café Dead.



Connecticut's 2 storefront Natural Foods Coops

☉ **FIDDLEHEADS Natural Foods Coop** <http://fiddleheadsfood.coop>

☉ **WILLIMANTIC Food Coop** <http://willimanticfood.coop>

I'm a member of both Fiddleheads Foods Cooperative in New London, and of Willimantic Food Co-op. With its all-volunteer work force during its first three years, it's a testament to community cooperation and to each individual's idealism that Fiddleheads has come this far, and after three years was financially stable to hire its long overdue first manager. I love and respect and am grateful to all the people who work here, and especially its manager and board of directors who do most of the work, and to the farmers who sell their

VEGAN restaurant options in (& beyond) Southeast Connecticut 7

produce here. BUT, and here's the big BUT, if you are a vegan or vegetarian, I suggest you shop instead at Willimantic Food Coop. Fiddleheads actively promotes the consumption of dead animals. For nearly a year, its website featured at the top of its homepage a photo of several piggies in a dark spooky pen, which I find insulting equally to its vegetarian members and to the by now dead and consumed piggies. Indeed, there are as many dead animals in Fiddleheads freezers as in any butcher shop, and their bodies in the past were interspersed all over the freezer units, in between the frozen berries and breads, and among the frozen pastries and pastas. Its poor separation of the wheat from the calves slowly has been remedied, and its advocacy of meat eating has quieted during the latter half of 2011, so it is making changes more welcoming to its vegetarians community.

Either in addition to or instead of Fiddleheads, Willimantic Food Coop is worth your patronage because until late 2010 its foods were all vegetarian. I now patronize Fiddleheads more because it's nearby, but still find Willi worth my 26 mile and 35 minute trip. If Willi had remained vegetarian for 30 years, Fiddleheads could have too, but Fiddleheads never even tried. Among the farmers who sell directly to Fiddleheads, many also sell dead animals. If there's one farmer at a farmers' market who sells live produce and also dead animals, I will buy his produce. But if there's two farmers selling live produce, one who sells also dead animals and one who sells only produce, when given the choice I will patronize solely the one who sells only produce. Thank goodness when we on behalf of better unborn farm animals are given the choice. So given the choice between shopping at Fiddleheads Food Coop and Willimantic Food Coop, my preference is clear, though due to prohibitive car mileage, I shop at both.

Willimantic Foods Coop is a blessing. It offers the best OG produce in CT, and every day, not just on delivery days. Plus, it is open on weekdays until 8pm (Fiddleheads is open until 6:30pm). And for 30 years, the store had remained vegetarian, meaning that it carried dead animals only in some of the dog and cat food, while most of the rest of the dog and cat food is made with eggs or milk instead of meat or fish. But it's the food intended for human consumption that should bring you here, and will keep you returning here. In 2005, the membership voted on a carnivore initiative to allow the coop to sell meat, and meat was overwhelmingly defeated. Yet in June 2010, a cabal of carnivores won another vote promoted by and conducted with obvious bias by the carnivore President of its Board of Directors, which advocacy by its Prez was a violation of the coop's charter, silly little rules of no consequence, but of dire consequence were the results of the vote. This second time, meat was voted into office by way of a pre-order buying club that slipped in through the coop's backdoor by perpetuating the myth of so-called "more humane meat." (A more accurate description would be "less inhumane meat.") Their premise was that its suppliers of locally killed meat will treat their deadstock better than does industrial agribusiness. Maybe better, but how much better, and by whose standards? The vote was ushered in with no mechanisms for oversight except by the farmers' own avowals. Hogwash and bull. The "meat locker" now is sequestered in the back of the store, where gentle vegetarians won't see it, and so won't be affronted by its presence, and thereby won't be reminded of Willi Food Coop's tragic fall from innocence.

Nevertheless I still shop at Willi, and still recommend that you, too, shop there. Indeed, I even recommend that you shop at Fiddleheads too, especially as an alternative to shopping at Whole Foods. After all, with the demise of Garden of Light in Glastonbury (due not to Whole Foods moving into town, but to its customers abandoning it for WF), Connecticut's one remaining all veg food store, Edge of the Woods in New Haven, is just too far away.



if YOU care to make recommendations of restaurants to add here, or you want to yell and scream at me, you are invited to do so at: [herman.melville\[at\]yahoo.com](mailto:herman.melville[at]yahoo.com)

Updated Jan 4, 2012

– Mark Mathew Braunstein

[herman.melville\[at\]yahoo.com](mailto:herman.melville[at]yahoo.com)

updates to this mini-guide are posted at:

www.markbraunstein.org/veganvegetarianism.htm

VEGAN restaurant options in (& beyond) Southeast Connecticut **8**



The image displays two book covers on a bright green background. The left cover is for 'Sprout Garden: Indoor Grower's Guide to Gourmet Sprouts, Revised Edition' by Mark M. Braunstein. It features a background of green sprouts and includes a red banner at the top that says 'Includes Broccoli Sprouts'. Two inset photos show a sprout salad and a bowl of sprouts. The right cover is for 'RADICAL VEGETARIANISM: A Dialectic of Diet and Ethic' by Mark Mathew Braunstein. It has a dark background with a central image of a plate containing a sprout-based dish. Below the covers, the website address www.markbraunstein.org is printed in large black text.

www.markbraunstein.org