

**BUZZ AROUND TOWN**

# Yes, there are Vegans in Dubai and they are cool



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**WORLD VEG-AND-DAY** is an annual event celebrated by vegans around

the world on 1 November for over 20 years. Vegans from across the world celebrate this day to spread the knowledge of compassionate living. Adopting this lifestyle is fast becoming a trend, a good trend, across the world. Ellen Page, Jessica Chastain, Ariana Grande, Ellen DeGeneres, Miley Cyrus and Alicia Silverstone are some of the popular celebrities who follow this lifestyle. The most popular benefits of turning vegan are weight loss, increased energy and younger looking skin. Being a vegan is definitely more of a lifestyle choice and a philosophy than a diet. A vegan does not eat anything that is of animal origin and will also not use animal based products for any purpose such as clothing.

Vegans often heavily rely on plant-based diets such as plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts and seeds. Hence, their diet tends to be higher in vitamins, minerals, and fibre. Healthy vegan diets are abundant with vitamins B1, C, and E, folic acid, magnesium, and iron while also being low in cholesterol and saturated fats. We spoke to two Dubai-based vegans Cynthia Gonzalez and Nikhila Ramesh about the good qualities and challenging of being vegans and how friendly Dubai restaurants are for plant eaters.



**Nikhila Ramesh - Before and after turning Vegan**



**Cynthia Gonzalez**

**WHEN AND WHY DID NIKHILA AND CYNTHIA DECIDE TO TURN VEGAN**

**NIKHILA:** I turned to a plant-based (diet) not just vegan in June 2016. Last year, in June during an event we were hosting I had a terrible breathing issue similar to what happens after an allergic reaction to nuts. I did a blood test and it turned out that I'd developed a significant allergy to dust. I went to a whole plant based retreat in June this year. That changed my life and I am extremely thankful for that kick-start. Today, I can say with 100% assurance that medicines merely block the symptoms of any disease/ ailment and does not cure/heal. It's now been 4 months and I have lost 13kgs, my skin is clearing up, my allergies are already reversing. It feels surreal. I am much calmer. And doing the work I do, I personally would not like to see animals and the environment suffer.

**CYNTHIA:** 13 years ago. I am now 54. I have been vegetarian since 18, for the health and spiritual benefits. When I was 41, so 13 years ago, I finally went raw vegan, after flirting with it for 3 years. I was finally ready emotionally to let go of certain nostalgia foods (my family's Mexican food) and other comfort foods that held me back from fully embracing this path that called strongly.

**IS THERE TEMPTATION TO INDULGE IN NON-VEGAN FOOD AT TIMES? WHAT INSPIRES THEM TO CONTINUE BEING VEGAN?**

**NIKHILA:** Vegan is a lifestyle, it's normal, natural and makes total sense. And honestly, who wants to suffer? Living life seems more tempting to me. In the beginning, it was tough I don't deny it. I was a non-vegetarian so there are times where I probably miss the textures and flavour of chicken and eggs. So maybe once or twice a month I will eat a dish that is made from mock chicken (tofu based) and done, satisfaction achieved! But for the rest, there are plenty of replacements and substitutes that can be made so I can't complain. Temptations arise from the mind, but does my body crave it? No.

**CYNTHIA:** I have a continual feeling of lightness, vast amounts of physical and creative energy and a clearheadedness that is so reliable professionally in my coaching, teaching and writing work. Personally, I feel more balanced and at peace with such a diet in my body, mind and heart. Stimulants or cooked food leaves me either feeling nervous and hyper or drowsy and groggy. It is tough when I am travelling in cold climates. I need to be prepared. It is also tough when I am going through emotional challenges. The vegan part is not difficult actually ever. Animal products- meat or dairy- are not a temptation. But when I am emotionally challenged, sometimes the comfort of certain cooked foods tempts me.

**IS IT EASY TO HAVE VEGAN FOOD IN DUBAI?**

**NIKHILA:** There's not much of a choice when it comes to restaurants, which serve vegan in Dubai. Yes, the awareness is growing slowly in Dubai compared to what it was 10 years ago. You can most definitely buy ingredients that are vegan friendly. Currently, eating freshly cooked home made meals is the best option. Since, I follow a plant based diet it's a bit more difficult for me, but if I do eat out once in a while I turn it down a notch and opt for vegan. **CYNTHIA:** It is very easy, and even more so with the amount of organic merchants.

**THREE PLACES TO GET YOUR VEGAN FIX IN DUBAI**

[www.detox-delight.ae](http://www.detox-delight.ae)  
[www.mygovindas.com](http://www.mygovindas.com)  
[www.77veggie.com](http://www.77veggie.com)



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**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

