

Lovin' Spoonfuls blowin' up

Business booming for vegan eatery on North Campbell

Business is good for Lovin' Spoonfuls owner Peggy Raigslid. So good that she's hoping to take her vegan restaurant national.

"I've been working diligently on franchise paperwork," she says. "It'll probably take a couple of months, and then I'll have a franchise packet available."

Raigslid, who has been a vegan for 20 years, says hers will be the first nationwide vegan restaurant chain.

Others have tried. Heather Mills, the former Mrs. Paul McCartney, talked about opening a vegan chain in 2007, but her funding ran out.

"It's a very extensive project," Raigslid says. "Every aspect of the business has to be detailed and documented, right down to how much pepper you sprinkle on the potatoes."

Running a vegan restaurant isn't easy.

Raigslid, who opened Lovin' Spoonfuls in 2005 at 2990 N. Campbell Ave., near East Glenn Street, says it's hard making everyone happy.

"When people find out you're a vegan restaurant, they immediately expect you to be able to accommodate every diet under the sun," she says. "I get people coming in who want wheat-free, gluten-free, salt-free, fat-free, sugar-free. I do accommodate them if I can, but I don't think a normal restaurant has that challenge to face."

People who give up meat for health reasons often desire organic produce.

"I do organic to the extent possible," says Raigslid, who creates all the recipes. "Most of the breads, flour and sugar are organic. But produce is really a challenge, because we have to have it delivered every day."

Then there's the restaurant's menu, which includes faux-meat items like a "bacon cheeseburger" and "fried chicken." Those items are repulsive to some vegetarians who think mock meat advances the notion that a meal is incomplete without animal flesh on the plate.

"They challenge me about the mock meats," Raigslid says. "Why do you have that here? I get a lot of pressure from that angle."

But for the most part, Raigslid says, people are happy a place like Lovin' Spoonfuls exists.

"There are people who do it strictly for ethical reasons and they're delighted that they can get a bacon cheeseburger. They love it. They tell all their friends that you can be a vegan and still get all this stuff."



SARAH ANDERSON / FOR THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Lovin' Spoonfuls owner Peggy Raigslid has been a vegan for 20 years. She opened her restaurant in 2005, and it has been so successful that she is working on franchising it.