

# TUCSON & REGION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2007 • SECTION B

## No meatheads allowed

Some Downtowners ready to swallow vegan sausage on whole-grain bun



A.E. ARAIZA / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Librarian Tom Farmer, left, orders up a vegan creation from vendor Brian Taraz. The affable Taraz, a San Diego transplant, has perfected his spiel to convince Tucsonans that meat is *not* an essential ingredient of traditional Polish, German and Italian sausages. "You don't need animal products to have delicious and healthy food," he says.

**I**n a town where Pat's chili dogs have a cultlike following and the bacon-wrapped Sonoran hot dog is a gastronomic icon, can a vegan dog on a multigrain bun coexist?

Brian Taraz thinks so.

Five days a week, the gregarious Taraz peddles meatless kielbasa, spicy Italian sausage and beer brats vegan dogs, and promotes the virtues of a meatless diet to the Downtown lunch crowd from his spot in the Joel D.

Opinion by

**ERNESTO  
PORTILLO JR.**



Valdez Main Library plaza.

Part carnival barker, part preacher, and part actor, Taraz invites pedestrians to stop and eat a \$3 dog.

"Good to see you, lovely lady," he says to Saendra Joslin.

She stops and orders a kielbasa, hot-dog style. This is not her first time.

"Everything but the salsa," she says.

The talkative Taraz tucks the sausage in the whole-wheat bun and smothers it with vegan mayo, onions, relish, ketchup and mustard.

"I call this the Total Joy Package," Taraz says. He has a name for every variation of vegan dog he serves, some

with marinara sauce, his "secret" olive oil, lemon, paprika, garlic and pepper dressing, or Tapatío salsa picante.

"I'm developing my whole motif," says Taraz, 44, who moved here with his wife and two children from San Diego less than two years ago.

Taraz began selling meatless dogs in the heat and rain of July. He hawks his dogs under the mesquite shade in front

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# PORTILLO

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of the plaque honoring the Jácomes, a Downtown retailing pioneer family that opened its first store in 1896.

Taraz also serves vegan dogs late nights on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays on North Fourth Avenue, next to Antigone Books.

The food cart is owned by Peggy Raisglid, owner of Lovin' Spoonfuls, a three-year-old vegan restaurant at North Campbell Avenue and East Blacklidge Drive. Raisglid, who holds a doctorate in chemistry, says she wants to present vegan food in a familiar format.

And what more familiar format is there than the hot dog cart, whether it's on South 12th

Avenue in Tucson or in Lower Manhattan?

As the heat is waning, Taraz is finding more people ready to eat vegan, such as Katherine Wesolowski, an employee of the Tucson Museum of Art.

The avowed Polish kielbasa fan tried the kielbasa hot dog for the first time. A couple of bites later, she proclaimed, "It tastes like the kielbasa I used to eat as a kid."

This is confirmation of what Taraz says about vegan food, which uses no animal byproducts, unlike vegetarian food, which can include milk and eggs.

"The object is deliciousness. You don't need animal products to have delicious and healthy food," he says.

Not everyone who walks by is willing to eat vegan, however.

Jim Vogelsberg, a Downtown employee clutching a Subway

sandwich bag, tells Taraz, "Maybe one day I'll try one of your dogs."

But Alanna Randall and Tad Beckwith are two Downtown workers who are grateful.

"Being vegetarian, there are not many options here," Randall says. Beckwith adds that they stop at least twice at week at the vegan cart.

Taraz says he is pleased that the Downtown crowd, including the homeless who congregate on the plaza and the cops who monitor them, enjoy the non-meat hot dogs.

"One less animal is inconvenienced," he says.

Taraz predicts people will slowly cease eating meat and turn to vegetarianism.

"This is where mankind is going. Meat eating is a remnant of an earlier time," he says.

While Taraz believes more people are going meatless, he's not quite there yet himself. Taraz eats meat.

He's trying to go to meatless like his 7-year-old daughter. Taraz says he eventually will follow.

"Hey," he says, "old habits are hard to break."

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## LOTTERY

Drawings for Tuesday, Sept. 18

**Pick 5:** 13, 20, 24, 32, 33

**Pick 3:** 7, 7, 5

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