



Dubai Vegan Days Brunch at Rove Hotel, by Chef Zandy Marsam

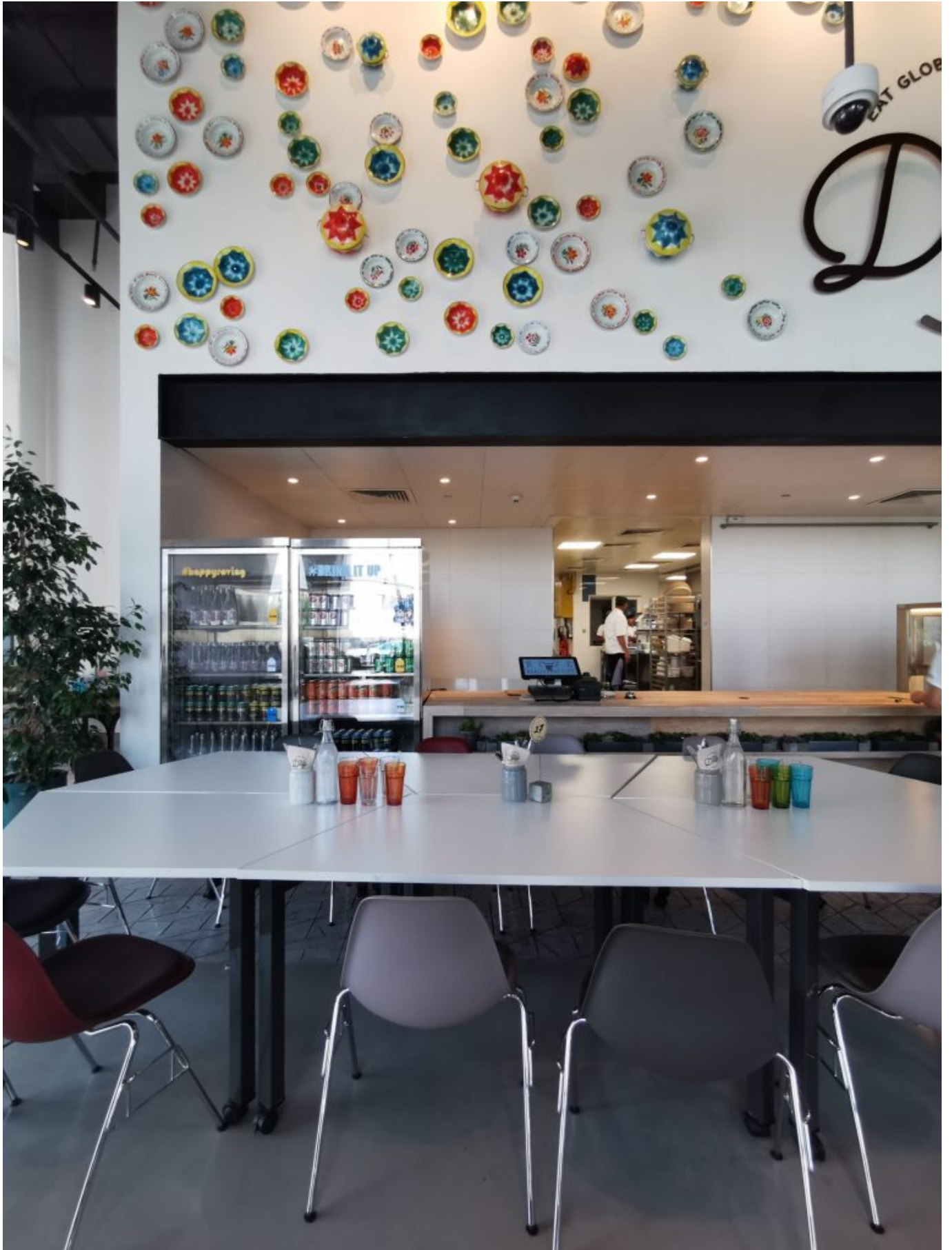
Firstly, a disclaimer - I'm not a vegan. I do like animals, also on my plate.

I know that's not what Dubai Vegan Days organizers want to hear, but it's the truth.

But I also love food, especially tasty food that makes me close my eyes and hum in delight as the flavors - and the aroma! - fire up the nerve receptors on my tongue and my palate, and then rush the electrical impulses to my brain: Oh my! THAT is amazing!

And so I accepted the invite to the Vegan Brunch, thinking to myself, if isn't good, I just won't write about it. It does happen...

But since you're reading it, I guess you already know that I loved it!





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The Rove Hotel is a nice and cheery place, and their all-day dining restaurant is called The Daily - and it was serving as host for the Dubai Vegan Days brunch.

It's an interesting set-up, whereby Dubai Vegan Days liaises with various venues in Dubai, and also coordinates with well-known vegan chefs, and then offers a very reasonable weekend brunch based purely on plant-based ingredients.

In this edition, renown vegan Chef, Zesty Marsam, was at the helm of the menu creation - as a reflection of her Indonesian heritage, but with a modern, international approach.

I was certainly intrigued!





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As expected, lots of raw veggies to welcome us on arrival.









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But I wasn't impressed.

I mean, sure, I love fresh salad, and I did enjoy the creativity of the various dressings on offer, and the crunchiness was supremely fresh, but anyone can chop up veggies and lay them out on a long table.

Not even the two delicious healthy juices made me smile, and I must admit I was getting a little hungry - I hope there's more to this vegan brunch?



The place was packed with happy, laughing, “alternative”-looking people, and I was probably the oldest and the grumpiest person there!

I do regret my attitude, though.

You see, Dubai Vegan Days has a loyal following, and groups of friends eagerly wait for the next installment, and then the news spreads quickly among the healthy community, and they all converge on the weekend not only for the meal but also for the human connection.

And then there was me, scraggly beard, overweight and hunched shoulders, among these youthful, and actually really healthy-looking people, who were scarfing down raw carrots and plain beans as if they were the best thing on earth.

Except, you see, it’s because they are “the best thing on Earth”...

The health benefits of a plant-based diet are inescapable.



Although intellectually I do detest the exploitation of animals, and the suffering our factory farms impose on them, and the sheer cruelty of raising animals from birth to death in horrible captive conditions, I was holding onto a feeble reasoning that it is all a necessity, as we do have to eat, and eating well is such a pleasure...

But Chef Zency blew away even that line of defense.

She presented a set menu - yes, all plant-based - which was absolutely on-par with any delicious weekend brunch on offer in Dubai; and probably better than many of them!





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Check this out.

You see this morsel?





It's jackfruit.

Apparently, it is a large fruit grown in the tropics, from India to Indonesia.

Could have fooled me, because it has the texture of meat, and it absorbs and carries flavors like a good stew cube, and it is a 'miracle' food in terms of nutrition and low-impact environmental farming.

Here it is in tacos!





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In all its glory - oh, I wish you could lick the screen and taste it! Just superb!





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And served with delicious roasted potato wedges,





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and a smashing mango- and chili-based salsa!





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And it was accompanied by a black activated-charcoal burger,





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filled with a beetroot patty!





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As well as crispy crunchy delights, so as to contrast with the earthy beetroot patty,





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and accompanied by a light and refreshing tomato sauce - a superlative homemade ketchup that will make you throw out the bottled stuff in disgust!





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And then dessert waltzed up to our table, and crushed any remaining doubt that somehow a plant-based meal would be in any way lacking.





It is a fact that this vegan banquet did not come in second place to a meat brunch, not even in terms of deliciousness.

I enjoyed every bite.

And as I looked around, I absorbed the healthy vibes of the lovely people around me - from all walks of life, enjoying a wonderful weekend brunch together, and not missing for one instant that there were no animal products on their plates.

I did feel good about it. Even an old grump like me had to admit that there was a positive feeling that with this meal I had not contributed to a chicken being locked in a cage for all of its life, that no cow had gone through the slaughterhouse for me, and that no fish had been pulled out of water gasping until it died.

And there's more to veganism than just my superficial experience at Rove - the negative impact of the animal food industry on our planet, for instance!



And so as a reasonable person, it's now down to convenience, and habit.

All our supermarkets and restaurant menus are packed with meat products, capitalizing on our eating habits and laziness in seeking out wholesome alternatives.

One day, I think eating animals will be the exception, and I must say what a happy day that will be for all living beings.





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