



Vegan News

San Diego



August, 2026

Vegan-News.org

Healthy Kids
Happy Planet!



Interviews: Barbara Gates of Healthy Kids, Happy Planet!,
Chef Angela Stanger of Vibrant Fork
Local News • Viewpoints • Community Calendar

Vegan News San Diego

www.Vegan-News.org

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San Diego seeks to support and
grow the local vegan community
by highlighting the work of local
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nutrition classes, and vegan/
cruelty free businesses.

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From the Editor

August is back-to-school time, and in honor of the occasion, we're proud to bring you an interview with Barbara Gates, founder and president of Healthy Kids, Happy Planet!, a non-profit that does an amazing job of educating classes about the nutritional and environmental benefits of plant-based foods.

Chef Angela Stanger was also kind enough to share the history of her San Diego-based meal prep and delivery company Vibrant Fork, as well as generously offering a 15% discount to *Vegan News San Diego* readers. See her interview for details.

We're grateful to Connie Edwards McGaughy for allowing us to reprint her essay "It's Not a Fad" in the new Viewpoints section of the newsletter. The piece clarifies some misconceptions that may arise when a restaurant closes or a celebrity decides to stop eating a plant-based diet.

The "Movies and TV" page has been retitled "Vegan Media." It still features a film, the 2018 documentary *The Game Changers* on vegan athletes, but future installments may include books, magazines, websites, or other media.

Community Calendar opportunities in August include a potluck and two lunches with PlantDiego, a Strategic Action for Animals lunch gathering to discuss responses to SeaWorld's new plan, a Restaurants for Rescues celebration at Sabor a Vida, Vegan Justice at Hillcrest Cityfest, a vegan spirituality potluck at the Seaside Center for Spiritual Living, and the 54th Anniversary celebration of the Ocean Beach People's Food Co-Op. We don't have dates yet, but keep your eyes open for activism opportunities with DxE San Diego and at SeaWorld this month.

Toward a vegan world,
Stephen White

Contents

Local News.....	3	Vegan Media.....	25
National/World News.....	6	Vegan & Cruelty Free.....	26
Interview: Vibrant Fork.....	7	Local Resources.....	27
Viewpoints.....	14	National/World Resources.....	28
Vegan Food: On the Road.....	16	Community Calendar.....	29
Interview: Barbara Gates.....	17	Deals & Discounts.....	30
Vegan Food in the Wild.....	24	Entertainment.....	31

LOCAL NEWS

- PlantDiego has several social opportunities coming up, including a screening of highlights from the recent documentary [How Not to Die](#) plus a potluck at the Point Loma Library (August 1, 11:30), lunch at [The Plot](#) in Oceanside, (August 15, 1:30-3 pm), and dinner at [El Veganito](#) in La Mesa (August 19, 5-7 pm).
- [Strategic Action for Animals](#) (SXFA) is holding a lunch meeting on Sunday, August 2, at 1 pm, to discuss SeaWorld: The Next 25 Years. This Fall the San Diego City Council will be deciding whether to approve SeaWorld's proposed plan, which notably removes the requirement of public hearings and a mailed public notice for major projects. Options for how to help the animals at Sea World will be discussed.
- [Restaurants for Rescues](#) has announced a new community partnership, between [Ben & Esther's Vegan Delicatessen](#) and the [Saving Animals & Healing Hearts](#) sanctuary in Ramona. Community members gathered on July 26 at Ben & Esther's to celebrate the pairing, enjoying deli creations and reading about the sanctuary on tabletop displays that promote Saving Animals & Healing Hearts to the deli's customers.
- Michelle May of Viridian Productions was interviewed July 16 on the culinary and culture podcast [Lick the Plate](#), discussing the Oceanside Sustainable Food Festival (a transcription of the interview is available on [The Coast News](#)), as well as appearing on [FOX 5 San Diego](#) news.
- [Vegan Justice](#) is making an appearance at Hillcrest Cityfest on Sunday, August 9, from 12 - 8 pm. Visit their website to sign up for a 2-hour volunteer shift, sharing about veganism with members of the public.
- On July 30, [DxE San Diego](#) partnered with the [True Cost Project](#) to stage a non-violent protest at Science Park, focused on the Merck pharmaceutical company, which purchased 154 dogs from Ridgman Farms to use in animal experimentation. Per a press release, the next major target for protest will be New York-based Marshall BioResources (MBR), which owns a facility that houses about 40,000 animals slated for animal testing, including dogs, ferrets, cats, and pigs.





- [Kind Heart Coalition](#) marched in San Diego's annual Pride Parade on July 18, urging attendees to choose a compassionate, vegan lifestyle, that respects all beings. The contingent was fortunate to host this year's Champion of Pride, [Jackie Han](#).

- Kind Heart Coalition is continuing to offer registration for the 2026 [Kind Hearted Campout](#). The Campout runs from October 15-18 on Palomar Mountain, and will include all meals, a custom T-shirt, and events

throughout the long weekend, including workshops, lectures, a dance party, yoga, games, and art projects. Ticket prices gradually increase over time, so early purchase is recommended.

- [Restaurants for Rescues](#) is celebrating a new restaurant-sanctuary pairing: Vegan restaurant [Sabor a Vida](#) will be promoting the [Fortuna Ranch Farm Sanctuary](#) in Encinitas. A gathering is being held to mark the occasion at Sabor a Vida in Vista on Sunday, August 16, at 10 am.

- SNAP (Spay Neuter Action Project) unveiled a new [Neuter Scooter](#) on July 18, allowing the organization to provide affordable mobile spay and neuter services to many more people in the community.

- Voting is open for the VegNews [2026 Restaurant Awards](#). San Diego restaurants are well represented among the contestants, including Evolution Fast Food and Plant Power Fast Food (Best Vegan Fast-Food Restaurant), Next Level Veggie Grill (Best Vegan Fast-Casual Restaurant, national), Donna Jean (in three categories: Best Vegan Upscale Restaurant, Best Vegan Pizzeria, and Best Vegan Italian Restaurant), The Plot (Best Vegan Casual Restaurant), Ben & Esther's (Best Vegan Deli), Maya's Cookies (Best Vegan Bakery), MOTHERSHIP (Best Vegan Bar), Tacotarian (Best Vegan Latin Restaurant), The Yasai (Best Vegan Sushi Restaurant, though it's not fully vegan), and Peace Pies (Best Healthy Vegan Restaurant).

- [Farm Animal Refuge](#) is holding their fourth annual Waterfront Social cocktail party at the Mission Beach Women's Club Cottage in Mission Bay, on Friday, August 21. Drinks (alcoholic and non-alcoholic) and vegan food will be served, and there will also be a silent auction. This is a ticketed event, ages 21+.

- The [Ocean Beach People's Food Co-Op](#) is celebrating their 54th Anniversary on Saturday, August 22, from 11 am to 2 pm, putting on a family-friendly event with a vegan cookout, bounce house, face painting, DJ, and local vendors. 4765 Voltaire Street, San Diego, CA 92107.

- Vista vegan restaurant [Sabor a Vida](#) is partnering with a local plant-based dog food company, [Dylan's Pet Food](#), which focuses on recipes for allergy-prone dogs. Orders can be placed via a QR code at Sabor a Vida.

- Popular vegan Mexican restaurant El Veganito [announced](#) that they are being forced to relocate from Grossmont Center by August 26th, and are actively looking for a new location. The owners, Victor and Melissa, posted a [message](#) of thanks to the local community for their support after the announcement.



- A medieval-inspired cocktail space called the [Throne Room](#) is slated to open within the vegan bar Kindred in South Park. SanDiegoVille [covered](#) the new venture, created by Kory Stetina and Arsalun Tafazoli, former owners of the Dreamboat diner and Vulture, both of which closed in February.
- The [Seaside Center for Spiritual Living](#) is hosting a vegan spirituality potluck with Kameron Waters, co-director/co-writer of the documentary *Christspiracy*, on Saturday, August 8, from 6-9 pm. RSVP online.
- The Hillcrest location of [Mr. Charlie's](#) vegan fast food franchise (3896 Fifth Ave, San Diego, CA 92103) held its grand opening on July 11, inviting Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker for the occasion.
- [Strategic Action for Animals](#) (SXFA) is monitoring three State legislative issues and two Federal issues. The Action for Animals app, which can be downloaded at the Apple [App Store](#) or the [Google Play](#) store, makes it easy to take action on all five.

The State issues are:

1. AB 928 — Cockfighting Cruelty Act: Caps movement-restricted roosters at 25 per property to give law enforcement a real tool against cockfighting operations. **Faces a key Senate Appropriations vote Aug 3.**
2. AB 2344 — Justice for Seized Animals Act: Lets courts free animals held as "evidence" when a defendant skips court, so they don't languish in shelters for years. Bipartisan, no opposition. **Also Aug 3.**
3. AB 1382 — Ethics Over Aesthetics Act: Bans selling pets genetically engineered purely for cosmetic novelty. Currently stuck on the suspense file, **decided on or before Aug 14** — the most at-risk of the three.

The Federal issues are:

1. The Farm Bill: Currently stalled in the Senate. Republicans on the Senate Agriculture Committee lack the votes to advance it independently, decreasing the likelihood of it moving out of the Senate by the end of the year.
2. FDA Modernization Act 3.0 (H.R. 2821): The U.S. House passed this bill, which requires the FDA to allow human-relevant testing methods like organs-on-chips and computational models. Senator Cory Booker's staff intends to push this through the Senate **before the August recess**, following the prior passage of a similar Senate bill.

Have a news tip? Get in touch! info@vegan-news.org

NATIONAL/WORLD NEWS

- New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani recently appointed [Siddhartha Sanchez](#) as the Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP), which is focused on increasing access to affordable, healthy food. Sanchez is a “lifelong vegan, family chef and avid gardener.”
- Califia Farms is offering two new banana-flavored coffee drinks, Banana Crème Almond Milk Latte, and Organic Banana Crème Almond Milk Coffee Creamer. They are expected to be available through Kroger stores, so keep an eye out at Ralphs and Food4Less.
- A [recent article](#) in the journal *Animals* examined “The Digestibility of Vegan and Vegetarian Diets for Dogs and Cats.” Author Andrew Knight examined the results of 31 studies, 22 on dogs, 2 on cats, and 7 on both dogs and cats, finding that “The overall evidence from these studies indicates that modern veg*n diets for dogs and cats, and their main protein sources, are broadly well digested by these species.” The article was covered by [Earth.com](#).
- Formerly all-vegan protein bar brand Misfits disappointed many customers by adding animal ingredients to their new “Stuffed” line of bars, including bovine collagen, dairy chocolate, and whey powder. There has been noteworthy backlash by customers who have expressed feelings of betrayal and a loss of trust in the brand.
- On July 16, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Switzerland violated the rights of two vegan prisoners when they were denied vegan meals. [Plant Based News](#) reported that Switzerland was found to have “violated Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which protects freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and Article 13, which guarantees the right to an effective remedy.” This ruling is an important precedent in the EU and may be influential internationally. This ruling follows the UK’s implementation of the [Food in Prisons Policy Framework](#) in February, 2026, which requires that vegan prisoners be offered appropriate foods and supplements.
- In a similar vein, [Vegan Food & Living](#) reports that the Lima Constitutional Court in Peru ordered the National University of San Marcos (UNMSM) to offer vegan meal options at its campus dining hall. The absence of vegan options was found to violate “the right to equality, non-discrimination, freedom of conscience, and the free development of personality.”
- Oregon-based vegan food brand Tofurky has announced a new partnership with the British [online supermarket Ocado](#), which is accessible to over 80% of the UK population. Tofurky’s Smoked Ham came out on top of a comparison of vegan deli meats by [Sporked](#).
- ARTICLE: [“Why am I a vegan? I do it for my mental health”](#) by Emma Beddington, *The Guardian*

Ben & Esther's Vegan Deli • Choice Superfood • Donna Jean • El Veganito • Eris Vegan Food Company
Evolution Fast Food • Evolution Coffee • Gorilla Eats Sushi • Kindred • Mr. Charlie's • MOTHERSHIP
OB People's Deli • One WorldBeat Cafe • Peace Pies • Plant Power • The Plot • The Purple Mint
Vegan Bistro • Roots UCSD • Sabor a Vida Cafe & Deli • Tacotarian • Thanh Tinh Chay Restaurant •
Trilogy Sanctuary • Uumbal • Val's Vegan Kitchen • Veggie Grill • Veganic Thai Cafe

San Diego Restaurants...& Meal Prep

Vibrant Fork

Meet Chef Angela Stanger, Founder of Vibrant Fork

Vibrant Fork is a San Diego-based whole food, plant-based meal prep and delivery company helping people enjoy fresh, nourishing food without spending hours shopping, cooking, and cleaning. We spoke with founder and executive chef Angela Stanger about her vegan journey, her commitment to ethical business practices, and why healthy food should never be boring.



Tell us a little about yourself and what inspired you to start Vibrant Fork.

I have been vegan for more than 26 years and have spent the last 7 years creating food that proves nutritious meals can also be exciting, comforting, and deeply satisfying.

I originally co-founded Plant Based Meals in 2019 after studying chemistry and engineering at UCSD. I was so honored to find a community, slowly building around my service, invigorating me to keep energetically changing the food landscape in SD in a more profound way. Vibrant Fork is my voice, and it's just in its infancy with a growing number of services I am launching. I offer expansive menus that are inclusive for people coming from any dietary habit, including the standard American diet. I utilize skilled cooking methods to produce bold flavors, leaving people wanting more, not asking "where's the beef." As the founder, CEO, and executive chef, I wanted to create a company that makes exceptional plant-based nutrition accessible and convenient for busy people throughout San Diego.

Vibrant Fork allows me to bring together everything I care about: delicious food, wellness, animal welfare, sustainability, community, and ethical business practices.

What exactly is Vibrant Fork?

Vibrant Fork is a whole food, plant-based meal prep, delivery, and catering company serving San Diego. We prepare fresh, chef-crafted meals from scratch and deliver them fully cooked and ready to enjoy.

Customers can order a weekly meal package, and a subscription option will be coming soon. Our rotating menu includes signature entrées, soups, salads, sauces, snacks, and desserts, so customers can enjoy variety without committing to the same meals every week.

We also offer catering, corporate dining, employee wellness meal programs, and menu and recipe consulting.

What makes Vibrant Fork different from other meal prep services?

Our food is intentionally designed to be nourishing enough for everyday eating while still delivering the flavor and satisfaction people expect from a great restaurant meal.

We do not simply assemble packaged ingredients or rely on premade sauces. Our meals, soups, dressings, gravies, and sauces are prepared from scratch using high-quality whole food ingredients. We use no added oils or processed sugars, and we avoid artificial ingredients, preservatives, fillers, and unnecessary additives. We source locally whenever possible and choose organic ingredients whenever they are available and practical.

Most importantly, we are not another boring meal prep company. Our menu is diverse, globally inspired, colorful, comforting, and full of flavor.

Is Vibrant Fork only for vegans?

Not at all. While everything we make is completely plant-based, many of our customers do not identify as vegan.

Some customers want to eat more vegetables. Others are trying to reduce their reliance on restaurant delivery, improve their health, support a family member, save time, or simply have something wholesome waiting in the refrigerator.

Our goal is to make plant-based food appealing to everyone. You do not need a label or a specific lifestyle to enjoy a delicious meal.

What does “whole food, plant-based” mean at Vibrant Fork?

For us, whole food, plant-based means building meals around recognizable, nutrient-dense ingredients such as vegetables, legumes, whole grains, tofu, tempeh, mushrooms, herbs, spices, nuts, seeds, and fruit.

We prioritize minimally processed ingredients and prepare our food without added oils or refined sugars. We also keep salt thoughtful and balanced rather than relying on excessive sodium to create flavor.

That does not mean the food is plain. We use fresh herbs, toasted spices, aromatics, citrus, vinegars, house-made sauces, and layered cooking techniques to create depth and richness.

Where do plant-based customers get their protein?

Protein is found throughout the plant kingdom, and we incorporate a wide variety of protein-rich ingredients into our meals.

Depending on the dish, customers may find tofu, beans, lentils, chickpeas, peas, quinoa, whole grains, soy curls, house-made seitan, nuts, seeds, and vegetables.

Rather than focusing on one isolated ingredient, we create balanced meals with complementary sources of protein, fiber, complex carbohydrates, and micronutrients. Our customers are often surprised by how filling and satisfying plant-based meals can be.



What are some of Vibrant Fork's most popular dishes?

Our menu changes regularly, but customers love dishes that feel both familiar and creative. Favorites have included our Rosé Florentine Lasagna layered with tofu ricotta, spinach, basil, Tuscan herbs, and signature rosé marinara; Pierogies 'N Gravy with mushroom gravy, peas, onions, and dill; Porcini Carbonara; Kraut Power Bowls; Gyro Bowls with house-made seitan; Stuffed Jumbo Shells; and our Chick'n Caesar.

We also offer comforting soups, vibrant grain bowls, wholesome desserts, and add-ons that make it easy for customers to stock their refrigerators for the week.

How do you keep the menu exciting?

Variety is one of the foundations of Vibrant Fork.

I am constantly developing recipes inspired by different cultures, seasonal produce, nostalgic comfort foods, and customer feedback. One week may feature Italian-inspired lasagna, while another includes a globally inspired grain bowl, a hearty casserole, a fresh salad, or a completely new take on a classic dish.

Our customers enjoy our new customizations by selecting optional ingredient add ons like our Shr'mp, Bac'n, Tofu Steaks, extra Signature Sauces, and so much more. This gives people the freedom to build a menu that fits their household, schedule, appetite, and personal preferences. Many dishes freeze beautifully; however all meals are made fresh to order and delivered ready to eat.



Can Vibrant Fork accommodate allergies and special dietary needs?

We do our best to accommodate a wide range of preferences, allergies, and dietary considerations. Our menu frequently includes gluten-free options, and certain signature dishes can be customized depending on the recipe.

Because we work with a variety of ingredients in a commercial kitchen, customers with serious allergies should always contact us before ordering so we can discuss their individual needs and explain our preparation environment.

We believe customers deserve transparency and thoughtful communication when it comes to their food.

How does ordering work?

Customers can visit www.vibrantfork.com to explore the current menu and choose their custom meal package.

Meals are prepared fresh for Monday evening delivery throughout our San Diego service area. Kitchen pickup is also available Monday evening from our commercial kitchen on Clairemont Mesa Boulevard.

Customers can enter their ZIP code on our website to see whether delivery is currently available in their neighborhood. Our ordering deadline and current delivery details are always posted online.

Is the packaging environmentally conscious?

Sustainability is central to our mission.

We use practical, eco-conscious packaging whenever possible and continuously evaluate ways to reduce unnecessary waste without compromising freshness or food safety. We also produce meals in organized weekly batches, which helps reduce the excess ingredients and food waste commonly associated with individual restaurant orders.

Choosing more plant-based meals is already a meaningful environmental decision, and we want the rest of the customer experience to reflect those same values.

Why do you believe meal prep is such an important service?

Many people want to eat well but are overwhelmed by the amount of planning, shopping, chopping, cooking, and cleaning it requires.

Restaurant delivery can be convenient, but it is often expensive and may contain much more oil, sodium, sugar, and processed ingredients than people realize. Restaurant food can be wonderful for an occasional experience, but it is not always designed to support someone's everyday health.

Vibrant Fork fills the space between home cooking and restaurant dining. Our customers receive fresh, flavorful meals that are thoughtfully prepared for regular, intentional eating.

How does Vibrant Fork work with local businesses and organizations?

We love collaborating with businesses that share our values.

We have partnered with local food makers, nonprofit organizations, community groups, healthcare professionals, wellness advocates, and animal rescue organizations. One example was our collaboration with local nonprofit Lionel's Legacy Senior Dog Rescue to help raise money for their ongoing medical care for senior dogs in need.

Local partnerships allow us to support other small businesses, introduce customers to exceptional products, and strengthen San Diego's plant-based community.

What corporate and employee wellness services do you offer?

Vibrant Fork works with businesses and organizations through corporate catering, executive lunches, office events, wellness initiatives, and ongoing workplace meal programs.

Employers are increasingly recognizing that access to nourishing food can support employee energy, morale, productivity, and retention. We help companies offer meals that are inclusive, flavorful, and aligned with modern wellness and sustainability goals.

Programs can range from a one-time catered lunch to recurring meal delivery or a customized employee wellness partnership.



Tell us about your venture into fresh pet dog food Lionel's Lunchbox.

Lionel's Lunchbox is my second food company and provides premium fresh food for dogs. I co-founded it during the COVID-19 pandemic while helping support the influx of senior dogs entering rescue.

I was amazed by the changes I observed when dogs transitioned from heavily processed food to fresh meals. Their energy, coats, mobility, and overall quality of life often improved dramatically. Lionel's Lunchbox also gives back to local dog rescues and nonprofit organizations. Both businesses are rooted in the belief that food matters and that businesses have a responsibility to contribute positively to their communities.

How do animal welfare and sustainability influence your decisions?

They influence nearly every decision I make.

Being vegan for more than 26 years has shaped how I view food systems, business, environmental responsibility, and the treatment of animals. I believe businesses should be honest about their values and make decisions that move us toward a kinder and more sustainable future.

I also believe progress happens when we create options people genuinely want. The most effective way to encourage someone to eat more plant-based food is not to lecture them. It is to serve them something so delicious that they cannot wait to eat it again.



What has been the most rewarding part of building Vibrant Fork?

The most rewarding moments are when customers tell us that our meals have made their lives easier or changed the way they think about plant-based food.

Some customers are navigating demanding careers, caring for family members, recovering from health challenges, or simply trying to take better care of themselves. Knowing that they can open their refrigerator and find something nourishing, comforting, and ready to eat is incredibly meaningful to me.

Every order is an invitation into someone's home and onto their table. I never take that trust for granted.

What is your vision for the future of Vibrant Fork?

I want Vibrant Fork to become San Diego's most trusted resource for flavorful, whole food, plant-based meals.

That includes continuing to expand our delivery area, developing innovative new recipes, growing our catering services, and creating meaningful employee wellness partnerships with local companies.

I am also excited about the growing recognition of food as a powerful tool for prevention, wellness, and long-term quality of life. I hope to collaborate more closely with physicians, dietitians, healthcare organizations, nonprofits, and community leaders who understand that access to nutritious food can make a profound difference.

What would you say to someone who is curious but has never tried Vibrant Fork?

Start with a dish that sounds genuinely exciting to you.

You do not need to overhaul your entire diet or make a long-term commitment. Order a few meals, keep them in your refrigerator or freezer, and experience how convenient it is to have something wholesome and delicious ready when you need it.

Whether you are vegan, plant-curious, health-focused, extremely busy, or simply hungry, we would be honored to cook for you.

How can readers learn more or place an order?

Visit www.vibrantfork.com to view our current menu, enter your ZIP code, and place an order for delivery or kitchen pickup.

You can also follow us on Instagram at [@vibrant_fork](https://www.instagram.com/vibrant_fork), email foodie@vibrantfork.com, or call or text **858-282-0028**.

We look forward to welcoming more members of San Diego's vegan and plant-curious community to the Vibrant Fork table.

*We are grateful to chef Angela for her contributions to the vegan community, and for taking the time to share her journey with us. She is generously offering a **15% discount** to readers of Vegan News San Diego, just enter code **VNSD15** at checkout.*



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It's Not a Fad

by

Connie Edwards McGaughy

Every time a vegan restaurant closes, the same tired narrative seems to pop up: “See? Veganism was just a fad.”

But is that really what is happening?

Recently, SanDiegoVille reported that Plant Power Fast Food is closing its UCSD location. The article also mentioned other local vegan restaurant closures and suggested that San Diego’s vegan restaurant sector is under pressure. That part is true. Restaurants are under pressure. Vegan restaurants included.

But here is the context that often gets left out: San Diego lost more than 70 bars and restaurants in 2025. Most of them were not vegan. Restaurants across the country are dealing with rising rent, labor costs, food prices, insurance, utilities, delivery app fees, and customers who are eating out less often. According to the National Restaurant Association, food and labor costs for the average restaurant have each gone up dramatically over the past five years, while restaurant profit margins remain notoriously thin.

So when a vegan restaurant closes, it is not automatically a referendum on veganism. It may be a lease issue. A labor issue. A food cost issue. A foot traffic issue. A pricing issue. A location issue. Or simply the brutal reality of running any restaurant in today’s economy.

No one says seafood is “over” when a seafood restaurant closes. No one declares burgers a failed movement when a burger chain shuts locations. But when a vegan restaurant closes, suddenly people are eager to turn it into a cultural obituary.

Part of that conversation is also influenced by powerful industries with enormous financial stakes in maintaining the status quo. The meat, dairy, egg, and factory farming industries spend billions on advertising, lobbying, and public relations efforts designed to protect their market share. Plant-based products and companies are often framed as unnatural, unhealthy, “too processed,” elitist, or part of a passing trend, while the environmental and ethical costs of industrial animal agriculture receive far less attention.

That does not mean every article criticizing vegan food is propaganda. But it would be naïve to pretend there are not powerful economic interests shaping public perception around food choices.

Social media also fuels the narrative. Celebrity “I quit being vegan” stories generate outrage, clicks, and engagement far beyond what ordinary long-term vegans quietly living their values ever receive. Those stories are then recycled endlessly as supposed evidence that veganism itself is collapsing.

But veganism is not a celebrity diet trend. It is not a temporary wellness phase. It is not something that disappears because a social media personality decided they missed eggs or because one restaurant concept over-expanded.

Veganism is an ethical position rooted in compassion. It is about reducing harm to animals, the planet, and ourselves. That does not vanish because one business model struggles.

And plant-based eating is not disappearing. In many ways, it is becoming more mainstream than ever. Vegan options are now found in places where they were almost unheard of years ago: coffee shops, airports, campuses, grocery stores, stadiums, hospitals, fast food chains, and neighborhood restaurants. In parts of Europe, cities including Amsterdam and The Hague have even restricted certain forms of meat advertising as part of broader climate and public health initiatives.

Ironically, one reason fully vegan restaurants may face greater challenges today is because mainstream restaurants have absorbed so many plant-based ideas into their menus. A traditional restaurant can add a few vegan dishes and appeal to everyone. A fully vegan restaurant depends almost entirely on vegan and vegan-curious diners in an already difficult economy.

That is not failure. That is evolution.

Some vegan restaurants will close. Some will thrive. Some plant-based companies will succeed while others disappear. The same is true throughout the entire restaurant industry.

The bigger story is not that veganism is fading.

The bigger story is that the restaurant industry is changing, consumers are under financial pressure, and businesses of every kind are trying to survive in an increasingly expensive world.

Compassion is not a fad.

Connie Edwards McGaughy is a home cook, vegan blogger, and animal advocate. She has published two vegan e-cookbooks, and has been featured as a vegan cooking and baking expert in the HuffPost and Chowhound. Her site [The Carrot Underground](#) is listed in the Feedspot 100 Best Vegan Blogs and Websites. Essay © 2026 Connie Edwards McGaughy.

Have a perspective to share? E-mail us at info@vegan-news.org



Riverside & San Bernardino

San Diego has many wonderful vegan restaurants, but our neighbors to the north shouldn't be overlooked. Whether you're headed to the Riverside/San Bernardino area or are just passing through, be sure to sample the delicious local vegan cuisine.

Riverside County

Gentle Grill (951) 240-7455 | 43053 Margarita Rd Ste 105 B, Temecula, CA 92592
Sandwiches, burritos, tacos, bowls, fries, nachos

Oasis Vegetarian Café (951) 688-5423 | 11550 Pierce Street, Riverside, CA, 92505
Bowls, burgers, burritos, quesadillas, tacos, desserts. NOTE: Despite the name, they are 100% vegan.

Veg & Go Plant Based Fast Food (951) 213 6233 | 1201 University Ave, Suite 115, Riverside, CA, 92507
Burgers, hot dogs, wings, fries, egg rolls, mozz sticks

FOOD TRUCK: **Vegan Vatoz - Casa de' Tacos** (951) 598-2182 | 3535 University Ave Riverside, CA 92501
Mexican: Tacos, burritos, quesadillas, nachos, tortas

FOOD TRUCK: **Golene's Vegan Kitchen** (951) 464-6500 | Murrieta, CA 92563
Mac & cheese egg rolls, cauliflower chickn', carne asada fries, apple pie egg rolls

DESSERTS: **Casa de Vegan** (951) 901-5300 | Riverside, CA 92503
Cakes, cupcakes, pastries, by pre-order only

San Bernardino County

Bright Star Thai Vegan (909) 980-9797 | 9819 Foothill Blvd, Suite F, Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730
Thai: stirfries, pad Thai noodles, curries, soups, salads

Happy Family Vegetarian (909) 783-8928 | 2150 S Waterman Ave, San Bernardino, CA, 92408
Chinese

Love Amaro Pizzeria (840) 444-1920 | 9928 Sierra Avenue, Fontana, CA, 92335
Pizza, pasta, garlic knots, monkey bread

Nacho & Cookies Vegan Food & Desserts (909) 515-6919 | 3048 1/2 N Stoddard Ave, San Bernardino, CA 92405
Home-based establishment, to-go orders only

Vegan Korner (909) 370-2644 | 22583 Barton Road, Grand Terrace, CA, 92313
Pizza, wings, Alfredo pasta, garlic cheese bread

Interview: Barbara Gates (aka Queen Bean), Healthy Kids, Happy Planet!

Interviewed by Marcy Schviebinz

Barbara Gates is the founder and president of [Healthy Kids, Happy Planet!](#), an Oceanside-based nonprofit focused on educating children and families on the benefits of plant-based diets for both personal health and for environmental sustainability.



What was your career path before starting Healthy Kids, Happy Planet (HKHP)?

I earned my BFA at SDSU in Theatre Arts, with an emphasis in acting. I performed at many San Diego theaters post college, and earned my SAG union card doing commercials. The plan was to move to Hollywood and make it big, but...life happens. After two years and twelve waitressing jobs in LA, I came back to San Diego to marry my best friend and start a family.

What was your motivation behind starting HKHP?

In 2002, when my two children were in elementary school, myself and two other PTA moms began advocating for plant-based school lunches. At the same time, we discovered a remarkable and fully plant-based cooking curriculum that we wanted to implement in our children's classes. We got pushback from the PTA President, who — when we pitched the idea of teaching this multicultural hands-on cooking program — remarked at a PTA meeting, "I moved up on this hill to get away from culture - I vote no!" Luckily, we had the support of most

other PTA members and our school principal, and we were successful in bringing multiple lessons to several classes. The program was a phenomenal success — even making a full-page feature in the *San Diego Union Tribune*!

Our efforts to advocate for plant-based school lunches did not go as well. Despite our most diplomatic efforts, which included providing recipes (requested by the nutrition director) that met USDA school meal standards, we were dismissed and ignored. We even received a letter from the district superintendent banning our little PTA delegation from ever communicating with the nutrition department again. Somehow, the universe conspired to help us. I got connected to some folks in Sacramento and found myself lobbying at the state Capitol for a bill to urge schools to serve daily plant-based veg lunches. One wonderful Assemblymember — with a vegetarian daughter — agreed to be the sponsor. We received endorsements from every major health and environmental organization, as well as the CA State PTA, Teachers Federation and the CA Superintendent of Schools, himself! One year later the CA Healthy Vegetarian School Lunch Act (ACR 16) was passed, and then three more states followed suit (NY, FL, HI). The Resolution is not a mandate, but it serves as a guiding principle — and for my little PTA delegation, it was vindication! That school year, at least a few plant-based options were added to our school menu. My advocacy was done, or so I thought.



These two experiences provided the seeds for me to start *Healthy Kids, Happy Planet!*.

Cut to 5 years later: I checked back with the CA Department of Education to inquire about the report they were required to write, regarding progress and programs to meet the goals of ACR 16. No one knew what I was talking about.

After several calls to Sacramento, I was told by an official that the report had "fallen through the cracks." By now, my kids were getting ready to enter high school and I was feeling ready to resume the effort to forge change in nutrition education and school food. My first self-appointed task was to lobby for getting the Resolution's Report written, so the word could get out to school nutrition that plant-based lunches were something kids should have access to. It wouldn't necessarily create change overnight, but it would begin to raise awareness. Two years later (2010), an exceptional report was finally completed, and the CA Department of Ed Nutrition Services (to this day) has several pages on their website with resources to support and encourage increasing plant-based vegan school meals.

Why do you think plant-based nutrition education is important?

Education is key for cultural change. Policy and legislation are also critical. But, policies won't change beliefs and behavior. Education, plus positive culinary and tasting experiences create a powerful formula for shifting attitudes, behavior — and ultimately, our fast food culture.

I was told once (a long time ago, when I was starting the org) that our programs should not combine nutrition with environmental issues. I'm glad I didn't listen. Behavior change starts from the heart, and we're teaching youth that they can make a difference for nature and animals — things they care deeply about — with their food choices. And then we share delicious food. It's a pretty powerful formula.

What is the mission of HKHP?

Our mission is to educate and empower youth to create a healthier, greener and kinder world. We accomplish our mission through partnerships with education and school nutrition professionals, to provide experiential learning opportunities that elevate and celebrate plant proteins — especially beans, for healthy, earth-friendly protein.

What has been most rewarding in your role as director of HKHP?

With my background in the Arts, I would have to say one of the most rewarding experiences has been to create our nutrition education programs and resources. I really enjoy “performing” our presentation for students in the classroom, which includes singing, games and food prep. Also incredibly rewarding, is experiencing teachers embrace our curricula, and school nutrition professionals embrace our cafeteria marketing materials. And it's a life-changing experience to receive support from individuals who have donated time, talent and treasures to help us grow the organization and make it better. And finally, I feel very rewarded to work with my three other passionate colleagues who have vision and courage to take this work to even greater heights.



What have been your challenges in your work?

My background is in Theatre, so the creative part of my job comes pretty easily — it's a joy. The challenges are probably similar to most small businesses: marketing and distribution, plus funding...enduring. It's a marathon, not a race. We have weathered some storms, including COVID, but we've also experienced so much success and miracles! We're still here, and getting stronger every year.

What age groups do you work with and why?

We work with elementary, middle and high school students. And we go pretty much wherever we are invited, from classrooms to girl scout events to libraries. It's vital that we reach youth — in their formative years — when hearts and minds are still open. As the primary nutrition educator for our nation, the Dairy Council has been reaching this population for decades, placing meat and dairy front and center. It's safe to say their marketing strategy is brilliant. We want to plant seeds of change and disrupt the status quo nutrition message, and provide educators with an evidence based, beautiful, fun and creative alternative.

How do you measure the success of your programs?

Quantitatively, we track:

- Number of students and teachers reached through presentations
- Number of students reached in cafeteria promotions
- Number of students reached with our classroom culinary project mini-grant awards
- Number of teachers using our curricula
- Number of students reached with our Cafeteria posters & PSA videos
- Number of students surveyed who indicate that they plan to increase plant-based meals into their diet

Qualitatively, we gather:

- Student surveys and reflections that highlight increased curiosity about vegan foods, cultural awareness, and compassion for animals and the planet
- Teacher feedback forms and testimonials describing student engagement, learning outcomes, and classroom culture transformation
- School Cafeteria adoption of vegan menu option adoption

Can you share a specific example of how your programs and curriculum changed students' and teachers' understanding of food choices?

I'll share sample quotes.

From longtime teacher partners:

Thank you again for always supporting my work here in Ohio! I can't tell you enough how beneficial your financial support and great materials have been for my program. I read Jack and

the Bean Stew to all my kindergarteners in December, and they just loved it! Every time they serve beans in the cafeteria they're all calling me over to show me that they're eating their beans. So sweet! I feel crazy blessed to get to be a part of all of this. — Ms. Starr, Elementary Fitness and Health Teacher

The students love the power points, learning about different countries and cultures - and native animals. Most importantly, they learn about eating in healthy ways using beans as the source of protein in their diets. Students beg for more of these lessons as they are fun and engaging. — Ms. Thibodeau, (Maine)



From elementary students, as written:

You taught me a lot. I learned that beans are called lagooms and that beans are very healthy and I love beans. I promise that I will eat healthy beans for protein. — Alondra P.S. The food was awesome.

I learned that if you eat PB and J sandwiches we're saving pollution.. I'm going to eat natural like the burrito you gave us. — Aja

I had a great time today! I learned that eating plants and beans for protein, you can help save earth's resources and animals and that the brain uses up to 25% of your self's nutrients. —Ashlee

From high school students:

Your presentation really opened my eyes and realize what I was doing by eating meat. I will try my hardest to change... and I might even convince my friends to do the same. — Jayden G.

I sure learned a lot and I'm trying it out. So far it's good and I sure do feel different. I thought going meatless was going to be terrible, but not at all. — Fredy M.

Your presentation gave me some insight of what is happening to our planet and the animals. I've actually tried a meatless day and it was not different from eating meat. I'm going to try it more often because it will help my health and our planet. — Jackie

What feedback have you received from teachers about how your programs and curriculum have integrated into their curriculum?

Below is feedback that refers (loosely) to social studies and science, plus a quote from a PE teacher.

From teacher partners:

Last week we made the soulful chili. Yum! We watched the cooking show video that went with this recipe. Absolutely amazing! I love seeing diverse representation in your cooking videos and the references to culture. Thank you! —Ms. Nina, 4th grade teacher, SDUSD



We really enjoy our lessons. I especially love the geography component. We are learning so much, including myself. At this age, kids are really interested in maps and learning about different cultures. We talk a lot about food in my class, so this is great. I'm even trying to eat way less meat and more beans! — Laura W, 3rd grade teacher LAUSD

This week we completed lesson 4, and I am continually impressed with the curriculum and the entire Cool Beans program. Students really enjoyed learning about the Middle East, and they loved the culinary project of making and enjoying hummus. I hoped to share some pics, but once we'd get started I'd always forget. Anyway, I just wanted to share how fun this experience has been for my students and me and we are all looking forward to the next Cool Beans adventure in January. —Mr. Ward, Elementary PE OUSD

How do your programs address diverse dietary preferences?

Our elementary curriculum, *Cool Beans from Around the World*, is multicultural, with each lesson spotlighting a different country and cultural cuisine, while highlighting different bean varieties for protein. What we are especially proud of, is that all our different lessons can serve to support the Social Emotional Learning core competencies of Social Awareness and Responsible Decision Making. Simply put, our curricula has the potential to help students appreciate each other's differences, and make food choices that are different — and better. Our

lessons are as much about health and environment, as they are about kindness and peace, emphasizing that each individual is a part of the global community.

What is your long term vision for HKHP?

The long term vision for HKHP is to continue growing, so that we may reach ever more teachers and students with our vegan-friendly nutrition education resources, and classroom culinary grants — to disrupt the status quo Dairy Council nutrition education in classrooms across America. We've come a long way in the last ten years, reaching tens of thousands of students from San Diego to Texas to Maine! It is only possible, thanks to the generous support from our vegan community and businesses, and for that we are deeply grateful.

Where do you see the future of plant-based education in public schools?

Currently, nutrition education is encouraged by local school wellness policies, but the reality is —because there are no standards or tests for nutrition education — it is not commonly taught in the classroom. To help teachers better integrate nutrition, we've created our lessons to support common core subjects, like science and social studies. For this reason, teachers are embracing our programs with high praise and appreciation. We have all the faith that our plant-based education programs will continue to be adopted in the future — as long as teachers can find out about them! Towards that goal, we welcome support from those who agree, reaching youth with plant-forward and vegan friendly nutrition education, in their developmental years, is a priority for our vegan movement.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your work or the organization?

We encourage parents, relatives or caregivers of school age children to please become an ambassador for our nutrition education programs, and share them with your child's teacher. Let's get posters into your local school cafeteria, and perhaps we'll even partner to bring an assembly and cafeteria taste-testing to your child's school! Parents have power...Together, we can plant seeds of change in the open hearts and minds of our future leaders!

We deeply appreciate Barbara's work to educate children, families, and teachers on the benefits of a plant-based diet. Keep up with their activities through the link below, and don't miss their Community Ask request on the last page of the newsletter.

Healthy Kids, Happy Planet!
www.healthykidshappyplanet.org

Vegan Food *in the Wild*



*Sabor a Vida Café & Deli,
Vista*

Rainbow Sandwich

*Veganic,
Hillcrest*

*Pad Thai
Noodles*



Photo: Patty Diercks



The Game Changers Documentary

Free Viewing Link: [YouTube](#)

Director: Louie Psihoyos

Focus: Human Health, Environment

Writers: Mark Monroe, Joseph Pace

Release date: Jan 19, 2018

Length: 86 minutes

Rating: Not Rated

Content Warning: No harm to animals depicted.

The Game Changers sets out to dispel myths about vegan athletes, demonstrating the improved performance and reduced recovery time a vegan diet can produce. The film rather unexpectedly begins at our local Camp Pendleton, where combat expert James Wilks demonstrates training troops in fighting techniques. Earlier in his fighting career, Wilks sustained serious injuries, and while researching recovery methods, learned that Roman gladiators were likely predominantly vegetarian, leading to in depth on research on vegan and vegetarian athletes.

Several vegan athletes are spotlighted in the film, including a number of Olympic competitors: runner **Carl Lewis** (nine Gold Medals, 1984-1996), Australian runner **Morgan Mitchell**, American cyclist **Dotsie Bausch** (Silver Medalist, 2012), and weightlifter **Kendrick Farris** (who broke the U.S. weightlifting record in 2016, lifting 370 pounds in the snatch and 461 pounds in the clean and jerk).

Other athletes include top ultramarathoner **Scott Jurek**; weightlifter **Patrick Babouman**, one of the strongest men in the world; UFC fighter **Nate Diaz**, who bested an opponent that had taunted Diaz for being vegan; boxing heavyweight title contender **Bryant Jennings**; and NFL linebacker **Derrick Morgan**.

Medical and nutritional insights are provided by Dr. James Loomis, a sports team physician (who was part of a World Series as well as a Super Bowl), who makes the point that all protein originates in plants, and that all plants have all essential amino acids, just in varying amounts.

An experiment by Dr. Robert Vogel, co-chair of the NFL Subcommittee on Cardiovascular Health, looked at how three football players were affected by consuming animal vs. plant protein. In a vivid demonstration, a blood draw after their meals revealed high fat circulating in the blood of players who ate meat, but not those who ate vegan food.

Dr. Scott Stoll, a team physician for the USA Olympic team, discusses the medical impact of veganism, including reduced inflammation and reduced recovery time.

Taken together, the personal stories of the range of athletes who have excelled on a vegan diet, and the evidence provided by medical authorities

The full cast is shown at [GameChangersMovie.com](#). Additional information on vegan athletes is available at [www.GreatVeganAthletes.com](#)

VEGAN & CRUELTY FREE:

Oral Hygiene

★ Vegan & cruelty free co. | * subsidiary of a non-cruelty free co. | † non-cruelty free parent co.

Toothbrushes

CRUELTY FREE: ★Before Self Care Company, ★Eco-Dent, ★The Eco Gang, ★Preserve, ★Twice

PARENT CO. NOT CRUELTY FREE: hello* (Colgate-Palmolive†), Tom's of Maine* (Colgate-Palmolive†),

Toothbrushes - Electric

CRUELTY FREE: ★Burst, ★Hismile, ★The Humble Co., ★Made by Dentists, ★Moon Oral Beauty, ★SprinJene, ★Vitis

Toothpaste (F fluoride, FF fluoride free, HA hydroxyapatite, n-HA nano hydroxyapatite)

CRUELTY FREE: ★ATTITUDE (F/FF), ★Before Self Care Company (F/n-HA), ★Better & Better (FF/HA), ★Boka (n-HA),

★Cali White (FF), ★Davids (FF/n-HA), ★Fygg (n-HA), ★Hismile (F/FF/HA), ★The Humble Co. (F), ★JÄSÖN (F/FF),

★Lumineux (FF), ★Made by Dentists (F/HA), ★Marvis (F), ★Moon Oral Beauty (F/FF), ★Oxyfresh (F/FF), RADIUS (FF/HA),

Red Seal (FF), ★Revitin (FF), ★RiseWell (HA), ★SprinJene (F/FF), ★Twice (F/HA), Weleda (FF), Welnesse (HA)

PARENT CO. NOT CRUELTY FREE: Aesop* (L'Oreal†), Burt's Bees* (Clorox†), hello* (Colgate-Palmolive†), Native* (Procter & Gamble†), Tom's of Maine* (Colgate-Palmolive†)

Toothpaste - Sensitive Teeth (F fluoride, FF fluoride free, H hydroxyapatite, n-HA nano hydroxyapatite)

CRUELTY FREE: ★ATTITUDE (F), ★Before Self Care Co. (F), ★Better & Better (HA), ★Boka (n-HA), ★Davids (n-HA),

★Lumineux (FF), ★Made by Dentists (F), ★Marvis (F), ★Oxyfresh (F), ★SprinJene (F/FF), ★Twice (F/HA)

PARENT CO. NOT CRUELTY FREE: hello* (Colgate-Palmolive†), Tom's of Maine* (Colgate-Palmolive†)

Toothpaste - Whitening (F fluoride, FF fluoride free, H hydroxyapatite, n-HA nano hydroxyapatite)

CRUELTY FREE: ★Before Self Care Company (F/n-HA), ★Boka (n-HA), ★Burst, ★Cali White (FF), ★Davids (FF/n-HA),

★Hismile (F/FF/HA), ★JÄSÖN (F/FF), ★Lumineux (FF), ★Made by Dentists (F), ★Marvis (F), ★Moon Oral Beauty (F/FF),

★SprinJene (F), ★Twice (F/HA)

Toothpaste Tablets (F fluoride, FF fluoride free, H hydroxyapatite, n-HA nano hydroxyapatite)

CRUELTY FREE: ★Bite (F/FF), ★The Humble Co. (F/FF), ★Huppy (H)

Dental Floss

CRUELTY FREE: ★allBambu, ★Before Self Care Company, ★Better & Better, ★Biobrush, ★Bite Toothpaste Bits, ★Burst,

★Cocofloss, ★Davids Natural Toothpaste, ★Eco-Dent, ★The Eco Gang, ★EcoYou, ★Happier Beauty, ★happybrush,

★Hippotanicals, ★Huppy

PARENT CO. NOT CRUELTY FREE: hello* (Colgate-Palmolive†), Tom's of Maine* (Colgate-Palmolive†)

Dental Floss Picks/Flossers

CRUELTY FREE: ★Burst, ★The Eco Gang, ★The Future is Bamboo, ★GoEcoVita, ★Happy Eco, ★The Humble Co.,

★LivingPro

Mouthwash

CRUELTY FREE: ★Boka, ★Essential Oxygen, ★The Humble Co., ★JÄSÖN, ★Marvis, ★Nudge, ★Oxyfresh, ★SprinJene

PARENT CO. NOT CRUELTY FREE: hello* (Colgate-Palmolive†), Tom's of Maine* (Colgate-Palmolive†)

Local Resources

VeganDiego, San Diego County's Vegan Directory www.vegandiego.com

A comprehensive listing of vegan restaurants, markets, food services, businesses, and organizations.

San Diego Vegans Facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/sdvegans

With 14,000 members, this is one of the best sources of information on the local vegan community.

San Diego Vegans Meetup group www.meetup.com/sandiegovegans

An inclusive group that meets regularly to connect local vegans.

PlantDiego www.plantdiego.com

A San Diego nonprofit vegan social support and education group, which offers monthly gatherings focused on whole food plant based eating and health.

San Diego Vegan Activists www.facebook.com/sandiegoveganactivists

A source for local protest and advocacy opportunities.

Vegan in San Diego veganinsandiego.com

Website featuring a listing of vegan restaurants, pop ups, and businesses.

Sustainable Market/Night Market events www.viridianproductions.com

Vegan and sustainable festivals and pop-up markets, including the San Diego Sustainable Night Market, North Park Sustainable Market, Vista Sustainable Night Market, and annual San Diego EarthFest and Oceanside Vegan Food Festival. See website for dates and locations.

San Diego Vegan Market, Grantville www.veganrestaurantsd.com

Groceries, snacks, drinks, personal care, cleaning supplies, freshly made deli sandwiches.

Thousand Petal Lotus vegan market, Vista www.thousandpetallotusvista.com

Groceries, snacks, drinks, vitamins, personal care, gifts.

Natural Foods Stores: • Chains: [Baron's Market](#), [Jimbo's](#), [Manolo Farmers Market](#), [Mother's Nutritional Center](#), [Sprouts Farmer's Market](#), [Trader Joe's](#), [Whole Foods Market](#) (owned by Amazon)

• Independent Markets: [Cardiff Seaside Market](#) (Cardiff), [Frazier Farms](#) (La Mesa, Oceanside, Vista), [Jensen's Foods](#) (Point Loma), [Keil's](#) (San Carlos), [Lazy Acres Market](#) (Encinitas, Mission Hills), [Ramona Family Naturals](#), [San Diego Farmers Outlet](#) (Grantville), [Stehly Farms Market](#) (Kensington, Valley Center), [Windmill Farms](#) (Del Cerro)

Local Activism Opportunities

[Action for Animals \(XFA\)](#) group, [Action for Animals](#) app, [BAAL \(Bold Activists for Animal Liberation\)](#) group, [Direct Action Everywhere \(DxE\)](#) group, [Kind Heart Coalition](#) group, [Strategic Action for Animals \(SXFA\)](#) group, [Vegan Justice](#) group + San Diego Vegan Activists ([Instagram](#) [Facebook](#)) pages

National/World Resources

VEGAN FOOD FINDERS

Happy Cow vegan/vegetarian restaurant finder www.happycow.net

Veggl vegan food options at restaurant chains veggl.com

VEGAN ALCOHOL

Barnivore: www.barnivore.com

VEGAN PRODUCT FINDERS/CHECKERS

Vegan Product Checkers: [Double Check Vegan](#) app, [Is It Vegan?](#) barcode app, [Vegan Verify](#) barcode app, [WhatsVegan](#) ingredient label scan app, [Conscious Bunny](#) free website, [Is It Vegan?](#) free website, [Logical Harmony Animal Ingredient List](#)

CRUELTY FREE PRODUCT CHECKERS

Cruelty Cutter app: cruelty-cutter.org

CRUELTY FREE PRODUCTS

Leaping Bunny cruelty free certification: www.leapingbunny.org

PETA cruelty free certification: crueltyfree.peta.org/product-type

Cruelty-Free Kitty: www.crueltyfreekitty.com

Ethical Elephant: ethicalelephant.com

VEGAN ORGANIZATIONS

The Vegan Society: Birmingham, England | www.vegansociety.com

The American Vegan Society, Malaga NJ: americanvegan.org

The Vegetarian Resource Group: www.vrg.org

Vegan Outreach: Sacramento, CA | veganoutreach.org

Viva! The Vegan Charity: Bristol, England | viva.org.uk

Vkind (products, companies and services): www.vkind.com

VEGAN and CRUELTY FREE ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Reddit/Vegan: www.reddit.com/r/vegan

Reddit/Cruelty Free: www.reddit.com/r/crueltyfree

VEGAN CERTIFICATIONS

Vegan Society, Vegan Action/Vegan Awareness Foundation, American Vegetarian Association, BeVeg, V-Label International, VegeCert vegecert.com

VEGAN HOUSING

VegVisits: vegvisits.com

CRUELTY FREE INVESTING

Cruelty Free Investing: crueltyfreeinvesting.org

ACTIVISM OPPORTUNITIES

PCRM Actions: www.pcrm.org/take-action

PETA Action Center: www.peta.org/actioncenter

VegMediaWatch: vegmediawatch.org

Factory Farm Watch: FactoryFarmWatch.org

AUGUST COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Coming in September: • San Diego VegFest, Balboa Park, Sep 26 • Sale Ranch: Annual Fundraising Gala 2026, Temecula, Saturday, September 19, 5-9pm • Sustainable Markets by Viridian Productions						1 PlantDiego: How Not to Die movie highlights + potluck, Point Loma Library, 11:30
2 Strategic Action for Animals (SXFA) lunch meetup on responding to SeaWorld: The Next 25 Years, North Park, 1 pm	3 Eris special: All-In Lunch (sandwich + a drink for \$12), 12-2 pm Mon-Fri →	4 Tacotarian special: Taco Tuesday, tacos \$1 off Maya's Cookies \$2 chocolate chip cookies Tue-Wed 4-5 pm	5 Donna Jean special: Entree, Dessert + Drink for \$35 Wed-Thu 5-9 pm Tacotarian special: Dorado tacos \$1.99	6 El Veganito: Burrito Thursday \$2 off all burritos Donna Jean date night special: 1 pizza, 1 pasta, 1 salad, 1 bottle of wine for \$85 Wed-Thu 5-9 pm	7 San Diego Sustainable Night Market, Miramar 5-9 pm, free	8 North Park Sustainable Market/Book Fair, North Park, 12-4 pm Seaside Center for Spiritual Living vegan potluck w/ Kameron Waters, Encinitas, 6-9 pm
9 Vegan Justice: Hillcrest Cityfest volunteer opportunity, 2 hour shifts 12 - 8 pm	10 Eris special: All-In Lunch (sandwich + a drink for \$12), 12-2 pm Mon-Fri →	11 Tacotarian special: Taco Tuesday, tacos \$1 off Maya's Cookies \$2 chocolate chip cookies Tue-Wed 4-5 pm	12 Donna Jean special: Entree, Dessert + Drink for \$35 Wed-Thu 5-9 pm Tacotarian special: Dorado tacos \$1.99	13 El Veganito: \$2 off all burritos Donna Jean date night special Wed-Thu 5-9 pm	14	15 PlantDiego: Lunch at The Plot, Oceanside, 1:30-3 pm
16 Restaurants for Rescues at Sabor a Vida, celebrating Fortuna Ranch Farm Sanctuary Vista, 10 am Spirituality for Animal Advocates online 1-2:30 pm	17 Eris special: All-In Lunch (sandwich + a drink for \$12), 12-2 pm Mon-Fri → Vegan Meditation 6-6:30 pm (online)	18 Tacotarian special: Taco Tuesday, tacos \$1 off Maya's Cookies \$2 chocolate chip cookies Tue-Wed 4-5 pm	19 PlantDiego: Dinner at El Veganito, La Mesa, 5-7 pm	20 El Veganito: Burrito Thursday \$2 off all burritos Donna Jean date night special: 1 pizza, 1 pasta, 1 salad, 1 bottle of wine for \$85 Wed-Thu 5-9 pm	21 Farm Animal Refuge: Water-front Social, Mission Bay, 5-9 pm (21+/ticketed) Vista Sustainable Night Market, Vista, 5-9pm, free	22 OB People's Co-Op: 54th Anniversary Celebration, Ocean Beach, 11 am-2 pm
23 _____ 30	24 Eris special: All-In Lunch (sandwich + a drink for \$12), 12-2 pm Mon-Fri 31	25 Tacotarian special: Taco Tuesday, tacos \$1 off Maya's Cookies \$2 chocolate chip cookies Tue-Wed 4-5 pm	26	27 El Veganito: Burrito Thursday \$2 off all burritos Donna Jean date night special: 1 pizza, 1 pasta, 1 salad, 1 bottle of wine for \$85 Wed-Thu 5-9 pm	28	29

Deals & Discounts

RESTAURANTS

[Ben & Esther's Vegan Delicatessen](#) (Rolando): Rewards program offers points with purchase

[Chani's Donuts](#) (Kearny Mesa): Free sample donut

[Donna Jean](#) (North Park): Weeknight Dinner Special: Entree, Dessert + Drink for \$35 Wed-Thu, 10% off, valid Wednesday and Thursday, coupon in [VeganDiego](#)

[El Veganito](#) (La Mesa): \$1 off, coupon in [VeganDiego](#), \$2 off all burritos on Thursdays

[Eris Vegan Food Co.](#) (Oceanside): The All-In Lunch (sandwich + a drink for \$12), Monday-Friday, 12-2 pm "Buy one, get ones" on Tuesday nights for loyalty program members

[Evolution Fast Food](#) (North Park): Free soft serve with purchase of a sandwich or burger, coupon in [VeganDiego](#)

[Gorilla Eats Sushi](#) (College Area, in SDSU at Aztec Food Hub): 10% off cash "call in for pickup" orders

[Ike's Love and Sandwiches](#) (Hillcrest, Midway, Poway, Sorrento Valley): Omni shop with many vegan options With app, free sandwich on birthday month, periodic specials and offers

[Maya's Cookies](#) (Grantville, San Marcos): \$2 chocolate chip cookies Tuesdays & Wednesdays 4-5 pm

[Nibble Chocolate](#) (Old Town's Fiesta de Reyes): 10% off coupon in [VeganDiego](#)

[Phattie's Bake Shop](#) (Point Loma): Rewards program, 1 point for every \$2 spent

[Plant-Power Fast Food](#) (Encinitas, Escondido, Ocean Beach, UCSD): Rewards program offers points with purchase to redeem for products + birthday surprise

[The Purple Mint Vegan Restaurant](#) (City Heights): Free birthday surprise at www.purplemintbirthdayclub.com VIP program offers secret menus, special offers/discounts, loyalty rewards

[Rayluca Chocolate](#) (Mira Mesa): For online orders, use code "LOVE15" for 15% off.

[Tacotarian](#) (North Park): Tuesdays: \$1 off tacos, Wednesdays: Dorado tacos \$1.99

[Veggie Grill](#) (Carlsbad): Rewards Program offers points with purchase, periodic offers, free birthday entree

STOREFRONT MARKETS

[Sprouts Farmers Market](#): Frequent Buyer program - purchases earn cash rewards, digital coupons

[Thousand Petal Lotus](#) (Vista): Low priced Rebel Cheese, buy one, get \$1 off second cheese

ENTERTAINMENT

Vegan T-Shirt of the Month

“THE ONLY THING
WE NEED FROM ANIMALS
IS FORGIVENESS”

Resources for New Vegans: The Vegan Society’s “How to Go Vegan”

The UK-based Vegan Society offers recommendations for new vegans, urging newcomers to go at their own pace, pay close attention to nutrition, be open to trying new foods, continue to learn about veganism, ask for help when needed (through social media groups, or the society’s [VeGuide app](#)), remember personal reasons for veganism, and never give up, seeking social support as needed. Keep this link handy — you never know when you might need it:

www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/how-go-vegan

Vegan/Vegetarian Character: Bruce Banner/The Incredible Hulk, *Ultimate Wolverine vs. Hulk* comic series (2005-2009)

The new Spider-Man film, *Spider-Man: Brand New Day*, includes a guest appearance by the Hulk. In the comic series *Ultimate Wolverine vs. Hulk* (2005-2009), part of Marvel’s Ultimate Universe comics, Bruce Banner is vegan. Coincidentally, Mark Ruffalo, the actor who has played Bruce Banner in most of the MCU movies, has long followed a mostly plant-based diet and advocated for sustainable agriculture.

“All beings tremble before
violence. All fear death, all love
life. See yourself in others. Then
whom can you hurt? What harm
can you do?”

- *Dhammapada: The
Sayings of the Buddha*

Vegans in the News

The new Spider-Man movie *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* includes performances by vegetarian actress **Zendaya** (MJ Watson), and vegan actors **Jacob Batalon** (Ned) and **Sadie Sink** (best known for playing Max in the *Stranger Things* TV series), as well as **Mark Ruffalo**, who is known to follow a mostly plant-based diet. Brazilian vegan pop singer **Anitta** collaborated on the song “Goals” for the Official FIFA World Cup 2026 Album (she also scored a spot on PETA’s [2026 celebrities](#) list). Vegan actress **Bellamy Young** just concluded the second and final season of the medical drama *Brilliant Minds*. **Tiny Chef** has teamed up with [Ikea](#) to offer vegan falafel balls in store cafeterias.

The Last Word: Community Ask

There are many groups and organizations which could benefit from community support to further their vision. Community Ask is an opportunity for these groups to request whatever assistance would be most helpful. Below Barbara Gates shares how to help Healthy Kids, Happy Planet! further its mission.

Is there a way that readers could help you further the aims of Healthy Kids, Happy Planet?

HKHP asks the vegan community to support the mission with donations to help fund our teacher culinary grants. Your donation will fund \$400 mini-grants to bring a series of nutrition lessons and hands-on vegan culinary projects to students.

Next Month

September will be a big month for the community. San Diego VegFest will finally come to Balboa Park, on Saturday, September 26. Right before VegFest, PlantDiego is hosting a “Let’s Beat Breast Cancer” rally at 11 am.

If you have any energy left after VegFest, Poppy’s Party for Prevention is a private donation event to benefit SNAP (Spay Neuter Action Project), September 26 at 1 pm.

Viridian Productions will be hosting the North Park Wellness Fair on Saturday, September 12, from 12-4 pm.

Sale Ranch will be holding their Annual Fundraising Gala 2026 in Temecula, on Saturday, September 19, 5-9 pm.

Vegan News
San Diego