

7th Ottawa Veg Fest on June 4-5 reflects growing interest in plant-based diets

Ottawa Veg Fest returns for its 7th year on June 4-5, 2016 at the RA Centre (2451 Riverside Drive) with more exhibitors than ever before, reflecting a growing trend of interest in vegetarian and vegan lifestyle in Ottawa and beyond. As always, it will be 'admission by donation,' with all donations going to local non-profit organizations. Last year Ottawa Veg Fest raised nearly \$10,000, and welcomed some 6,000 visitors.

"We've seen a number of brand new plant-based businesses open their doors in the capital this past year, including three new entirely vegan restaurants. This spring alone, Little Jo Berry's Café and Rawlicious have opened in Ottawa, with Grow Your Roots slated to open its doors in Kanata in June. The interest in this dietary option has grown consistently over the past few years, as we've seen through Veg Fest attendance and the growing number of exhibitors at this event," says Pamela Tourigny, Ottawa Veg Fest co-founder and local vegan lifestyle blogger and expert.

It's part of a larger trend; According to surveys, more than 1/3 of people use and prefer meat and dairy alternatives, and as many as 41% of people are actively reducing the quantity of meat they consume.

"Booth space at Veg Fest has never filled up more quickly," says Veg Fest organizer, Michael Calvert. "It's not just restaurants; there is a growing number of products and services now available to support plant-based living, including healthier personal care products, nutrition and health professionals, specialty food and drink products, food delivery services, cooking classes and more." The Table Vegetarian Restaurant is once again Veg Fest's Gold Sponsor.

Veg Fest is not just for vegans and welcomes everyone, regardless of how or if they identify their eating preferences. It is the perfect opportunity to discover some great local businesses, taste some great food, and to learn about the various alternatives in a friendly and inviting atmosphere.

Visitors can sample and purchase plant-based versions of products ranging from non-dairy cheeses, ice cream and chocolate, to vegan meat and even vegan bacon grease. (An exhibitor list can be found online at vegfest.ca). Many local health food stores, restaurants, bakeries and non-profit organizations will also be participating. In addition to 80+

exhibitors, Veg Fest also features a great line up of international and local speakers, a film and a series of informative cooking demonstrations.

“It’s amazing how much things have changed since the first Ottawa Veg Fest in 2009. Now almost everyone knows what vegan is, and many more people are curious to try these options that are better for their health, the environment, and of course, animals,” says Tourigny, who will be a speaker and exhibitor representing her new cooking school Eat Your Veggies Institute.

Don’t miss it. Ottawa Veg Fest runs from 10 am to 4 pm on June 4-5 at the RA Centre. Visit vegfest.ca for more information.