

How would you rate/evaluate vegetarian and vegan options in Belgian restaurants?

Veganism is definitely starting to get more commonly known, especially in the bigger cities. Ghent has always been the leader walhalla for vegetarians and vegans, but over the past two years, Brussels and Antwerp have become real vegan hotspots as well. Smaller cities like Leuven and Bruges have recently jumped on the vegan train, too — veganism is growing in Belgium!



Raw vegan breakfast at Eten Vol Leven in Antwerp: sprouted buckwheat granola with fresh fruit and homemade almond milk + rainforest smoothie w/ brazil nut milk, banana, cacao, carob and agave.



Lunch in vegetarian and vegan-friendly bistro WILD Antwerp: homemade vegan quiche w/ tofu and swiss chard, homemade whole-grain bread with goat cheese and pesto, warm cinnamon-ginger-lemon-orange juice and a raw broccoli-pear-ginger smoothie.



Vegan lunch at [Carotterie 2000](#) in Antwerp: Salade des gens heureux ('Salad for happy people'), vegan aubergine start baguette and a slice of raw vegan mojito cheesecake.



Lunch in vegan fast-food restaurant Loving Hut Veganerie in Leuven: Samurai Burger w/ potato wedges and a rice dish w/ vegan steak and veggies.

However, when you live in a small town like me, it's much harder to find a vegetarian or vegan restaurant. Most restaurants just have one or two vegetarian options on their menu, vegan options are often limited to a salad or are just not on the menu at all. However, if you ask the chef to prepare a special dish without animal products, they may be willing to do it. But once again — in some places you need to call in beforehand and explain your dietary preferences so that they can prepare for your meal in advance.

What about vegan and vegetarian options at supermarkets? What is the availability of these products and what are the choices?

Options are growing! Each supermarket has a health section now, where you often find vegan-friendly products. I always laugh at the name 'health section' by the way — if there's a health section in your supermarket, what does that make of all the other aisles? ;)



Vegan and vegetarian balls, burgers, sausages, falafel, stir-fry, tofu, tempeh, etc. A whole range of products to choose from! This is the vegetarian cooling section in a regular supermarket (Delhaize) in a small town (Aarschot). Proof that vegetarians are growing — and they're hungry!

One little side note though: vegan and vegetarian products in regular supermarkets are often loaded with sugar and artificial additives, which is why I usually shop in organic whole food shops.



Vegan organic Belgian chocolate from Wiloco and Magic chocolate sweetened w/ coconut blossom sugar, sold in Bioplanet. It's AWESOME stuff.

Where do Belgians usually shop for these products?

My favourite organic supermarkets are [Origin'O](#), [Het Natuurhuis](#) and [Bioplanet](#), but you'll also find vegan options in local health food stores and in regular supermarkets like [Delhaize](#), [Colruyt](#) and [Carrefour](#). Because vegan products are limited in regular stores and supermarkets, many vegans order their favorite products online from vegan-friendly websites like [Pit&Pit](#), [Veganistisch Koken](#) and [Lifefood](#).

What do Belgians usually eat? What is Belgian traditional food? Are they more of a "carbivore" nation?

Belgians definitely love meat (eg. rabbit with prunes is a very traditional dish), but I guess the world knows Belgium best for its fries, waffles and chocolate? Luckily, it's fairly easy to veganize these dishes — fries can be baked in coconut oil, waffles can be made with plant-based fats and many brands sell dairy-free chocolate these days.



Raw vegan chocolate from [lovechock](#), sold in Bioplanet Leuven.

Is there any campaign or promotion of how this kind of diet influences one's health being?

Five years ago, Alexia Leysen, a young Belgian theater producer, launched a campaign called Dagen Zonder Vlees ('Days Without Meat'). She challenged people to eat less or no meat for 40 days during Lent. Over five years time, the campaign has become so popular that this year, 90,226 participators saved 10,873,516 square meters on their ecological footprint. Amazing, huh?! I also love organizations like [EVA_vzw](#), who positively encourage people to eat more plant-based meals by organizing workshops, professional courses, potlucks, community events and so on. They have a website that is packed with vegan recipes, vegan-friendly Belgian restaurants and general info about the impact of the consumption of meat- and dairy on your health, the environment and animals.



From the campaign 'Dagen Zonder Vlees'