

HOLY COW CHEWS CHICKEN

Funky food fixture figures flexivores are the future BY SHANNON FINNELL

It's a brave new world, and Holy Cow worshippers acknowledge that even omnivores are getting involved in the ethical decisions about what they eat. When café co-owner Katherine Lavine decided to bite the bullet after 14 years of considering an off-campus location and open a second restaurant in the space of the former Fina Taqueria, she knew it was time to apply the local, organic, environmentally friendly Holy Cow philosophy to a brand new set of circumstances.

Lavine still thinks sticking to vegetarianism or veganism is the best way to eat, but she also admits that some people will always eat meat for various reasons. She didn't want insistent omnivores to be stuck with non-organic meat raised in tortuous conditions, so she and her co-owner, head chef Anton Ferreira, decided to embrace the concept of "flexivores." Flexivores eat meat but consciously try to eat more meals without meat, and when they do eat meat they try to do so in smaller portions.

"One of the things that I've learned is that there is a class of people that think if there's no meat, they can't eat there, so groups of people miss out," Lavine says. By ensuring that Eugeneans craving chicken and fish can follow their friends to the mostly vegetarian and vegan restaurant, she plans to draw a new crowd to Holy Cow while still providing local organic meals further down the food web.

To Lavine, moving toward flexivorism embraces the original concept that she and Ferreira planned when they created Holy Cow as a vendor to local restaurants 20 years ago.

"We wanted to change the world by changing the food system," Lavine says. And while Lavine's not taking all of the credit for it, Eugene's food system is slowly transitioning toward a more local and organic-based bank of foodstuffs.

The new location offers separate, color-coded menus and plates for vegetarians and vegans who want to make sure that even things they aren't eating are strictly "nothing with a mother or a face." There's also a gluten-free menu to avoid celiac flour-torture.

Holy Cow chef Ferreira (Lavine calls him a "restless improver") is using the new space to expand the number of things they cook in house. Pita bread and tortillas are now made fresh on the premises.

Another advantage of opening a second location is its off-campus location — can you smell the booze? Holy Cow is building its local, organic wine and beer



Katherine Lavine and some of the Holy Cow crew

list with Oakshire Brewing and Hopworks Urban Brewing, and hopes to add more soon.

For its opening, Lavine and Ferreira decided to try a "pay as you go" experiment, allowing customers to order at the counter, eat, then pay what they felt the meal was worth. Lavine says customers seemed slightly uncomfortable with such freedom.

"I think it was hard for people to grasp," she says, "they just wanted to be told what the prices were." If Holy Cow repeats the experiment, Lavine says she would consider skipping the counter and cash register altogether, to avoid the awkwardness of standing at

the register and not paying.

The owners are still working out the décor while the restaurant is up and running. In the same tradition as their long search for an additional location, they have local artists Brandi York and Rachel Wolfe-Goldsmith working on murals, both inside and out. Michael Martin is creating a courtyard mosaic. "We try to support not just our farmers but local craftsmen as well," Levine says. "The sense of community is central to what Holy Cow is about." ■

Holy Cow Restaurant, 2621 Willamette; 852-4659; open 11am-8pm every day, hours to expand.



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