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GETAWAY

VEGETARIAN IN MANILA


When vegetarian-friendly cities come to mind, Manila isn't usually high on the list. But the sprawling capital of the Philippines has a clutch of restaurants with dishes to hearten any herbivore, says **Sanjay Surana**

CORNER TREE CAFÉ This former private home, with its roof painted green, retains the look and ambience of a country cottage, no small feat given its prime Makati business-district location. Comforting interiors feature wooden benches, bar stools, a chalkboard listing daily specials for this pan-global vegetarian menu. Highlights include peanut-sauced kare-kareng and the hearty rice dish arroz a la Cubana. (cornertreecafe.com)

HEY HANDSOME Housed in a modern office/retail building in the emerging financial district of Bonifacio Global City, this bright restaurant with towering concrete walls and exposed copper pipes uses local ingredients for its Filipino and Southeast Asian dishes. Of its nine or so main courses, two are vegetarian and both are fantastic. The jackfruit curry is creamy with coconut milk and hints of chilli, while the beetroot paneer unites cheese with beetroot powder, compressed onions, kaffir oil, and dehydrated kale. (+63 917 102 0355)

MANAM With four locations across the city, this Filipino comfort-food chain serves up local dishes in traditional or contemporary form. This is the place to try vegetarian versions of classic fare like the addictive sour soup sinigang, tokwa't baboy (a piquant pork dish made here with tofu), and the winged green bean gising gising, washed down with a tall glass of ube, a milkshake made from purple yam. (momentgroup.ph)

THE TEST KITCHEN A reservations-only dinner spot run by the accomplished Josh Boutwood, Test Kitchen feels like the dining room of a private home where the compact open kitchen is the focal point. Six-course menus are multiculturally influenced, using local products as much as possible, and are theatrically staged, with vegetarian and vegan menus available on request. Dishes that change every day might include a rich gratin with thinly sliced potatoes and intense Comté cheese, or fermented Filipino black rice churned into an ice cream. (+63 2 403 5952)

TOYO EATERY Set at the back of an office plaza, this cool, concrete restaurant with bamboo tables, lamps like bird cages, and a large open kitchen draws Manila's cool crowd for its multi-course tasting menus of updated Filipino fare. The vegetarian version, also on request, features tomato meringues made with local chilli and moringa oil, Calabasas squash soup with cashew butter and sweet potato, and bahay kubo, a dish with 18 vegetables inspired by a Filipino folk song. (+63 917 720 8630) 

Clockwise from left: **boats by Manila Bay**; a dish of beetroot paneer at **Hey Handsome**; a local market in Manila; a dish of jackfruit curry at **Hey Handsome**; rows of pineapples for sale at a roadside stall; desert at **The Test Kitchen**; raw sliced mangoes for sale in the streets of Manila; the exterior of **Manam**

