

# VEG HEAD'S GUIDE TO GUILTY PLEASURES

## MINUS THE GUILTY CONSCIENCE

By Heather Henderson | Contributor

Being vegan doesn't have to mean settling for a lame salad when you go out to eat. Herbivores need a junk food fix just like everyone else. Veganism is on the rise in America and Jacksonville's local eateries are quickly catching up with the movement. I went on a city wide culinary adventure to uncover the tastiest cruelty free treats you'll want to indulge in every day.

The first stop on our journey is Sweet Theory Baking Co. in Riverside — better known as the place where dreams come true. It's an unassuming hole-in-the-wall that serves up some pretty amazing baked goods. From cupcakes to donuts to cinnamon rolls, they've got a little of everything here, and it's all made without eggs or dairy. The cakes and other treats are great, but oh, those giant beautiful cinnamon rolls. They stand out as the most delicious form of sugary carbs I've ever put in my mouth. I would guess the secret ingredient in these rolls is unicorn tears, but that's probably not vegan. Whatever it is, they're amazing. If someone is mad at you, bring them a box of these cinnamon gifts from heaven. They'll quickly forgive you.

While you're in that part of town, head over to Sun-Ray Cinema. If you're down to get a little drunk and stuff your face while watching a movie on the big screen, there's no better place. It's best known as simply a movie theatre, but some consider it more of a restaurant that also offers entertainment. The menu is surprisingly large, and it's not easy to choose just one thing to feast on. They offer regular and vegan versions of your favorite movie snacks like pizza, hotdogs and nachos. My advice? Go for the ultimate comfort food classic — chili cheese fries. You can't beat them. Cheesy, spicy delicious-

ness is one of the core foundations of America. As long as these chili cheese fries exist, everything is right in the world.

OK, those first two are obvious choices when thinking about vegan delights in town. Here's one you might not have thought about. Epik Burger is a casual burger joint on Atlantic Boulevard and Girvin Road. They have a killer menu that would make any carnivore happy, but they also offer a nice selection of vegan and vegetarian options. Lots of regular burger places have started offering veggie patties to keep plant-eaters happy, but it's unusual to find burgers that are completely vegan from the bun to the cheese. I gave the Vegan BBQ Burger a try. Consensus? I want this burger to have my babies. It's messy, dripping with barbecue sauce and piled high with slaw and a giant fried onion ring, finished off with a slice of "cheese." It's a masterpiece of meatless burger engineering. Even Ron Swanson would begrudgingly approve.

How do you finish off a list like this? With dessert, of course. 5F(x) on Baymeadows is an ice cream shop with a twist. Unlike traditional places, whatever you order here is made right in front of you with the ingredients you choose. Go for one of their non-dairy milk options (like almond milk, yum!) and watch the magic happen. This place is Asian-influenced, so they have some weird flavors like taro, but plenty of familiar choices like mango or chocolate. Let your heart run wild with all the great add-ons and toppings and enjoy the tastiest, creamiest vegan ice cream you've ever had. It totally beats the store-bought stuff. When summer comes, you'll want to stop by here every day.

Hungry yet? I don't blame you. Round up your fellow vegans and go feast!