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Organic on the go

by Clay Fong



I've got one, too!" happily exclaimed the tow-headed boy as he pointed to my chocolate shake. Although I was scrutinizing my organic meatless burger and dairy-free shake with some trepidation, the child's enthusiasm was contagious. Consequently, I answered with an equally emphatic and cheerful shout of "Cool!" As he returned to his beverage, I took my seat at one of Boulder's newest restaurants, V.G. Burgers. What sets this establishment apart is that it's an organic fast food restaurant and everything, including the knives and forks, is plant-derived.

The reason for my trepidation? I have a natural suspicion of food items masquerading as something that they are not, such as Ritz Crackers playacting as filling in mock apple pie, or tofu disguising itself as turkey. Moreover, my previous experience with store-bought veggie burgers had often left me with cravings for their bovine cousins. As a counterbalance to my prejudice against non-burger burgers, I brought along a friend who's been a vegetarian for the past 20 years and an astute judge of culinary character.

Scanning the menu, my friend was impressed by the selection. Lifting a competitor's "have it your way" philosophy, V.G. offers five varieties of meatless patties. My friend opted for the three-nut burger, which contains nuts, nut butters and rice. I chose the classic, a mix of rice, carrots, beans

and a sprinkling of beet powder for color. Other choices include sunflower, black bean and falafel patties. The server behind the counter was friendly and helpful, and offered to answer any questions we might have. He made condiment recommendations, including a suggestion of barbecue sauce for the nut burger. For mine, he advised mixed field greens, tomatoes, and ketchup. We also had a choice of white, wheat and spelt buns. Non-dairy cheese is another option.

After exchanging pleasantries with the boy, we started in on our meals. I munched on a handful of organic baked french fries and was hard

pressed to distinguish it from ones that had visited the deep fryer. While I could tell that my hemp-based chocolate shake was free of butterfat, it still had the right creamy texture and deep cocoa flavor.

Then I took the plunge and bit into my burger. I was immediately struck by the full-bodied taste and texture of the patty. It dawned on me that much of what one experiences of a burger is as much about the patty as it is about the accompanying tang of the ketchup and the cool crispness of the lettuce. The high quality of the condiments coupled with the flavor of the patty made for a satisfying dining experience without

the grease. The final verdict? My friend said her nut burger was her new favorite. To borrow a phrase from Pulp Fiction, I considered the classic to be one tasty burger.

At the next table, I noticed the boy was engrossed in the children's combo. For \$6, a youngster can dine on a downsized burger or hot dog, salad or fries, a drink and a cookie. Our meals were a bit pricier, weigh-

ing in at about \$10 apiece. At first glance, that seems like a lot for what we had ordered. However, it's worth noting that the price includes a high degree of social and environmental consciousness you aren't going to get at a national chain. Everything at the restaurant is compostable except for the soda bottles and cans. T-shirts printed with organic dyes and certified free of sweatshop labor are available for purchase. Organics are used wherever possible, including the ice cream cones.

Lastly, for those that eschew animal fat because of choice or necessity, V.G. offers options rarely found in restaurants at any price. This point was dramatically illustrated as we talked to the boy's parents. They explained he had a severe milk allergy and his excitement came from the fact that this was the very first time he was able to drink a restaurant "milk" shake. As we continued the conversation, their son kept smiling as he sipped the frosty chocolate treat, clearly without a care in the world.

Editor's note: Last week's ExactFare was missing the address and phone number of 8 Island Hawaiian BBQ. The address is 3050 28th St., and the phone number is 303-440-7427. ❗

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