

Off the shelf

Helen Greenwood

Ode to soy

This vibrant vegan retailer stocks everything from chocolate ice-cream to Peking "duck".



Vegan victuals: Colin Fung with customers Diana Halloran and Cameron Withers. Photos: Natalie Boog

Vegan's Choice Grocery

113 KING STREET, NEWTOWN.

TEL: 9519 7646

Open Mon-Sun 11am-8pm



Best Buys

Lemongrass soy nuggets, \$11.80/500g
Laksa paste \$5.80/250g
Yakura green tea ice-cream, above, \$6.80/300g

Colin Fung wasn't always a vegan. First he was a Hong Kong-born cook who came to Australia and ran a series of Gourmet Inns in the 1980s and '90s, in Manly, Mosman and Northbridge.

Then, six years ago, Fung became a vegetarian and opened the Green Gourmet Restaurant in Newtown, using his formidable knowledge of Cantonese and Sichuan cooking to create vibrant vegetarian dishes.

But his customers would ask if his food had any eggs or dairy and he realised he could cook without those products, too. So he became a vegan and four years ago, opened this shop.

Even if you're not vegan, you'll enjoy the exotics Fung stocks. He has noodles, seaweeds, dried shiitakes, four kinds of block sugars, and brands of soy sauces and black vinegars you won't find in many Asian groceries.

A gorgeous-looking couple rocks up and pounces on the OKK mushroom "oyster" sauce. Cameron Withers and Diana Halloran are dedicated to the no-compromise philosophy of veganism, avoiding anything produced by the "death industry", as they call it. Vegans think about food a lot. They don't eat any animals or animal byproducts, eggs, honey or

dairy, so they are constantly checking labels, asking questions and making sure they keep their nutrition balanced.

But, as one long-term customer says: "[In this shop], I don't have to worry about what I am buying. I don't have to read every label. And there's such a variety of tofu-based foods."

Fung has created nearly 100 different soy-based dishes. He makes gow gee and war tip dumplings, dim sum and buns, spring rolls and fish cakes, and satay skewers. The kumera purses are based on his mother's recipe.

There are also the popular ginger and coriander tofu pillows, the silken sea veggie rice noodles, and the Peking duck that looks and tastes virtually like a

real breast, right down to the markings on the glazed "skin". He also supplies these frozen and fresh to Harris Farm in Broadway, IGA in Annandale, Bondi and Kirribilli, Macro in Bondi Junction and Crows Nest and Duffy Bros in Darlinghurst.

Fung also makes his own laksa paste, ginger and black bean sauce, hoi sin sauce and an olive paste.

At the front of the shop are 10 different ice-creams, from green tea and black sesame to coconut and chocolate. Fung also has Chinese red dates, rose tea and burdock, the wonder root vegetable for aiding digestion and bodily disorders.

Fung recommends I try a packet of prepared black sesame tea. I drink it later, a pleasant chai-like powder with a gritty residue, and sleep very well that night.