Nature’s Health Food & Cafe

130 Reasons to Love It

By: Deborah Liv Johnson

Hungry for Mexican food?
Asian? Italian? Vegan? Vegetarian? Gluten free? And would you like all of it prepared with certified organic grains and vegetables?

Look no further — Palm Springs plays host to the most extensive, organic, vegetarian menu in the Valley. Nature’s Health Food & Café offers more than 130 items on their colorful, quadruple-fold menu, and the only challenge is figuring out which menu item to order.

Founded eight years ago by Jose Felix and William De La Campa, Nature’s Health Food & Café features a full menu café and health food store in one convenient location. Prior to opening the business with De La Campa, Felix was chef and manager for the previous owner’s café.

“I’ve been in the restaurant business since I was 17 years old,” explains Felix. “When the previous owners asked me to run their business, the only request I made was to expand the menu. I wanted to give the customers a great selection of healthy food options.”

Originally from Sonora, Mexico, Felix learned to cook when he was just eight years old. His mother explained that she was taking one day off from cooking each week, so he and his brother would need to learn how to cook for themselves. Furthermore, she pointed out, if Felix or his brother someday married a woman who didn’t know how to cook, their culinary skills might serve them well. Felix admitted that learning to cook was a bit daunting at first, but he soon grew to enjoy it.

Both Felix and De La Campa have contributed recipes and ideas to their eclectic menu. Open for breakfast, lunch and early dinner seven days a week, the café offers a wide variety of options. The

breakfast menu (served all day) includes scrambles, omelettes, burritos, pancakes, French toast, oatmeal and an acai fruit/granola bowl. Vegetarian meat options include seasoned soy "beef," tofu, soy chorizo, grain sausage, Un-Ham and Fakin'-Bacon.

"It's surprising how many people who eat here are not vegetarians. They simply enjoy the food," notes Felix. "Other customers come in because of health issues. They're a little worried that the food won't taste as good as what they're used to. Pretty soon, they bring the whole family, and it becomes a new way of life."

Lunch items include stir-fry entrées, pasta dishes, vegan entrées, gourmet sandwiches, flat bread pizzas, fajitas, quesadillas, tacos, vegetarian burgers, salads and wraps. A la carte items are available as well as specialty coffee drinks. Smoothies, elixirs, fresh juices, tonics and shakes are listed on two pages of the menu, providing customers with dozens of delicious, organic drinks.

"Our customers often tell us that they can't believe how many choices they have," says Felix. "Our business has really grown by word of mouth. We get people from all over the country, and as far away as Seattle and New York."

In addition to the café, which has small indoor and larger outdoor dining areas, Nature's Health Food & Café boasts a small but well-stocked market that carries vitamins, supplements, cosmetics, probiotics, bulk food items and specialty grocery items.

Vegan Date Shake
Serves 2 (8-10 ounces each)

- 4 scoops (generous 1 cup) soy ice cream (may substitute dairy-free coconut or almond ice cream)
- 1 small fresh banana (1/2 cup)
- 4 to 6 fresh medium-size dates*, pitted
- 1 cup soy milk (may substitute dairy-free coconut or almond milk)

Combine all ingredients in a blender and mix until well blended and creamy. Serve immediately.

* 1 teaspoon date crystals may be substituted for 2 fresh dates

Tofu Scramble Burrito
Serves 2

- 1/2 cup finely chopped carrots
- 1/2 cup finely chopped zucchini
- 1/2 cup finely chopped mushrooms
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 12 ounces medium to firm tofu

- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 2 whole wheat tortillas (12 inch)

Seasoning

- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder (or to taste)
- 1/8 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon ginger powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- Dash of paprika
- Dash of cayenne pepper
- Salt and pepper to taste

Sauté chopped onion in olive oil for about two minutes before adding chopped vegetables and seasonings. Continue sautéing until slightly tender. Add tofu, stirring often until well blended with all ingredients. Remove from heat. In a cast iron skillet or large frying pan, heat tortillas on both sides — using oil is not necessary. Fill each tortilla with half of the veggie-tofu mixture, fold to create a burrito and garnish with freshly sliced avocado and salsa. You may also add a side of brown rice or beans, black or pinto.

Nature's Health Food & Café is located at 555 S. Sunrise Way, Suite 301, at Ramon in Palm Springs. Hours are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

HealthNotes is a publication of Eisenhower Medical Center · © Copyright 2014 All Rights Reserved · www.emc.org