



Go Vegetarian? Go Vegan? Go Herbivore!

Vegetarian and vegan cuisine has been a trending topic in recent years,

Getting in on the trend, we present to you **Herbivore Pte Ltd.**

Located at Fortune Centre along Middle Road, **Herbivore** specialises in quality and unique vegetarian and vegan cuisine. Its Japanese fine dining style satisfies the need for finer tastes and has garnered good reputation and strong following in the vegetarian and vegan scene.

The owner behind this cuisine, vegan *extraordinaire* is Mr Ho, who has been in the vegetarian and vegan scene since 2010, under *Zen Japanese Vegetarian Restaurant Pte Ltd (Zen)*, and subsequently branching out to become the current **Herbivore**.

We are privileged to have him offer us a glimpse of his journey establishing **Herbivore** through this interview.



C&C: Could you share with us your story of Herbivore?

I started my first restaurant, *Luo Han Vegetarian Health Food* at Fortune Centre in 2003, and operated it till sometime in 2011. I also opened *Forest Dew Vegetarian Restaurant* at Block 23 Bendemeer Road in 2007, which was eventually sold off in 2011. Both *Luo Han* and *Forest Dew* served Chinese vegetarian and vegan cuisines. During that period, I was approached by Mr Masatshi Yasui, a chef from Japan, and together we created *Zen*, Singapore's first Japanese-themed vegetarian and vegan restaurant in 2010. As we moved along, we received consistent feedbacks and suggestions to serve Western vegetarian and vegan cuisine. So, we decided to merge **Herbivore** with *Zen* to cater to customers' requests of serving both Japanese and Western vegetarian and vegan cuisine. As a result, **Herbivore** was established and branched out from the concept of *Zen* in 2011. Thus, the **Herbivore** you see today.



C&C: We're amazed, the first Japanese vegetarian concept in Singapore! How was the journey like? Any challenges along the way?

The journey was an unforgettable one. It was challenging and risky because we were the first in the market. We were unsure how the market would respond or react and whether the customers were able to accept the new concept. But here we are today!

One notable challenge was the creation of the menu. It was tough seeking continuous breakthrough in creating new dishes and in enhancing its presentation and taste. I relied on day-to-day inspirations and exchanging ideas with friends. I appreciate our customers' feedback about not realising that they were having a vegetarian or vegan meal while dining at **Herbivore**.



C&C: That itself was a great testimonial to showcase the authenticity and quality of vegetarian and vegan meals. So what would you recommend to customers who are here for the first time?

Unagi! It's made from tofu with some other secret ingredients added to create an authentic taste. The ongoing challenge I face is always about how to leave a unique impression for our customers. I want to ensure great customers' experience, good quality food that we are proud of. I do my best to please the customers despite the restaurant being very busy at times. Our customers are from all parts of Singapore and all around the world and we want them to experience the food quality that exceeds their expectations.

C&C: Let's have a look at the interior of the restaurant. We'd say that it has a vastly different feel from any other vegetarian and vegan restaurants.

I want to create a warm, relaxed and comfortable environment for people to dine in and to enjoy their food. This led me into researching and designing my restaurant in the direction of "Zen" theme.



C&C: That is very thoughtful towards your customers! Are there any specific goals that you would like to achieve?

My goal is to seek constant innovations to my menu and to research for unique ingredients in creating my menu.

I hope to create awareness for less slaughtering and less suffering to animals and encourage more people to go vegetarian and vegan. By doing so, one can reduce greenhouse gases through less animal farming and reduce pollution to the environment, thus a greener Earth to live in.

C&C: That is a noble motivation to drive continuous innovations to your business. Many people are confused between being a vegetarian and being a vegan. Can you tell us more about the difference?

There are many versions of explanations about the differences and it really depends on individual preferences. Generally, both vegetarians and vegans exclude animal products in their diet but vegans also avoid dairies and eggs.

C&C: Your way of business is almost as "Zen" as a way of life. Do you have any advice for the younger generations?

Being young or old, every encounter in life is a learning process. Virtues and ethics are fundamentals in life that are crucial in whatever one ventures to achieve success. I wish for peace and harmony to all beings!

Have you visited Herbivore yet?

 **Herbivore Japanese Vegetarian Restaurant**

 **herbivore_sg**

 **www.herbivore.sg**



This interview was conducted and recorded by the team from Chen & Chin Pte Ltd.

For feedback and comments, please contact us at contactus@chenandchin.com.