

SayPlants! wants you to eat *vegan* to help out

A new dining club is offering discounts in London's finest plant-based eateries.

Maddyness spoke to Harry Kingdon, cofounder, about how business can help people to eat more plants – and less animals.

Tastecard was founded at the end of the last recession, and now has 800,000 members to its name. In 2015, the 2-for-1 discount dining club was reportedly sold for a figure approaching £100M. Fast-forward ten years from Tastecard's inception and Harry Kingdon and Marcus Rapacioli of SayPlants! are hoping to keep eating out on the cards – with a new vegan twist, reflecting how much attitudes have changed in the last few years.

The two schoolmates quit their jobs in January hoping to realise their dream of founding a business together. They were putting the finishing touches on an app to chart personal carbon footprint when lockdown hit, coronavirus overtook climate in the public conscience, and consumption – or at least the kind of consumption they were hoping to help us monitor – totally flatlined.

Both longtime vegans, they pondered how best to fill the gap until things returned to normal. Within a couple of days, they were driving around London dishing out all-vegan food boxes to those unwilling to wait in long supermarket queues. After supermarket franchises got over the initial shock, Harry and Marcus were unable to make their margins work. However, their initiative's (albeit short-lived) success did teach them a valuable lesson. "The vegan community is incredibly supportive of vegan and vegan-friendly businesses", Harry tells me.

“Supporting vegan and vegan-friendly businesses isn’t just a consumer choice about maximising my own welfare – it’s also about supporting those pioneering entrepreneurs who are working hard to showcase the benefits of a lifestyle that has so many ethical, environmental and health benefits. I get a kick out the fact that my cash is spent on a good cause. We all vote with our wallet.”

And so – like any self-respecting entrepreneurs – they pivoted one last time. SayPlants! – a guide to eating vegan in the capital, ft. a roster of delicious discounts to boot – was born. Now available to punters, they already have the city’s biggest plant-based names on board, from shawarma joint What the Pitta! to Jake’s Vegan Steaks, creator of the UK’s first all-vegan Philly cheesesteak.

For just £3 a month, members of the SayPlants! dining club can get free coffee and baklava at the former, and a 15% discount at the latter, but the deals don’t stop there – and aren’t exclusive to all-vegan restaurants. A meat-filled menu hasn’t stopped Beer and Burger from advertising its vegan burger with SayPlants!, offering free beer across its Dalston, Willesden Green and King’s Cross branches.

“We’re heading into another recession and it’s clear that people are going to try to hold on to their previous luxuries but with more attention to their purse strings. At SayPlants! we’re fighting the image that veganism has to be expensive – deals are a great way to save money and support businesses at the same time. From firsthand conversations, I know that restaurant managers felt an enormous impact from the Eat Out to Help Out scheme.”

Now that we can no longer dine out at Rishi’s expense, Harry and Marcus are hoping to fully make the most of peoples’ appetite for discounted dishes. “With 1 million in London alone, vegans, vegetarians and ‘flexitarians’ are a growing audience. Their decisions are based on two things – cost and convenience. We want to solve those two problems.”

Read also

4 foodtech trends to watch in 2020

Article by FLORENCE WILDBLOOD