

Entrepreneur's journey: Interview with Richard Macien and Manon Clarke- Macien of Tasty No Dairy

Veganism, vegetarianism and flexitarianism are all on the rise, and the plant-based food market is expected to be worth \$74.2B by 2027. Big brands are investing in their vegan offering - and innovative small players like the Tasty No Dairy vegan bakery are making sure we can eat ethically without compromising on taste.

The couple launched their vegan bakery business last May, capitalising on growth trends in the UK vegan market and increasing appetites for plant-based alternatives to our favourite foods.

What gave you the confidence to launch a vegan business?

We actually launched the concept about five years ago, however the brand and business are relatively new. We used to run a coffee shop in East London and started at the time baking some freshly-made muffins to go with the coffee. The idea was to enable lactose and gluten-intolerant customers (we had quite a few!) to enjoy a tasty treat with their warm drink.

The muffins became popular very quickly and we then decided to extend the offer to cater for events as well. We remember in particular receiving a request for 300 muffins for a large two-day event – they were eaten so quickly we had to spend the night baking 300 more! Feedback was fantastic and we ended up getting contracts with companies like Lego, Intuit and Accor.

This gave us the confidence to start a dedicated vegan bakery business, Tasty No Dairy, whose brand was officially launched last May. Our vision is quite simple: no one, whatever their dietary requirements, should ever have to eat boring cakes. For this reason, we have developed a range of delicious cakes that anyone can enjoy. All our products are freshly handmade, using 100 per cent plant-based, natural ingredients and are suitable for non-dairy, vegan and gluten-free diets.

What is your business model?

To be honest, it is not what was initially planned! Like most businesses in the last few months, we have had to adapt in the face of COVID-19 and be creative in terms of offer and target audience.

Firstly, we had to diversify our B2B offer – as organisations were no longer hosting events or meetings, we put together a ‘Treat Your team’ package enabling companies to send boxes of fresh muffins and coffee to their teams working remotely. We also started working more closely with restaurants and coffee shops as they were reopening. Finally, to increase our visibility in the market, we capitalised on partnerships and alliances, focusing mainly on the vegan industry and French networks in the UK – this is what led us to become members of the French Chamber of Commerce.

What has been the reception to your products?

We are lucky to have received an incredibly positive welcome and managed to grow a base of loyal business and individual customers, who we regularly get in touch with to share ideas and test new products. Our vegan customers really appreciate that products are not only freshly handmade and made of natural ingredients, but most importantly contain less sugar than most available vegan alternatives; lactose and gluten-intolerant customers usually comment on the moist texture and flavourful taste. We also have a number of clients who simply want to integrate more plant-based options in their diets and appreciate how easy it is to order with us. We are often told that our cakes ‘do not taste vegan or gluten-free,’ which is one of the best compliments we can get.

Being a small structure has enabled us to be very agile. We have grown organically so far, listening to what our customers wanted and developing new flavours. Since the launch, we have added three new lines of products to the original muffin range (brownies, sticky toffee pudding, loaf cakes for wholesale) and a special Christmas collection. We are now considering scaling up and are investigating new partners and manufacturers for this next stage of our journey.

How do you compete in this increasingly growing and competitive market?

By being relevant, opportunistic and visible. Relevant by offering both vegan and gluten-free products with low sugar content that anyone can enjoy as a healthier and tasty treat. Our cakes are very popular with coffee shops for instance, where they have limited space to display products and love this 'all-in-one' solution. Opportunistic by capitalising on special events such as vegan days, Mother's and Father's Day, and Christmas. We were contacted to deliver a few Secret Santas this year, which we really enjoyed.

Lastly, it is essential to be visible, by leveraging our British and French networks and raising awareness via social media channels and, when possible, face to face. We had the opportunity, for instance, to host a presentation and tasting at Accor headquarters a few months ago, which positioned us as a partner of choice in terms of healthy eating. We also recently hosted a virtual "Cook & Chat" session with the Blick Rothenberg team as part of their Black History Month programme – a fantastic experience we would love to replicate.

Where do you see the market going now?

We do not pretend to be leading vegan experts however, from a small business perspective, we have noticed a significant shift of mindset from individuals and businesses. The plant-based food market is expected to be worth \$74.2B by 2027, so it is no wonder big brands are significantly investing in vegan products. Interestingly, this trend seems to be driven not by veganism per se, although there are over 600,000 in the UK, but by flexitarian people, willing to cut or simply reduce their consumption of meat and dairy products. Eventually this should translate into a more diverse and, over time, potentially cheaper selection of products to replace not only milk but products like cheese, eggs, ice cream and meat (the success of 'Rudy's Vegan Butcher' in London is a great example). Companies have also started taking more and more vegan and plant-based options into consideration when it comes to their workforce, keen

to cut their carbon footprint and promote healthy habits.

How do you compare the reception to the vegan/plant-based diet in the UK and France?

Although France has become more and more vegetarian and vegan-friendly in recent years, there is still a significant cultural gap versus the UK. In certain areas, it can be incredibly challenging (and not very well perceived) to ask for a vegan alternative to traditional dishes. It is also of course about awareness – last time we were in France and asked for a vegan pasta dish, the waiter kindly removed the butter but sprinkled the pasta with parmesan! That being said, we have seen noticeable changes in the last few years – most of our closest relatives, for example, have somewhat changed their eating habits and consume less dairy and meat. According to the market insights firm Xerfi, vegetarians and vegans make up two per cent of the French population, whereas flexitarians represent about a third of the population, almost 23 million people. Our current business is focusing on the UK only for now but something to keep in mind for the foreseeable future!

To order your favourite vegan and gluten-free cakes and muffins, visit [Tasty no Dairy's website](#)

Veganism in the UK – At a glance

Vegans and vegetarians look set to make up a quarter of the British population in 2025

A record number of 400,000 Brits signed up to Veganuary in 2020

The plant-based food market in the UK is worth £1.8B

10% of British children aged eight to 16 are vegan or vegetarian

Those who eat meat spend £645 extra a year on food, compared to those on a meat-free diet

Vegetarian and vegan product sales are expected to increase to £658m by 2021

50% of Brits said they know someone who is vegan

35% of British consumers say they make a point of regularly having meat-

free days

The number of vegan residents in UK care homes has almost trebled in the five years to 2019

The UK was the most popular country for veganism in 2019

Nearly one in four products launched in the UK carried a vegan claim in 2019

Brighton was the most popular British city for veganism in 2019, followed by Bristol, Norwich and Cardiff

Orders of vegan meals grew 388% between 2016 and 2018 and they are now the UK's fastest-growing takeaway choice

19% of people check if their toiletries are tested on animals

Superdrug's own brand vegan cosmetics saw a 750% sale increase in January 2019

Source: The Vegan Society and Finder

This article was originally published by [The French Chamber of Great Britain](#)

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