

By Charles Marcanetti

Sublime Restaurant and Bar

I eat meat! Didn't always, but at least since 1983 I am, at best, an omnivore. While I'm confessing, I actually owned and operated several health food stores (vitamins and homemade goodies), years before Whole Foods, and I was a very skinny, happy and healthy vegetarian (approximately 11 years).

Then, when I joined the "real" world, I was walking down the street in Manhattan one day and there just underneath my nose, wafting up from a street vendor, were the arousing scents of a Hebrew National Hot Dog swimming in its own juices and highlighting the fragrances of sauerkraut and deli-mustard. I stopped. I bought. I don't remember chewing, but at least two dogs later I was no longer a vegetarian.

I was determined to immediately undo the poison I had ingested and began a three day fast to rid myself of the flesh I ate. On the third day I was sitting in a local luncheonette having some boiled eggs and toast (I was an ovo-lacto vegetarian) when a waiter passed by with a Roast Pork on Garlic Bread drenched in Duck Sauce (a long since ended fad); goodbye fast. Goodbye vegetarianism. Goodbye slender physique. Goodbye clean pores and naturally good smelling skin. Hello gluttony!

Fast forward a quarter century and my passion for food brings me to the subject of this review: Sublime Restaurant and Bar on 1431 N. Federal Hwy, in Fort Lauderdale. (954-539-9000). It's more than a vegetarian restaurant on several levels:

- 1 It is vegan. That means that there are NO animal ingredients used in the preparation of their extraordinary fare. There are no animal skins worn as clothing or used as decoration. In fact, vegans are so strict that even vegetarians make fun of them.
- 2 All profits from this restaurant are donated to Animal Rights groups, including the owner's very own ARFF (Animal Rights Foundation of Florida).

3 This is no hippy joint. It is a luxurious, classy, upscale eatery catering to people of every food persuasion who are looking for gourmet, well-balanced, unique and delicious "sublime" creations, served in an environment likely superior to any competition with any menu. (Check out the ceiling to floor gentle waterfalls.)

4 It is universally top-rated by Zagats and the Sun-Sentinel and now, by the one review that actually counts (how's my modesty?), *the Parklander*.

Nanci Alexander, the owner and a vegan, is well known throughout South Florida for her philanthropy. She has been written about in major magazines and acclaimed as one of our very own special treasures. She has dedicated herself to the safety, preservation and well-being of animals. Wherever there's an animal in distress; whether by hurricane, abandonment, cruelty or over-population, there you'll find Nanci spearheading a drive for rescue, recovery, adoption or awareness.

When I met her she was so modest that I had no idea about her life and it wasn't until I started doing my background research that I discovered all of this. By the way, I ought to mention that this work is a labor of love for Nanci. You see, together with her husband, they own the Houston Rockets Basketball Team.

The chefs at Sublime are not necessarily vegetarian chefs; rather they are hired based on their culinary skills, love of cooking and love of people. Once hired, they are taught the special vegan recipes. The recipes are Nanci's creations, the creations of her friends and associates, the mainstays of other vegan restaurants and vegetarian restaurants from around the country and garnered from wherever possible to bring eating delights to Sublime's joy-filled customers.

Sublime has a soup called "Fifty Onion". One might think that it's comprised of fifty different types of onions (there aren't fifty types of

onions) but, the truth is; it takes fifty onions to make a batch. It's a simple, accurate name for a complex delicacy.

So, why haven't I described more of the marvelous dishes we sampled? Easy! Most of us would not understand it anyway. Do you know (I didn't) that one can have Portobello "Tenderloin" or "Forrest Mushroom"? Or Grilled Seitan Steak? (my spell-check can't even find "seitan"). How about Forbidden Black Rice Tempura made with soy cream cheese, carrot, asparagus and served with a ponzu dipping sauce...tastes great, reads funny. No words can adequately describe Sublime's creations; in fact, words can only do them a disservice because one must simply try the dishes, fall in love with them and then ask how they're made and what's in them. They are very special, indeed.

Anyway, on July 11th, 2007 Sublime is offering a Vegan Preparation and Cooking Class for those of us who would like to enjoy the experience at home.

Items on the menu marked with (GF) are gluten free, which has become so important today and items printed in lime color are low fat. This is just another indication of Sublime's consideration of its patrons.

Let me drop a few names:

At any given time, one might run into Pamela Anderson or Sir Paul McCartney, Alicia Silverstone or Alec Baldwin, who does the "voice-on-hold" narration (Sublime is closed on Mondays, so call then to check it out) or one might encounter one of this nation's great animal rights advocates, Bob Barker ("Remember, have your pet spayed or neutered...").

Still, Nanci has made us her favorite celebrities by making each of us shine a little brighter and smile a little more.

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