

# **Expanding Vegan Dining: Providence Vegan Restaurant Week Returns**

For its third year in a row, Providence Vegan Restaurant week returns in just a couple of weeks. This annual event extends outside of Providence and allows restaurants from all across the state to show off their vegan chops. Restaurants, vegan and nonvegan alike, create specials and demonstrate their ability to make delicious vegan meals.

This year's event will span two weekends for a collective nine day extravaganza from October 29th to November 7th. Currently, there are 28 restaurants and businesses participating.

Among those participating are two pop-up businesses, the Afro-Indigenous Vegan and Basil and Bunny.



Vegan Comfort Food from Basil and Bunny

Basil and Bunny launched in February 2020, shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic. They pop-up all over Rhode Island with their foodtruck, the Bunny Mobile, and focus on vegan comfort food like burgers, hot dogs, and tacos. This year will be their second year participating in Providence Vegan Restaurant Week, they will be launching a few special dishes, while including some of their normal favorites on their menu as well.

“We wanted to illustrate how you can still enjoy all the foods you love without any animals,” says Basil and Bunny creator Lyslie Medeiros. “Burgers can still be juicy, and fries can still be topped with gooey cheese without any cows and dairy. Biting into a sandwich should be so satisfying that you crave it again and again. That’s what we’re bringing to RI. All your favorite foods that you crave – made from plants.”

When asked about her favorite meals on her menu, Medeiros says, “I have always loved both the Bunny Mak and Buff Bunny. They bring back memories of going to McDs as a kid with my grandma and enjoying a Big Mac and then enjoying buffalo wings on wing nights in college.”

Basil and Bunny’s pop up dates and locations can be found here as well as on their Instagram @basilandbunny.

This year will also be The Afro-Indigenous Vegan’s second year participating. AI Vegan does both pop-ups and delivery, and focuses on providing delicious and healing vegan comfort food.

“I used to dream of being a chef as a child as I watched the television chefs on PBS,” Chef Bree Smith says “I started my AI Vegan Instagram page as a way to document my transition to a plant-based diet. AI Vegan the business was born when my husband tasted my Coconut Curry Lentil soup, looked at me and said, ‘Why aren’t you selling this? We’re going to get business cards tomorrow.’” She adds, “It’s [also] about the legacy that I am leaving to my heirs.”

Smith also shared about her roots and how they impact the food she serves. “Afro refers to the Diaspora, the 12 tribes if you will. Indigenous refers to my roots on this planet. I make Vegan comfort food from across cultures, which not only shows my range and versatility, but my inherent and spiritual connections to the places, people and food that I create.” She adds, “For me, it’s more than food. It’s that spiritual connection that comes through me to you with every bite. Plant-based eating is where my roots are. It is not a new practice, just a forgotten one. I am here to reclaim it.”

Chef Bree also emphasized that all the food she makes, even the fried items, include healing herbs and spices.

The Afro-Indigenous Vegan will be making appearances during Vegan Restaurant Week on October 31st, November 2nd, November 4th, and November 7th. They will also be hosting a ticketed event, Chef Bree vs Chef Bree on October 24th, in which Smith demonstrates how easy it is to veganize all your favorite classic comfort foods. For information about menus and locations be sure to follow them @the\_afro\_indigenous\_vegan.

For more information, you can visit the Providence Vegan Restaurant Week website here or go to the event Instagram @pvdrestaurantweek.