

Vegan bakeries gaining traction in Seoul

Four shops that produce tasty vegan treats

By Liza Hafner, Kim Ji-inn,
Timothy Im & Yun Minoo
Intern reporters

Vegan bakeries started to emerge in Seoul just a couple of years ago. Eschewing the usual wheat, butter, yeast, milk and eggs, vegan bakeries create their goods with alternative ingredients such as soy milk, brown rice or coconut oil.

In addition to vegans, these shops attract people with food allergies or atopic diseases, mothers of newborns and customers simply seeking healthy alternatives.

The Korea Herald checked out four of the most talked-about shops in Seoul.

Yummyyomil

"When the bakery first opened, many people did not know what being vegan really was all about, but Yummyyomil spread the awareness that vegan food can also be delicious," said Kim Sung-mi, CEO of Yummyyomil, a vegan bakery near Hapjeong Station.

Kim was inspired to start the business in 2017, when she realized that many people with dietary restrictions had limited access to healthy baked goods.

Yummyyomil's products are made to meet the needs of vegan and diabetic adults, children with atopic diseases and health-conscious people. Nevertheless, they are made with popular taste in mind. "Though it is vegan, we develop and produce products that everyone can enjoy," said Kim.

Yummyyomil's products — as touted in the bakery's tagline — contain no eggs, milk, butter, GMO ingredients, white sugar, preservatives, white flour or vegetable cream.

Items such as the popular cream bread use as few ingredients as possible, with the main staples being rice flour, soy milk "egg" replacement, vital wheat gluten and organic sugar.

With a cozy store and a larger-scale online ordering and production platform, which began at the beginning of the year, Yummyyomil's ultimate goal is to expand beyond Korea.

Kim said, "It's still a long shot, but we aim to become Korea's best vegan brand and eventually export to overseas markets to represent Korean-style vegan products."



① **Yummyyomil's avocado burger and vegetarian cheeseburger, with fruit tea-ade and french fries**
Instagram @yummyyomil

② **Pan Honesta's sweet pumpkin tofu cake, chocolate tofu cake, matcha tofu cake and black rice tofu cake**
Pan Honesta

③ **A sweet potato and pumpkin tart, Hoguma**
Instagram @thebreadblue_official

④ **Mugwort chia butter bread**
Ooh Breado



Yummyyomil
• 6-5, Yanghwa-ro 7-gil, Mapo-gu, Seoul
• 02-325-0082
• Open 7 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. daily, closed Mondays

Pan Honesta

Pan Honesta, or Cafe Honesta, did not initially start as a vegan bakery. Instead, it focused on using quality, healthy ingredients.

Vegans were able to enjoy the store's products because of its strict standards. CEO Lee Ah-ram said, "We do not see our cafe as a vegan bakery, but rather a cafe that only uses healthy ingredients. This is how we differentiate our bakery from others."

Due to Lee's allergies to ingredients such as milk, eggs, and butter, she began to study baking techniques that did not use animal products and eventually opened this shop.

As well as not using animal products, such as eggs, butter and milk, Pan Honesta even refrains from using

flour and sugar.

One of its most popular products, tofu cake, is made out of premium tofu that contains dietary oil and various nutrient-filled soybeans. It comes in various flavors. Although the cake is small, it is very dense and filling.

Another favorite among customers is a tart created with cacao-rich dark chocolate.

Lee says the spread of the vegan culture is a positive phenomenon. Although she did not intend to open a vegan bakery, Cafe Honesta has helped people to be more open-minded about veganism.

Cafe Honesta

• 240-34, Yeonnam-dong, Mapo-Gu, Seoul
• 02-336-7768
• Open 12 p.m. to 10 p.m. daily (including Saturdays), open 12 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Sundays

The Bread Blue

"No eggs, no butter, no milk" is etched



onto the storefront of The Bread Blue bakery and cafe near Sinchon Station.

Here, the owner has one goal: to make vegan food accessible, readily available and ultimately a standard part of Korean culture.

Inside the store is a menagerie of vegan baked goods and treats. Traditional Korean baked fare such as red bean and soboro bread adorn the shelves of the quaint cafe, but with a vegan twist.

The shop offers a whole slew of products, including trendy items like milk-free, vegan macarons.

The Bread Blue CEO Moon Dong-jin wanted to show it is possible to have a vegan bakery that values both health and diverse tastes. "Our concept is to standardize vegan culture and to experiment with various vegan products that we do not already make," he said.

Going vegan is still perceived here as bizarre or slightly odd, said Moon, and the shop seeks to counter this prejudice by expanding its stores and online platforms.

The Bread Blue also strives to be environmentally conscious.

"People go vegan for different reasons. Some vegans are concerned about the environment, so keeping this in mind, we try to make our cafe itself more environmentally friendly by replacing plastic straws with metal straws, for example," Moon said.

The Bread Blue

• 54-58 Nogosan-dong, Mapo-gu, Seoul
• 070-4405-0723
• Open 9:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays, open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekends, closed on national holidays

Ooh Breado

Chef Woo Chan is behind Ooh Breado, a vegan bakery near Sangdo Station.

A vegan himself, he started baking pastries that he could eat in 1998 after realizing how rare veganism was in Korea.

The bakery offers a wide variety of goods that refrain from using eggs, butter, milk and refined sugar. It only uses a controlled set of ingredients, such as rice bread, whole wheat, organic wheat, rye, domestic beans and mandarin oranges.

Ooh Breado only uses domestic healthy crops that Woo carefully picks, though these may be a bit pricier than those used by other bakeries.

The store's most popular product, sweet pumpkin cube, is made from domestic white rice and black rice, filled with sweet pumpkin puree and red bean jam. Almond streusel is sprinkled over the top of the delicious cube.

The bakery also offers mugwort chia butter bread and tofu pizza rolls, among many other options.

Going vegan became more common here recently, but it was tough living as a vegan three to four years ago, Woo recalls.

"The biggest difficulty? It's the same for any other minority group. We are naturally discriminated by the majority group without even realizing," he said, noting how almost no one at gatherings bothers to think about whether someone is vegetarian or not.

"It's such a matter of taste. It's not like we — the minorities — did anything wrong. You just like something, and so vegetarians just like vegetables," Woo said.

Ooh Breado

• 3, Sangdo-ro 37-gil, Dongjak-gu
• 070-7543-0599
• Open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, closed Mondays

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Going vegan on the face

Vegan beauty brands seek to provide ethical alternatives

By Im Eun-byel

The vegan way of life is not limited to diet or eating but encompasses the full spectrum of a person's life choices, including things like skin care and cosmetics.

With more consumers opposing animal testing and the use of animal-derived ingredients, a number of vegan beauty brands have popped up in recent years.

To qualify as vegan, a cosmetics maker must not use any animal products or by-products. Animal testing is out of the question too.

South Korea, a country that is keen on keeping up with the latest beauty trends, has recently seen an expansion in its vegan beauty market. More local vegan beauty brands are eager to promote themselves as ethical alternatives.

Melixir is a vegan skin care brand founded in August 2018. Lee Ha-na, the founder and CEO, worked for a cosmetics company based in the US for four years.

"I became frustrated with how cosmetics companies come up with marketing strategies even before deciding on the products. They consistently launch new products, telling consumers they need more and more," Lee said at a recent press event arranged by global home-sharing platform Airbnb.

"I wanted to focus on values for the greater good — for instance, creating a sustainable environment," she said.

Since there are already successful US brands that produce vegan makeup, Lee decided to take a chance in another direction, launching a vegan skin care line.

"K-beauty is represented by flawless skin. Though Melixir does not herald about being a Korean brand, I thought we should focus on skin care, reflective of the market trend," Lee said.

According to Lee, the brand's most

Melixir, Save Earth



① **Lee Ha-na, founder and CEO of vegan skin care brand Melixir, speaks during a press event arranged by Airbnb on Aug. 16 at the brand's showroom in Itaewon, central Seoul.**
Im Eun-byel/The Korea Herald

② **Lipsticks by Dear Dahlia are popular for their marble-patterned cases.** Dear Dahlia

③ **Vegan balancing toner** Melixir

loyal customers are vegans. But it has nonvegan customers too, who buy the products because they love animals. To communicate with potential consumers, the brand occasionally hosts vegan parties at its showroom in Itaewon, central Seoul.

Another leading brand on the market is Dear Dahlia, owned by startup Baram International.

Dear Dahlia bills itself as a "prestige vegan beauty brand" inspired by dahlia flowers. The brand promotes clean beauty and holds that makeup should not compromise on functionality.

Unlike Melixir, it focuses more on makeup products, from lipsticks and eye shadows to blushers. Aside from its appeal as a vegan beauty brand, it also offers marble-patterned cases that young consumers love.

"We realized that conventional animal

derivatives are not needed to create high-performance makeup products. It took more time and effort, but it was possible," said Alice Heo, who is in charge of public relations for the brand.

Dear Dahlia retails in seven countries and its products are available from the upscale department store Galeries Lafayette in Paris. According to Heo, the brand enters a new country every two months.

"Vegan beauty is definitely an idea that generates more interest overseas, especially from the US, South America and Arab countries," Heo said. "But we are sure that Korea's interest in vegan beauty has been growing rapidly."

"Customers who like our brand are not necessarily vegans, but those who have pets and love animals," she said.

Even so, vegan beauty still has yet to become a mainstream trend. Korean cosmetics giant Amore Pacific has been talking about the need to go cruelty-free for years. It officially banned animal testing in 2013.

But the company was not so successful with its vegan skin care label Gaondodam, and had to shut it down in 2018.

"Vegan beauty is not a sector high in sales. We do have products that are created with good ingredients but certification is an issue, so they are not labeled as vegan products," an official from the firm said.

Chicor, a beauty brand owned by retail giant Shinsegae, has few vegan products in its lineup.

"We do not keep track of vegan beauty brands or items. Organic may be a trend, as customers are sensitive about ingredients. But vegan has not been a major trend yet," an official representing the franchise said.

But Lee Ha-na of Melixir is sure that vegan beauty can become something bigger in the future.

"We are sure because it is the right thing. It is about creating a better environment, protecting the animals. Vegan beauty will be the mainstream. It just needs some time," she said.

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Korea's vegan scene, through eyes of an expat

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Choi Seu-yun of DalYang came over and offered me a vegan ice cream cone.

As one of the organizers, Choi was very busy that day. When we spoke late in the afternoon, she told me the festival was running smoothly. The turnout hadn't met her expectations, but she told me later that the final tally was 1,500 — "still good."

I asked her how things were going at DalYang since the move to the new location. She said she and Kang had made some changes to better serve the new customer base, which mostly consists of other people working at the venue.

If they had continued to run the restaurant the old way, she said, customers would have to eat the same things every day. Now they rotate the menu so everyone gets a chance to try new vegan dishes. "They love it," said Choi, who said she was very happy Seoul Innovation Park had selected DalYang.

Her colleagues and neighbors there are "the most open-minded people in Korea," Choi said. But they're not all vegan yet, so Choi and Kang want to show them how the vegan movement is growing and improving. That's their main mission, she said. She wants to showcase the vegan movement so people at Seoul Innovation Park will be more accepting of veganism and will consider vegan lifestyles and campaigns.

We also talked about the wash station and the absence of disposables at the fair. "It was a really good experience," said Choi, who said she could

not imagine it being possible at any other venue.

Similar festivals smaller in scale are planned for Seoul Innovation Park four times a year. Choi said she is looking forward to arranging film screenings and exhibitions there as well. One filmmaker with a studio there, who is also vegan, is making a film about garbage. The filmmaker "thinks seriously and deeply about waste," Choi said.

Before saying goodbye, I mentioned Kang's Facebook post and Choi reiterated the last part of the message: Organizing vegan festivals with care and dedication is a way of saying sorry to the animals who died in the laboratory.

Looking back, I remember the days when there was no "Happy Cow" website to guide travelers to vegan-friendly establishments. Back then, South Korea was known as a not-very-vegan-friendly country. But even then, I managed to find a determined group of "veggie pioneers" and was invited to a festival in Myeong-dong where protest signs read "Meat Is Murder" in English. (I'm pretty sure they carried a softer message in Korean.)

Now, vegan activists take to the streets of Myeong-dong or Hongdae most weekends with laptops displaying footage of animal slaughter and confinement. If people stop to watch, the activists talk to them about what they are seeing — and if the violent footage upsets them, which it usually does, the activists ask them to think about why those things keep happening.

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