

Vegetarian friendly restaurants in NYC (& beyond...)

IN THE NEW YEAR, I WISH YOU ALL GOOD HEALTH THROUGH FOOD....

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It's a New Year once again! Happy New Year to all of you!!

I eat out fairly often and often, at the end of a meal, although I am extremely satisfied with the taste of everything that I ate, I also feel guilty of having busted my calorie-limit for the day. Can one really eat out without breaking the calorie-budget for the meal / day? It is not an easy one to answer. After all, there is no "free" lunch / meal – even if its paid for by someone else, you know you have to burn off the extra calories.



Health Through Food

A couple of days ago, I came across [this article](#) from the NY Times that mentions a (relatively) new certification for restaurants that represents a holistic approach to healthy ingredients, sourcing, preparation, and environmental impact. The certification is called [SPE](#) – Sanitas Per Escam, which means "Health through Food".



“Through its SOURCING, PREPARING and ENHANCING philosophy and culinary techniques, SPE Certified strives to:

- *Promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables*
- *Promote the consumption of high quality fats and reduce saturated fat*
- *Ensure nutrient density in a dish*
- *Limit processed ingredients*
- *Preserve and enhance food’s intrinsic nutritional properties”*

Don’t we all want to increase our fruit and vegetable consumption, reduce our salt intake, and avoid fried food? Also, many of us want to eat more healthy fat, and less of processed ingredients, don’t we? What the above certification implies is that butter and cream are not used in an appetizer or a main course, that is SPE certified (they are permitted to be included in desserts as necessary). A grilled or fried dish cannot be SPE certified (read more on the [SPE](#) website). Preferred methods of cooking for SPE certification are: saute, steaming, roasting etc. The SPE team also ensures that portion sizes are fine-tuned, so you stay within reasonable calorie limits for a meal.

How many of us think that healthy food cannot taste good? I remember this one instance when I did a juice cleanse and as I was picking up my 2 day inventory of juices, I asked the lady at the counter, “Do people like the taste of these juices? Do they come back to buy more juice?” She thought for a moment and said “After 2 days of drinking these juices, you will know when you are eating food that is healthy for you and when the food you eat is not good for you.” I did not think much of it then. As I was struggling to complete Day 1 of the juice cleanse, and somehow (with some will power), got through Day 2 of the cleanse, I thought to myself, “I know that healthy food does not have to taste like these juices, and can be extremely tasty” (There, you know what I think about the juices in the juice cleanse!). Apparently, the SPE experts also certify that the food is delicious – not something that one would always associate with healthy food.

So, am sure the next question on your mind is: Are there restaurants that sign-up for this certification (is it practical)? We in NYC are fortunate that the restaurant [Rouge Tomate](#) (also a Michelin Starred restaurant) is in fact SPE certified. I remember eating there once a few years ago, but haven’t been there since. Did I just forget about my eating experience there? Or was the food there not tasty enough that I have not gone back to the restaurant since? Not sure. I’ll try to eat at Rouge Tomate this year and promise to share my experience with you. Per the [NY Times article](#), the University of Massachusetts, Celebrity Cruises, and Hotel Plaza Athenee in New York have agreed to be SPE certified.

Here is my New Year Resolution and I know that I can easily stick to it through the year: In this blog, I will highlight any SPE certified dishes at any restaurant that I eat out at. Just to set your expectations, it’s not as though I will eat only at SPE certified restaurants, it’s just that I will highlight dishes that are SPE certified and they may be few and far between. If you come across any, please send me a note about the dish, where you ate it, and if it meets your standard for deliciousness.

Another related article on SPE Certification is on [this](#) Epicurious Blog.

Wish you all good health and happiness (through food) with your friends and family in 2013!!!