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GOOD FOOD

Organic Avenue is becoming a (vegan) office-worker's dream



New Pret-a-Manger-style cases at Organic Avenue Bryant Park are meant for busy Manhattan office workers. Like you? (Photo: Lisa Elaine Held for Well+Good)

Juice and cleanse company Organic Avenue will unveil a new flagship store off Bryant Park this Friday, April 25, where Midtown green-juice-sippers and tourists headed for Times Square will be introduced to the brand's splashy new design concept and menu direction.

That concept centers around bigger stores (with seating!) and vastly expanded grab-and-go food options, many of which were designed in partnership with SPE Certified. It feels a lot like a Pret A Manger—only with all vegan, organic, and nutritionally clued-in food.

Which makes a lot of sense. While the company was founded by raw food and juice guru Denise Mari (with Doug Evans) out of her Lower East Side apartment, Mari grew it into a chain of neighborhood shoebox-sized shops before selling a controlling stake to investment firm Weld North, who then brought on Martin Bates, a former president of Pret.

The new concept and menu will kick off in the Bryant Park, Park Avenue South, and Bleecker Street stores and will be rolled out gradually at other locations. Here's what you need to know before stopping in for lunch:

What's on the menu

"We will always serve juice, but we now spend most of our time developing delicious food," says Organic Avenue's Jesse Gould. To do that, they collaborated with SPE Certified, the healthy dining charter-turned-consulting group famously founded out of Upper East Side resto Rouge Tomate. The result is a slew of new menu items like hot wraps, soups, vegetable sides, and grain bowls. Think Kimchi Wild Rice and Sweet Yam & Fennel Quinoa Bowls, Roasted Brussels Sprouts, and Curried Vegetable Wraps.



*The Curried Vegetable Wrap and Hearty Kimchi Wild Rice Bowl, two of the items developed with SPE Certified.
(Photo: Organic Avenue)*

The newly revamped locations will also stock a wide selection of salads, and the portion sizes on all dishes are bigger (they were notoriously small). Prices are lower than some competitors, with wraps and bowls at \$8–9 and salads at \$10–12.

Plus, Organic Avenue is also rolling out a made-to-order smoothie bar—something they've never offered, which all of their big New York competitors do. And they'll be serving organic, single-origin coffee and a selection of teas.

A new emphasis on your weekday lunch

Gould says the company is turning its attention away from thinking about neighborhoods that would appreciate an Organic Avenue to focus on business districts, where office workers need healthy lunch options. And the new design reflects that, with more space for a quick grab-and-go experience and smoothie laptop sessions, and a clean, expansive feel instead of the cozy, homey vibe of green-juice yore.



*The living plant wall at Bryant Park, which helps purify the store's air and cuts energy usage, says the company.
(Photo: Lisa Elaine Held for Well+Good)*

And you can't run a vegan, organic, nutritionally balanced brand without sharing your company's ethos. And to do that, Organic Avenue developed "Feed Your Brain," a new program that includes menus that come with nutrition Q&As and decorative infographics that will appear on your place mats and the store walls. You know, in case you'd like to learn about the benefits of kimchi while you're chowing it down.

Gould says educating people about what's good for them is a key part of the brand's mission moving forward, and it will serve them well as they recruit new customers to fill their new locations. Expect six more openings in the next six to 12 months, Gould says, and, after that, the growth will "really accelerate." Soon you'll be able to hear blenders whirring from every Manhattan block. Hey, maybe they'll cancel out the taxi horns?

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