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MEAT MEETS ITS MATCH

Clockwise from left: a “pulled pork” sandwich made with The Prepper; No Evil Foods owners Mike Woliansky and Sadrah Schadel; a taco made from El Zapatista, their vegan take on Mexican chorizo

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing?

An indie vegan meat company begs to differ

BY AMBER GIBSON

We know, we know: The term “fake meat” strikes fear into the hearts—and stomachs—of non-vegans. But two Asheville, North Carolina-based cooks, Mike Woliansky and Sadrah Schadel, are hoping to change that unsavory reputation with their No Evil Foods line of plant-based meat substitutes.

Schadel was raised a vegetarian but found herself salivating over food blogs, menus and recipes made with chicken, beef and pork. She tried recreating those recipes with highly processed veggie meats—MSG-filled soy burger patties, rubbery tofurkey—and was, unsurprisingly, disappointed with the results. “They fell short on flavor, texture and versatility,” she says.

With no previous experience in food production, she began experimenting with the ancient cooking techniques of Buddhist monks, combining wheat gluten, chickpea flour and *shoyu* soy sauce. The resulting product is protein-rich and naturally, well, meaty—or, as their website says, “environmentally friendly, cruelty free & damn delicious.”

Schadel and Woliansky started selling handcrafted plant-based proteins at Asheville farmers markets last year. Now, home cooks and chefs alike are gobbling up No Evil Foods’ Italian sausage, crumbly Mexican chorizo and

“WE’RE TRYING TO REDEFINE WHAT SOUTHERN EATING CAN BE.”

“The Prepper”—a seitan or tempeh alternative that can be used in everything from Thai curry to vegan chili.

“We’re not here to shun anyone’s choices,” Woliansky says of meat eaters. “We just want to inspire them to take those first steps. People enjoy eating animal meat, and we want to replicate that experience. We want people to think of our product as meat.”

And chefs do. Asheville’s Chestnut has served a savory gumbo gravy studded with hunks of Prepper and chorizo. “The Prepper has the texture of pulled pork,” explains chef Joe Mitchell. The Italian sausage is popular around town, too, sprinkled on pizzas, salads and sandwiches at Mellow Mushroom and as the veggie dog option at Avery’s Hot Dogs.

The popularity of these products in a BBQ-loving state like North Carolina comes as particularly high praise. “We’re trying to redefine what Southern eating can be,” Schadel says.



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