

# Vegetarian Favorites in New Bedford



by Mike  
McCarthy

At first, and especially to tourists, it can seem daunting to find a decent vegetarian option in New Bedford amongst the myriad of restaurants specializing in seafood or Portuguese cuisine. As a vegetarian of seven years, and lifelong resident of the city, I've managed to weed out the better choices for a meat-free meal from the numerous restaurants in town. I've assembled some personal favorites for lunch and dinner that can be found around the city, making sure to include menus that offer more than one vegetarian option.

## **Veggie Chili – Destination Soups 149 Union Street**



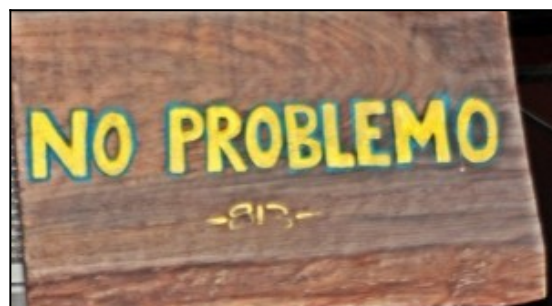
Although it gets benched Thursday and Friday for clam chowder, the veggie chili is a perfect choice for a quick lunch downtown. Destination Soups has one of the busiest counters around noon on a weekday, but I've never waited more than five minutes for my food.

The chili is perfectly balanced, not so spicy that people back at the office will be wondering what's wrong with you the rest of the afternoon and by no means bland or soupy, with its chunks of pepper and tomato. The staff is always willing to oblige heat-seekers with a couple extra shakes of hot sauce into your bowl.

If you happen to find yourself in Destination Soups on Thursday or Friday, fear not! Throughout the week, there is always a vegetarian, if not vegan, soup available. For those of us who aren't vegan, the grilled cheese (provolone AND cheddar) pairs great with a cup of creamy tomato basil, both of which are on the menu all week. The chef also provides some exotic choices for the warmer months, like chilled gazpacho (great with avocado) and melon mint soups.

### **Tostada – No Problemo 813 Purchase Street**

The first time I ordered the tostada, I was presented with a massive bowl of rice and beans topped with lettuce, sour cream, red peppers, cheese, salsa and scallions, crowned with corn chips.



The chips are great to dip into the sour cream and salsa on top, but are even better if you can conserve them for use as croutons.

For those familiar with No Problemo's menu, this is the burrito of salads; you'll be lucky to get through the whole thing. I am thankful the menu was recently revised to offer a smaller version of this filling meal. There's always the option of adding guacamole to your salad, which makes a nice replacement for the cheese and sour cream if you're vegan.

A quick scan over the menu at No Problemo will reveal more vegetarian-friendly options. Rest assured that the refried beans are not cooked in lard, but if you're vegan you'll want to stay away from the torta since they are served on Portuguese rolls which are made with butter. Final words of advice- when plantains are available as special, make sure you give the quesadilla a try!

### **Pumpkin Curry – Spicy Lime 522 Pleasant Street**



This is kind of a teaser if you're reading this article in the winter or spring because the pumpkin curry is only available at the end of the summer and into the fall. It is my favorite

seasonal treat in New Bedford, aside from apple cider (but that's more of a Freetown thing). The Spicy Lime's year-round red curry is infused with pureed pumpkin as well as giant chunks of the gourd.

I personally feel like the pumpkin curry is filling enough on its own, although, like most Thai restaurants, Spicy Lime has tofu as the choice for protein for almost every dish. The gradient of spiciness might throw new-comers, so I would recommend ordering to the mild version of your dish for your first visit unless you are prepared to go through a lot of water and wine or beer of your choice (they are BYOB).

### **Insalata – Brick Pizzeria 163 Union Street**

Pizza is kind of a no-brainer for vegetarians and omnivores alike, and Brick always pleases. The menu has over twenty specialty pies, so everyone in your group is likely to find something to ease their appetite. Be sure to check out their calzones, which are massive and stuffed with ricotta, and sandwiches served on bread baked fresh for every order.



The insalata is an interesting take on pizza which I've never seen anywhere else. A sour dough, Neapolitan-style white pizza comes out of the oven, then has a salad of your choice built on top. If your ordering take-out, they will put the salad on the side so it won't wilt on your ride home.

The first time I got the insalata, I ate it very daintily with

knife and fork, but now I just dive right in, grabbing a slice and folding it in half to hold the greens on top. The menu has enough salad selections so that this choice never gets old.

### **General Tso's Tofu – Grand Wok 840 Kempton Street**



You can look through the phone book for New Bedford and find over twenty listings for Chinese food. Every person has their favorite, and even after I moved out of the West end in high school, I still stood by Grand Wok. In the past year they've expanded their menu to offer more choices for the health conscious and vegetarian, including a seaweed salad and the option to substitute brown rice.

The General Tso's tofu is a vegetarian take on the Chinese food staple, General Tso's chicken. The kitchen at Grand Wok never disappoints, with the crispiness of the tofu strips and the potency of the sweet and sour sauce slathered all over them. The only addition I make is occasionally asking for extra broccoli when I want more than the three token florets.

Grand Wok will also deliver to most of the nearby neighborhoods for the tiny fee of one dollar. The food is fast and affordable. They're one of the best choices for a late night, after work dinner, since they're open until midnight on the weekends.

There's always a vegetarian choice for a meal in New Bedford, whether you're in the mood for a quick bite or a lengthier sit-down place, you'll always have something on your plate. All these restaurants are also great places to feed a larger party. Dining out with a group can sometime mean having to order the only salad on the menu, so I included the places that offer a variety of dishes that will satisfy everyone at the table, from tofu chompers to those who are always in the

mood for steak.