

# Plant Based Food for Travelers

## Winning at the Table in Reno

By Kay Bushnell

On last summer's road trip through Nevada, Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming we stopped in some towns where there were no restaurants listed as veg-friendly. Even so, we ate satisfying meals by requesting that animal ingredients be omitted from regular dishes – “without meat, without chicken, without sour cream, etc.” We sometimes asked politely if the chef could substitute plant-based ingredients for ones that were omitted. Without exception, the chefs obliged. We also found that cafeterias along the way usually had a selection of tasty plant-based choices.

An exciting discovery occurred in Reno, where we had been booked overnight in a hotel-casino. This particular casino had multiple restaurants in the basement and exit doors that were difficult to find. A quick visual inspection of the casino's food convinced us to search for dinner elsewhere. We telephoned several restaurants from the possibilities listed on the web sites mentioned at the end of this article. One was down by the Truckee River within walking distance of our hotel. It was a charming, funky place with operable pneumatic tubes attached to ceiling, thus giving it its name, the Pneumatic Diner.

The relaxed ambiance of the Pneumatic Diner seemed worlds away from frenetic casino activity and dark, underground restaurants. The food at the diner was fun, delicious, and imaginative. The menu listed vegetable ragouts, various combinations of grains and legumes, and gigantic fizzes. All of the dishes sounded interesting. It was difficult to choose. Unusual categories of menu options included “American Food with Italian Names,” and “American Food with Dumb Names.” Those who hesitated to try grilled tofu were greeted with the menu's phrase, “Don't be afraid, little one, try it.” With its no cell phone rule, its emphasis on fresh, organic ingredients, its neon artwork on the ceiling, and its reputation as “unusual and obscure,” the Pneumatic Diner beckons the adventurous and discriminating diner. See the Pneumatic Diner's menu at [www.aci.net/diner/pneumatic](http://www.aci.net/diner/pneumatic).

Not only did we have a delicious, memorable meal, but we also saw a relaxed, less-known part of Reno. After dinner we strolled along the quiet esplanade by the river and admired the old buildings from Reno's historic past. Here is my version of a delicious dish we enjoyed while perching on the stools among the “cool” crowd at the Pneumatic Diner. It's a great way to create something wonderful with simple, leftover ingredients.

Planning a trip? Visit [www.VegDining.com](http://www.VegDining.com) or [www.happycow.net](http://www.happycow.net). Consult *The Vegetarian Journal's Guide to Natural Foods Restaurants in the U.S. and Canada* available at [www.vrg.org/catalog/guide/htm](http://www.vrg.org/catalog/guide/htm).