



Isa Chandra Moskowitz's Favorite NYC Restaurants for a Special Vegan Meal

By Isa Chandra Moskowitz
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Photo courtesy Avant Garden

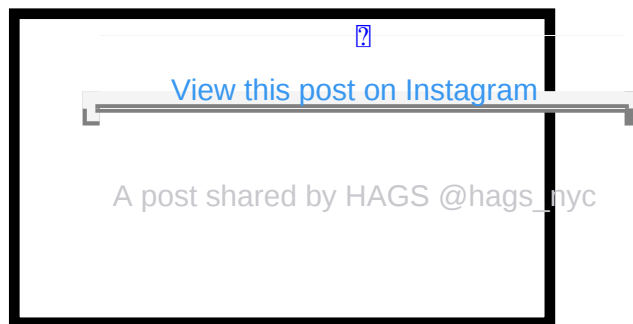
Welcome to Vegan Recs, our new series spotlighting plant-based tastemakers and their favorite veg-friendly finds around the globe. For our debut, we turned to vegan icon Isa Chandra Moskowitz, who shares her top picks for a special vegan meal in NYC. These aren't oil-free restaurants, but they are places where vegetables are the stars of unforgettable dishes.

What better way to celebrate a special occasion than by communing with the season? Maybe it's biting into a stuffed zucchini blossom that changes your life via dill, or digging into a plate of wax beans you never knew you needed. In my years of dining out in NYC, I'm fortunate to have had many such transcendent moments at restaurants where vegetables are the main event. No frozen faux-anything, just beautiful produce transformed by chefs who know a perfect carrot needs no apology. Here I've rounded up a few of my favorite spots for veggie-forward bliss, perfect for when you're feeling a little fancy. Whether you're sliding into a booth or pulling up a sleek chair, the atmosphere is a feast in itself.

I've focused on downtown NYC, all within walking distance of the Union Square Greenmarket, where many of these chefs source their bounty. And hey, browsing

the market makes a pretty great date, too. Is there anything more romantic than wandering the brick paths past the city's oldest statue, sharing a carton of just-picked strawberries, and pretending you live inside a vegetable-forward version of *When Harry Met Sally*?

So go ahead, toast an anniversary, a job promotion, a birthday (or your cat's birthday), and also the earth's local little gifts, all at the same time.



HAGS

My latest obsession is HAGS, a fine-dining restaurant with the coziest atmosphere—plush, lush, and softly lit, including a precious heart-shaped lamp on the table. Owners Camille and Telly guide the whole dreamy ride. HAGS uses every bit of the vegetable to prevent waste—think crispy garnishes from transformed carrot tops and beet skins. They offer two prix-fixe menus, vegan and omnivore. Both are seasonal and change constantly, but you'll find choices like delicata squash transformed through fermentation and smoke until something inventive emerges. The dishware is worth mentioning too: some vintage, some hand-thrown, artful touches that just make the food shine brighter. The vibe is fancy-in-love, and the wine list has strong queer summer energy with the best non-alcoholic options I've seen on any fine dining menu. And fun fact: Those creamy sauces are not cashew-based. Camille has a cashew allergy. So get ready to be fully humbled by sunflower seeds used in ways you never thought possible.

Best occasion: They have larger booths if you want to dine with friends and family, but I'm gonna say third

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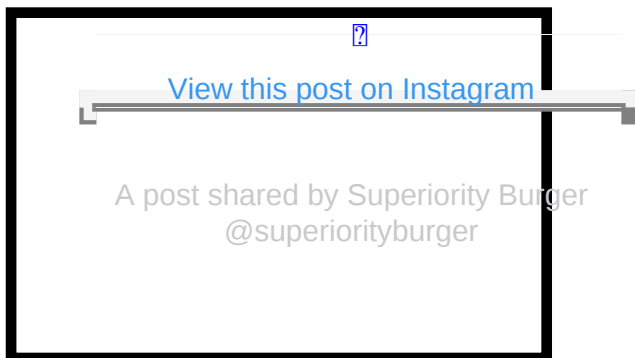
date with the person you think might be the one. Visit hagsnyc.com for more info.



Avant Garden

The OG offering of vegan hospitality group Overthrow Hospitality, Avant Garden features a lush red, dimly lit setting that feels vaguely goth and totally devoted to vegetable worship. Plates arrive with mysterious little dots: creamy, tangy, smoky, and just waiting for you to drag a grilled artichoke through like it's a ritual. Cauliflower shows up ready to prove it's a main (and it absolutely is), and the grilled toasts come stacked with silky spreads and adorable mushroom designs, so go ahead and order another round like you want to. The microgreens really drive home the "garden," while the tiny carrot cut-out rings whisper "avant." Bonus: Soda Club, Overthrow's all-vegan pasta spot, is right downstairs if you need a carby nightcap.

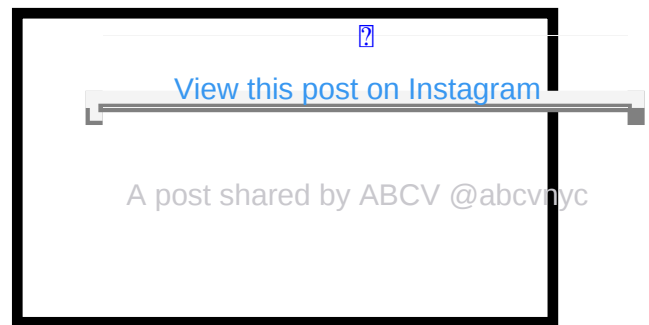
Best occasion: When you want to show your family how mind-blowingly good vegetables can be and get them to pick up the check. Lol. Visit avantgardennyc.com for more info.



Superiority Burger

Located in the former landmark Ukrainian diner Odessa, Superiority is known for its house-made burgers, but I've never ordered one. I'm just too excited to see what else Chef Brooks Headley is serving up while I scan the nostalgic placemats featuring long-gone stores where I used to buy my local zines. Come here if you want eggplant dehydrated, hydrated, and then hydrated again; focaccia with a life story on top; pesto made from a type of basil you never knew existed; surprise stuffed cabbage that nods to the location's Ukrainian past; or my favorite standby, the burnt broccoli salad. They do have amazing fries, but these veggie sides may make you forget that!

Best occasion: Birthday celebration with old friends you want to reminisce with. Visit superiorityburger.com for more info.



ABCV

Tall ceilings, marble everywhere, gorgeous vases... how can anyone in NYC afford this kind of rent? Oh right, it's inside ABC Carpet & Home and run by Jean-Georges. This is a cavernous restaurant where every table somehow still feels intimate.

Chef Neal Harden serves parsnips that achieve peak parsnip-ness...sweet, earthy, and so perfectly cooked they taste like what every little parsnip dreams of becoming. He grills things you didn't even know could be grilled (cabbage that tastes like steak, at least to this vegan) and composes plates so beautiful you'll hesitate before digging in.

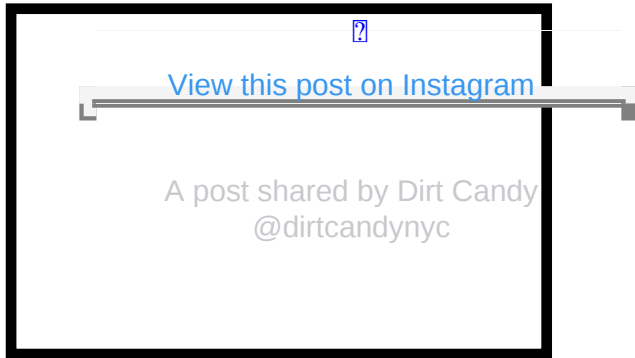
Come for brunch and swoon over quinoa with asparagus and fava beans, or dinner where a char-grilled oakwood shiitake might knock you right out of your cozy pink chair. Even simple dishes surprise: Carrots arrive dusted with mysterious spices, while house-made dips make raw vegetables taste decadent. The smoothies are vibrant with herbs that make every sip feel garden-fresh.

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Best occasion: A milestone anniversary when you want everyone you love to celebrate together. After all, there's plenty of ceiling height to raise your drinks for a toast. Visit [abcv.nyc](https://www.abcv.nyc) for more info.



Dirt Candy

Have you been waiting your whole life to hear the words “tomato Twinkie”? Forget à la carte; this is a five-act play starring vegetables, and every dish is a scene-stealer. Chef Amanda Cohen’s vegetable tasting menu changes with the seasons, but no matter when you go, expect each course to be wild, witty, and wonderfully weird. You might encounter a hot pocket made of carrots or a granita that somehow tastes like peppers and summer at the same time. It’s maximalist, highly composed, and just playful enough to make even the most skeptical diner lean in. Yes, it has a Michelin star, but whether or not you’re a fan of *The Bear*, this is definitely a must-visit restaurant for any veg head.

Best occasion: Date-night city. Get a seat at the counter and have dinner and a show all at once! Visit dirtcandynyc.com for more info.