



MATCHA LATTE



FRENCH TOAST



CLASSIC BREAKFAST SANDWICH

# Doc's Brew

By Danny Fairchild

Yeah, I got beef with the vegan community. (See what I did there?) It's not the diet that I have beef with. I know it's totally possible to get all the amino acids you need from a vegan diet. It's a simple matter of mix-and-match. For one major example, beans and rice combine to create a complete protein. And there ain't nothing wrong with beans and rice, even without a meat stock and a nice smoked ham hock in it. And my beef isn't with the flavor, either. There's some huge misconceptions about the flavor of vegan cuisine. The biggest legitimate gripe against the flavor of vegan cuisine comes from the relative lack of salt because we season, brine, smoke, and cure the hell out of our meats. For those of us who need to pay attention to such things, the lack of sodium is a feature, not a bug. The biggest beef I've had with vegans is the demonization of "processed foods." You really think tofu isn't a processed food? Seriously? Cuz it is. And then it gets even MORE processed to make it into something like a bacon substitute. But that's just my overdeveloped hatred of hypocrisy. That's MY fault for reading *A Catcher in the Rye* so young. I now know that hating hypocrites when I have my own hypocrisies is really hypocritical of me. And as far as people go, vegans are among the least hypocritical. They walk-it-like-they-talk-it more than most.

So yeah... I guess I DON'T got beef with the vegan community. We're cool, vegans. We've got no beef. But I'm still going to eat beef. Sorry.

Until Doc's Brew in Dubuque came into my life, I've only eaten at one vegan restaurant in my entire life. And it was on accident. And I hated it. Again, it's my fault, not theirs. After trying Doc's Brew (and I WILL be back!) I kind of want to see if that first place is still open. It'd be a bit of a road trip, but justice must be done.

I mean let's think about the logic here: With an entire world of ingredients at our disposal, is it really logical to say that delicious and satisfying dishes just can't be created without using animal products?

Forget the term "plant-based" and whatever baggage you have with it. Because even though we're talking fluent vegan here, Doc's ain't diet food. If you want something sweet, savory, even decadent... if you want some effing FLAVOR... you're a fool not to give Doc's Brew a try. A fool, I say! A fool and a coward.

Doc's Brew makes sure flavor is always present and accounted for. "That was all my choice," says owner-operator Grace Esser. "I've been vegan for eight years, so it was kind of a personal choice of mine. I didn't want to do this if I couldn't do it my way."

I like her way. Her way makes that eight years of veganism seem less like time served.

Let's start with the "brew" part of Doc's Brew. We're not just talking about coffee. We're talking about matcha. If you're a matcha fan and not a regular at Doc's Brew, you're screwing up.

For the rest of you: What is matcha? Well... it's green tea... but so much more so. Remember in *The Karate Kid Part II* when Daniel and Kumiko have that romantic tea ceremony? Remember that green tea powder Kumiko whisked into hot water instead of steeping it like normal tea? That's matcha.





WEEKLY SPECIAL: BREAKFAST TACOS



WEEKLY SPECIAL: BREAKFAST FRIED RICE



ICED COFFEE

Doc's Brew serves matcha hot or iced with flavors ranging from vanilla to chai-spiced to apple pie. And before I forget, it should be known that Grace makes many of they flavor syrups in-house. Hell yeah.

Despite my partner having at least one tin canister of matcha in our house, I'm not too well-versed in matcha. I don't know much more about it beyond what I learned in *The Karate Kid Part II*, and I'm sure that scene was at least partly BS, culturally speaking. It was the '80s. Nobody's culture mattered but Reagan's. So I decided to ease into it with the "Dirty" Vanilla Matcha. Why? Because in addition to matcha, it has my old friend, two shots of espresso. It's a great way to kind of ease into matcha. I sure did taste the matcha. I can definitely say I know what matcha tastes like now, and I like it. But that espresso kept me grounded. Kept me safe. I think I can fly solo with matcha now. Next time, I will.

Whether we're talking about milk in coffee or milk in matcha or whatever, this is still a vegan establishment. So we're talking almond milk or oat milk or soy milk. No moo. This isn't a huge change to your usual coffee place. They all offer dairy alternatives, and they're getting even more popular than dairy, vegan or not. Personally, I've always stuck with the dairy option because I can. But what I learned is this: At least at Doc's, you don't notice the difference. At all. All these strong flavors go on inside a cuppa and dairy isn't the only thing that can bring those flavors together.

And it drives me to distraction when a coffee shop uses too much syrup. I hate it soooo much. Have some pride and faith in your brew, dammit. Of all the flavors in a cup, the one I need to hear least from is "sweet." Grace has faith not only in her brew but also in the syrups she makes. Hell, if I made my own syrups, I would be tempted to blow you away with them. But Grace maintains discipline. Don't get me wrong, the flavor is there, and in more than just a subtle way. But the syrup is part of the ensemble, not the lead.

The food.

Look, even if you get off on being a jerk to vegans, you gotta try the Classic Breakfast Sandwich at Doc's Brew. You gotta. We're talking about a plant-based sausage patty, tofu "egg" patty, fresh greens, and maple aioli on an English muffin. Now... before you take that first bite, I don't want to hear a word about

how the "sausage" tastes nothing like sausage. Yes, it does. Shut up! It does! What you're NOT tasting is all the salt you get with meat sausage because we're not trying to keep meat from spoiling here. Because there's no meat. You want that saltiness back? Then shut up and add more salt. It's easier to add it than to take it out. Without the salt bomb, the flavors of this sandwich meld and build in your mouth as you chew. Each bite, a flavor crescendo. Yum. If you've got a thing about texture, know that these animal product substitutes won't let you down. The tofu "egg" is no surprise. Tofu already has an egg-like consistency. The sausage shouldn't be a surprise, either. We've made great strides in ground meat substitutes over the past few years. The rest of the sandwich is pretty straightforward sandwich stuff, so yeah. Why would you be surprised that this sandwich tastes and eats awesome?

Doc's Brew has this year's fall menu up and running, which means we had to try the Pumpkin Sourdough French Toast. I'm not sure how Grace gets that French toast custardiness in her French toast without eggs. Tofu ain't gonna help you there. But I kid you not... this was some of the very best French toast I've ever had—ever. And it comes topped with butter(y spread), powdered sugar, pumpkin seeds, and pumpkin pie spices. And I am NOT one to go for pumpkin-spiced ANYTHING. But this is STILL a Top-5 French toast for me. This is going to be a craving I won't be able to kick. When the winter menu comes, I'm sure I'll say the same thing about the French toast that replaces it because Grace has earned my trust. Grace has changed my whole damn world.

And make sure you stop back regularly with Grace. I alluded to the seasonal menus. There's always something new and delicious with each passing season as well as unique weekly specials like chili, mac & cheese, and breakfast burritos.

Doc's Brew is located in the same building as Frosted N' Filled Bakery. It's a family thing. Which means that it's located in the same building where you can get some of the best cheesecake around. And the cheesecake, I assure you, is NOT vegan. So next time you've got a cheesecake craving, order a cup of coffee or matcha while you're there. And give vegan cuisine a fair chance for once. Vegan cuisine has come a long way, and Grace at Doc's Brew pushes it even farther. ■



**Doc's Brew**  
**FROSTED N' FILLED BAKERY**  
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 IG: @docs.brew  
 Hours: Tue: 8 AM-Noon, Wed-Fri: 8 AM-4 PM,  
 Sat: 8 AM-2 PM, Sun-Mon: Closed

**DANNY FAIRCHILD**

DANNY DOESN'T TAKE CRAP FROM NOBODY, BUT HE'LL TAKE FOOD FROM ALMOST ANYBODY. IF YOU WANT TO FIGHT DANNY, OR FEED HIM NOM-NOMS, EMAIL HIM AT [DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM](mailto:DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM).



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