



MEET THE CHEF

Marika Netzel

Location

Berlin, Germany

Philosophy

"Do the least harm always and have fun in the meantime."

Influences

Polish and Italian cuisines; spices from around the world, particularly North Africa and the Middle East; Childhood memories

BIO

Marika Netzel's life philosophy is simple: She believes in doing and creating things that radiate with love and good energy. As a vegan chef, educator, and founder of Plant Base, a vegan cafe and community space in Berlin, Marika is dedicated to building an establishment that not only stimulates the taste buds but also the mind.

Originally from Poland, she moved to Berlin in 2017, drawn by the city's liberal, vibrant atmosphere—and its numerous vegan-friendly spots. Netzel launched Plant Base as a pop-up in 2018 and the brick-



Image by Trisha Jones

and-mortar restaurant in 2019. Here, she serves up breakfast classics that transform natural ingredients into familiar flavors, such as the Carrot Salmon Bagel, and Cheesefakes, her vegan cheesecakes that come in different flavors like lemon, strawberry, and rose.

MARIKA NETZEL'S RECIPES



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Q&A

Cindy Brzotowski talks to Chef Marika about the growth of her brand and the memories that inspire her plant-based creations.

Collective Kitchen: Berlin is known as a hub for vegan food and culture, and with its cafe and events, Plant Base seeks to be an epicenter of all things vegan in the city. What do you think makes your establishment not only unique but necessary?

Marika Netzel: There are not many places that feed your belly and your soul. There are a lot of great restaurants and concepts, and you would have to go there to eat and then to other places to learn. I'm trying to grow into the vision of the 360 degrees food for thought and thought for food, so theory and practice all together in one place.

CK: From hosting a monthly book club to dating nights, Plant Base's events extend much further than just food-related topics. Why is it important to you to support and celebrate multiple aspects of veganism?

Chef Marika: When we talk about plant-based, this is mainly about the diet and how we eat our way to a better world, but to me plant-



German Potato Dumplings with Mushroom Gravy is a vegan riff on Kartoffelknödel. | Nancy Anne Harbord

based eating or the plant-based lifestyle is only a part, yes it is a huge chunk, but only a part. The vegan lifestyle is so much more than this.

I just like the life of compassion, and to me it's also nice to meet like-minded people. We as humans are also societal beings, so to me it's very important that people have this kind of connectedness.

CK: Another event Plant Base offers is a Vegan Starter Kit class for those interested in adopting veganism. What's your approach to introducing beginners to the lifestyle?

Chef Marika: This class and my attitude is to just warmly introduce people to the options that we have. To me, it's very important for people to realize that this isn't a good or bad, nothing-or-everything approach. It's just taking steps and taking the time, and learning by discovery.

CK: You didn't always work full-time in the food world. What was your defining moment when you realized you wanted to devote your career to veganism?

Chef Marika: The specific moment was just the sense of urgency... if you feel that there's someone suffering in the world that you have to alleviate it somehow. Like everyday I'm going to work, and okay, we're designing this and designing that but the problems of the world that I feel terrible about, they're not changing because of that. I just felt like now or never, because we really live in a world with so many problems and I thrive when I can draw inspiration from trying to help. First step is just not being a part of the problem, but then I want to be the solution.

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CK: What gives you the most joy in your everyday life and work?

Chef Marika: I try to find joy in little moments when people support us by coming back everyday for coffee and cake and just being warm. We know their names, we know what they do, and they know ours. We have more time to actually converse with them now.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cindy Brzostowski | Berlin



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Cindy Brzostowski | Berlin

Cindy Brzostowski is a freelance writer and editor based in Berlin focusing on food, travel, and other lifestyle content.

Ricky Sawara
Frankfurt, Germany
The wunderkind



Mokgadi Itsweng
Johannesburg, South Africa
The flavor queen



Jasmine Shimoda
Los Angeles, CA
The renegade chef

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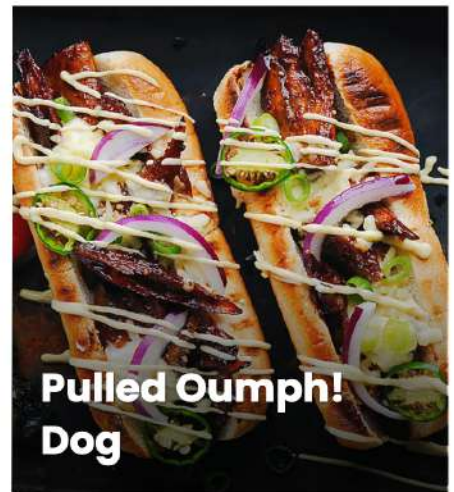
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Traditional German Frikadelle



Kohlrouladen with Mushroom Sauce



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