

Talking Plant-Based Food with 'Artefact' Head Chef Evan Mende

Photo by [Nobiskrug.com](https://nobiskrug.com)

You might know Chef Evan Mende as the head chef on-board [Nobiskrug's](#) 80 m' Artefact' or through his Instagram account [Passionateflavors](#). Chef Evan recently attended the [Monaco Yacht Show](#) and hosted a plant-based bbq with our friends at [Maison Del Gusto](#). We managed to catch up with him at the event to explore his views on food and a plant-based lifestyle.



Have you noticed an increase in plant-based diets over the past couple of years?

Yes, definitely. The mindset has changed in the industry. Plant-based food is on the rise, and people are gradually becoming more aware of what they're placing in their bodies. I believe this is a result of the pandemic. Not only guests and crew on-board, but a whole mass of individuals are now realising that food is fuel, and to be healthy on the outside,

you need to make sure you're healthy on the inside. Growing up in a vegetarian household and being a pescatarian for 17 years, it's fantastic to see how much the industry has developed and is continuing to do so. I tend to cook multiple dishes to the preference of my guests, but I'll always push for them to include vegetables and healthier options with their choice of food.

As head chef, do you cook a lot of plant-based food on-board?

At the beginning of the season, I started doing "plant-based Monday" food for the crew on-board Artefact. As expected, not everyone was as keen as me on the idea. However, I explained the benefits, and so far, it's been successful. Often, when I eat crew food, I will opt out of adding meat to my dish, not because I don't enjoy it but for health reasons. I cook dishes they request for guests on-board, but I'll always give them vegetable options to go with their plate to entice them to try more. Often guests perceive bread as a "treat" and will request gluten-free. I make a 72-hour pizza dough, which is something they look forward to over the three days.

I think it's imperative to make it clear that following a plant-based diet or opting for gluten-free options doesn't necessarily mean you're healthy. Many people will cut out meat and other substances but continue to consume a diet full of processed foods that lack vital nutrients. I'm not a nutritionist or a dietitian. However, I read a lot and educate myself on nutrition. Staying up-to-date with the latest information on nutrition and food is a fundamental part of my role and something I pride myself in.

https://www.instagram.com/p/BwMd1MKF_9S/

Do you find that cooking plant-based is versatile?

Definitely! Vegetables are so versatile! They have so many flavours, textures, and tastes. I incorporate vegetables based on the season and locally sourced ones (unless my guests request otherwise). There's a common misconception that I would love to change: meat is the centrepiece of the dish. I believe meat should be 30% of the plate and the vegetables, sauces, and other elements the remaining 70%. Let's take [Maison Del Gusto's](#) plant-based BBQ, for example; Included in one of the dishes were grilled avocado and grilled sweet potato. These are two foods people don't often consider cooking that way. The more plant-based foods you experiment with, the more you will come to realise that you're not missing meat at all.

We also did a mushroom, cauliflower, and beetroot burger with a slow-roasted aubergine miso sauce on the bottom and topped with truffled parmesan cream. The visitors' response to the burger was that it's the best burger they've ever had. So these are just a couple of examples of how versatile vegetables can be.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CT9wAtSMhGo/>

What are some of your favourite cuisines and foods?

I enjoy a lot of plant-based dishes. I never look at a vegetable dish and feel like I'm missing out because it's lacking a piece of meat. It all depends on my location at the time. There are so many cuisines I love, Japanese being one of them. I've worked in Japan twice now. Italian and Mexican are also two cultures that I enjoy eating. I could eat tacos every day for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. If I were to have to choose a favourite fruit, I'd have to go with a fresh

jackfruit and vegetable-wise, anything from my Mum's garden. Everything that she grows in the garden tastes so much better than store-bought foods.

What are your thoughts on the misconception that Plant-based diets don't provide you with enough protein?

It's funny because there are several vegetables out there, such as beans and legumes, which contain an equal amount of protein, if not more than a piece of meat. As long as you're consuming the right food and including whole foods in your diet, you'll more than certainly be getting enough protein. I will add that one of the most underestimated nutrients in a diet is fiber. People don't realise it's a key component to a healthy gut and helping the body function properly.



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