

Talking about Tossgreen with Manali Patel

EatDrinkJax.com shares their interview with Manali Patel, owner of Tossgreen.

Published September 22, 2013 in **Dining & Nightlife** - MetroJacksonville.com



Talking about Tossgreen with owner Manali Patel

1. Tell us about Tossgreen.

Tossgreen is clean eating fast food with ultra fresh ingredients. We want to provide our customers with healthy, natural foods. We use 100% natural salad dressing and vinaigrettes. We offer unlimited salad/burrito combinations. We use fresh, whole ingredients with no pre-cut or pre-shredded anything. Our chicken and sirloin are 100% natural and are cooked in small batches throughout the day. We use a new chopping board for every salad and provide compostable salad and burrito bowls. Our burrito comes with nearly 50 toppings.

2. What is the overall concept for Tossgreen?

It's a healthful fast-casual restaurant with an environmentally friendly emphasis and sustainable sourced ingredients wherever and whenever possible. Simply stated: "It's not just Food, It's a Lifestyle."

3. Is Tossgreen part of a franchise?

No, for now it's a single location.

4. When did Tossgreen open?

We opened on December 21, 2012. Our official, Grand Opening, was on January 8, 2013.

5. Does Tossgreen serve breakfast, lunch and dinner?

At this time we serve lunch and dinner.



6. What sort of food do you offer?

Our menu is comprised mainly of salads, burritos, burrito bowls and frozen yogurt. Customers can build their own salads, burritos and burrito bowls, choosing from more than 50 toppings, proteins, 100% natural dressings and more. We chop and toss each salad for a perfect bite every time! In the near future our plan is to expand our offerings by introducing wraps, soups and a kid's menu with more choices.



7. Why did you decide to put together burritos and salads, rather than something traditional like soup and salads or sandwiches and salads?

We started with salads and burritos and will be introducing soups and wraps shortly. A lot of people like a really good salad but there's also a lot of people who like something a bit heavier, which is why we've included the burritos and the burrito bowls on our menu. A lot of times a man and a woman will come in together and the woman will order a salad and the man a burrito. But not always! Sometimes it's the other way around.

8. Can you tell us anything about the soups?

We're still working on them now, but they'll be 100% natural, just like the rest of our menu.

9. Who is the audience for Tossgreen?

It's a fast, healthy, casual restaurant that is perfect for the entire family.

... how do kids react to salad?

Well, really little kids may prefer deep fried chicken fingers, and we don't offer things like that. But teenagers and anyone who wants to eat clean, fresh and healthy food will be attracted to Tossgreen.

I was surprised by how many men are eating salads. We offered the burritos because we thought that's what men would want, and a lot do. But I have to say that a lot of men are also eating the salads. We get a lot of businessmen for lunch.



10. What's different about a Tossgreen salad?

There's several things. First of all, we have a lot of toppings to choose from, so you don't have to just have lettuce and dressing. Secondly, Tossgreen is very focused on hygiene, which is really important to me. Thirdly, we chop and toss our salads. Sometimes when you go out for a salad it comes in large, leafy segments with dressing on the top. That can make it hard to eat and easy to get on your clothes. We use a mezzaluna knife which creates a finer chopped salad that is easier to eat. You can eat a Tossgreen salad with a spoon. When we toss the salad the dressing gets more evenly distributed - it doesn't just sit on the top. A fourth thing is that we use all natural salad dressings. They taste fresh and don't have any of that chemical taste you sometimes get from prepared dressings that come with a lot of preservatives. A fifth thing is that we use compostable packaging to help our environment. A sixth thing is that we use 100% natural chicken breast, sirloin steak and all of our food is cooked in small batches throughout the day. Finally, whenever possible we get our produce directly from the farm. So, for example we are one of the wholesale customers of Berry Good Farms, an

organic producer here in Jacksonville.

11. What's the mix between salads and burritos?

So far we've seen that salads are slightly more popular than burritos, but it's close and can change around on any given day.



12. One of your salads is called a Local Harvest Salad, and it draws on ingredients from local farms. Can you tell us about your use of local produce?

We try to source as much as we can locally. We're currently using about five farms. For example we get our strawberries from Crawford's Farm, which is in between Jacksonville and Tallahassee. We also source our organic greens from Berry Good Farms at the North Florida School of Special Education, which we visited recently, here in Jacksonville.

Down the road we want to have a farm that grows certain things just for us. Things like our spring mix, romaine lettuce, and so on.



13. Can you tell us about some of your chef designed burritos and salads?

Our chef designed them for customer convenience and great taste. Our most popular chef designed salads have been the Ancient Greek, Classic Cobb, and Chopped Royale. The Chopped Royale comes with bacon and chicken. The chef designed burritos are the Free Range Chicken, Mexican Gold (steak burrito), and the Vegetarian.

14. Will your chef designed items change regularly or are they designed to be staples on the menu?

They won't change frequently but they may change based on menu item popularity or customer feedback.

15. Do more people choose to make their own salads or do they choose the chef designed salads?

So far we're seeing about 60% of people creating their own salad design and about 40% selecting a chef designed salad. A lot of people like rice in their salads for example, so making their own lets them do that. On the burrito side we're finding that a lot of people like to add salad ingredients to their burrito.

16. What have been some of the most popular items?

Build Your Own salad and the burrito bowl.

17. What's your favorite thing at Tossgreen?

I like the Build Your Own Burrito Bowl. We have approximately 20 toppings available and I put a lot of them on my burrito.

18. With so many toppings to choose from, what is the average number of toppings people pick for a salad?

It's probably about 5 or 6 and most of the customers add fresh avocado as well. The interesting thing is that so many people pick different things. It's not that everyone has the same toppings.

19. Are you finding that people use your huge selection of toppings to experiment and try new things, or do they stick with what they're familiar with?

There are a lot of toppings that people aren't familiar with - things like jicama.

â€what's that?

It's a root vegetable that's sometimes called the Mexican yam or Mexican turnip. It's like a potato, but nuttier. We let people try any ingredient if they want to see what it's like before committing. A lot of people like to try out new things. We have one customer who drives all the way from the Beach because there's no other place to get toppings such as quinoa for a salad. I feel good when I hear things like that.



20. What are some of the toppings that have surprised you by their popularity?

I've been surprised by how many people aren't familiar with things like beets. They're always asking me if certain toppings are healthy, and I tell them "yes!" Radishes are common but you'd be surprised how many people don't really know about them or rarely eat them, so when they come here they have a chance to try out things that they don't regularly have at home.

We also make a pico de gallo, tomatillo salsa and homemade guacamole for our burritos. I was really surprised when so many people started getting the pico de gallo, tomatillo salsa and homemade guacamole for their salads. I'd never heard of that but a lot of people order it.



21. Where do you get your recipes and inspiration?

Mostly I rely on my experience.

â€what experience is that?

I like to cook and have always enjoyed preparing food. I started cooking around 12 years old and have built up a lot of experience. I'm the type of person who doesn't like frozen food, so I've always appreciated things that are fresh and flavorful. Because I like eating that way it was natural that I wanted to have a restaurant that served the type of food I've always enjoyed.

22. Do you cook food at Tossgreen?

We do cook our meats, brown and white rice, beans, tofu and so on. We have 3 types of chicken that we prepare regularly throughout the day: herb roasted chicken, roasted chicken and spiced chicken, which we marinate in house before cooking. The same is true of our steak and shrimp, which we marinate and cook in-house. We also make our salsa and guacamole in-house multiple times a day.

23. What attracted you to Tossgreen?

The overall concept of having fresh, healthy food available every day. We don't have a freezer in our restaurant. We source as locally as we can. We use organic ingredients wherever possible. And we provide a huge amount of variety to keep things interesting. All these things together make for healthy, and really tasty eating. Then we make sure everything is as environmentally friendly as possible. Our bowls, cups, cup holders, and straws are compostable, for example. We focus on healthy food, but also sustainability and recycling. We have 3 containers in the store to separately capture bottles, compostable items, and then trash.

24. What's your favorite place to eat when you're not eating at Tossgreen?

I like California Pizza Kitchen.

25. What did you do before Tossgreen?

I owned a different restaurant.

26. Can you tell us about your catering?

We offer our full menu of salads, burritos and burrito bowls. We can put together some of our chef's creations or items that are designed by our customers.

27. Do you deliver?

Yes, for orders of \$100 or more. On smaller orders customers can use services like doorstep delivery.

28. What's next for Tossgreen?

We're focusing on stability and growth for our current location.



29. Anything else?

A lot of people think of us for our salads and don't realize that we have burritos, burrito bowls and frozen yogurt. When they come for the salad they discover what else we offer.



Tossgreen Restaurant

Address: 4375 Southside Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32216

Phone:(904) 619-4356

Hours: Sunday 11:00 am - 8:00 pm

About EatDrinkJax

EatDrinkJax.com is a local website showcasing Jacksonville area food and drink. Our mission is to go behind the scenes and talk to the people who make great food and drink happen. Ever wonder where the top food writers in Jacksonville like to eat? In addition to our interviews we also bring together hundreds of restaurant reviews from leading food writers in Jacksonville. EatDrinkJax.com is brimming with special features, such as our directory of more than 800 local restaurants and bars, complete with addresses, phone numbers and menus. We have a growing list of free restaurant coupons, and our own BLOG where we check out some of the places and things that delight us and are deserving of more attention.

About the writer

EatDrinkJax.com interviews are conducted by Jacksonville Beach resident Gerry Glynn. When Gerry isn't talking with restauranteurs he is working for a local software company, training for his next road race, and hanging out with his wife and dog.

This article can be found online at: <http://www.metrojacksonville.com/article/2013-sep-talking-about-tossgreen-with-manali-patel>

METRO JACKSONVILLE

Copyright 2013 MetroJacksonville.com