



## Vegetarian Meltdown

As a Brit, I **am used to** being around vegetarians. Both my sisters are veggies, as are my nieces, **brother-in-law** and **countless** friends. In Britain, nearly 12% of the population are either vegetarian or vegan. You would never invite someone to dinner without asking them if they were vegetarian, and every wedding menu includes a **dish** without dead animals. (And yes, fish are animals). Every restaurant provides vegetarian options, and being a veggie isn't laughed at, **frowned upon** or ridiculed.

If only this were the case in Reunion! The reaction from people can be **mind-blowing**, from restaurant chefs to **guesthouse owners**. Check this out:

Last month I was in a beautiful river-side restaurant in the east, and we asked what vegetarian options there were. Now I won't **name and shame** the establishment, but it has (or used to have **in my book**) an excellent reputation.

The **waitress's** response was **awful**. Embarrassing and totally unprofessional. She said one word: "*Rien.*" Not even "*Rien, Madame.*" I insisted - couldn't she just ask the chef to prepare something simple without meat? Her second response? "*Ici, c'est Créole, on ne cuisine pas avec des légumes.*" I translate: "*This is a Creole restaurant sir, we don't cook with vegetables.*" Now please allow me to translate once again so you can understand what she really wanted to say: "*We **can't be bothered** to cook something different for you and **couldn't care less** if you went away and never came back.*"

Me being me, I insisted further: "*Come on, the people in Mafate do this without **batting an eyelid!** And you can't?*" She eventually came out with a plate of rice, beans and palm heart salad, looking about as happy as **a bulldog chewing a wasp**. A bargain at twenty euros.

Of course, this experience was not **a one-off**: all over the island we are met with similar **displays** of incompetence. One chef refused, saying if "*you want to buy a pareo, you don't go to a couturier.*" I wanted to reply: "*well if it's so simple, then why can't you do it?*" But I didn't. I simply paused and slowly said: "*But what if we didn't eat meat for religious reasons?*" "*Ah!*" he said, "*that's different!!*"

This made me furious! **On one hand**, a client who doesn't eat dead animals just because it's written down in a book is treated with respect, **whereas** the client who does this through choice and a conscientious empathy for other living animals is turned away and treated like an idiot...

But I am confident this will change. As the numbers of people who eat less meat and fish **grows**, these so-called professionals will have no choice but to adapt. It's just a question of tolerance...





## Vocabulary

to be used to = être habitué à

brother-in-law = beau-frère

countless = innombrables

dish = plat

frowned upon = être jugé

mind-blowing = époustouflant

guesthouse owners = gîteurs

to name and shame = montrer du doigt

in my book = à mon sens

waitress = serveuse

awful = affreux

can't be bothered = ne pas avoir le courage

couldn't care less = s'en foutre royalement

without batting an eyelid = sans sourciller

a bulldog chewing a wasp = un chien mâchant une guêpe

a one-off = un cas unique

display = (ici) preuve

on one hand = d'une part

whereas = tandis que

to grow = croître