

Cavi-Art Tasting

Lee Hall of Friends of Animals and *VeganMeans.com* tests it out with Chef Trish Sebben-Krupka

Vegan caviar. Really!

We heard [this Danish product](#) was a hit when it debuted at the New York City Vegetarian Food Festival. At just about [\\$10 a jar](#) it's a lot gentler than regular caviar on the wallet as well as on sea life.

But would such a product hold up to the expectations of a chef who knows the taste of sturgeon caviar?

Could online retailers and hosts of elegant affairs be inspired to drop caviar made from sturgeon—fish for whom [Friends of Animals and WildEarth Guardians recently petitioned as urgently needing the protection of the U.S. Endangered Species Act](#)—and offer seaweed-based varieties with a straight face?

I (Lee) had caviar—black, and, you know, the kind we shouldn't be eating—about 30 years ago, before becoming vegan. It had a fairly strong taste. Cavi-Art is a bit lighter, with a less oily feel. It's showy, versatile and great fun to experiment with: vibrant, delightful and real in its own right.

But who's going to listen to me? I'm vegan.

To test my view, I met with chef Trish Sebben-Krupka. ->

Trish, whose culinary area of choice is vegan-organic cuisine, does have extensive experience as a corporate chef in the omnivorous sphere, and can be expected to know more than I do about how this will likely play out in the gourmet world. So I stopped by the local Trader Joe's for some caviar aficionados' wafers, and headed to northern New Jersey to meet with Trish.

Here's everything laid out and ready for the serious business of tasting. ->

We started with the yellow Cavi-Art together with a bit of Sour Supreme (by Tofutti) on the water crackers. Trish liked the "texture authenticity"; yet the taste of the yellow Cavi-Art is *not* just like roe. That's not a complaint: we found the



Cavi-Art products did very well on their own terms.

The yellow variety is perhaps more mellow than the other four, with something like the



fresh taste of a nicely marinated, half-sour pickle. The sour cream complimented the taste perfectly.

The stage was set to whip up a few canapés.

We had five jars (we tried all of the vegan offerings): yellow, orange, black, ginger, and wasabi Cavi-Art.

Trish quickly began to combine Cavi-Art varieties over a slice of avocado on each water cracker.

Fun and very pretty!

I was surprised how subtle and endearing the wasabi Cavi-Art is. And we both really loved the ginger variety. Not surprisingly, a sushi theme works very well.

Next, Trish got some pea shoots out of the fridge, and we had a winning creation that tasted as wonderful as it looked: sashimi-style with avocado, pea shoots and a drop of tamari.



It was out of the question for Trish not to try Cavi-Art with a potato pancake. A small potato quickly got itself peeled, grated, and pan-fried with a bit of Spectrum Organics' canola oil and sea salt. To my delight, our tasting had just evolved into an impromptu cooking demo.

How exciting, to try this on potato pancakes with tofu sour cream and the works!



Trish cut the pancake into triangular slices, and topped it off with vegan sour cream, a festive medley of Cavi·Art and chives. **Delicious!**



“This is an accent, not something to be eaten on its own,” said Trish. How about some apple sauce with the potato pancake and Cavi·Art? Now there’s a thought. **Whoosh!**



We then had to have seconds of the potato pancakes. Who can eat just one?

This time, Trish tried them with the sour cream, apple sauce, yellow and orange Cavi-Art, topped with a bit of the black variety and chives.



Just as we were about to conclude our testing, Trish had another thought: hot sauce! Now we needed just a bit of avocado, sour cream and bell pepper!

“Although I didn't find that much difference in flavor between yellow, orange and black,” said Trish (for indeed, the ginger and the wasabi are the most distinct varieties), “I think the colors look gorgeous when mixed, and there are subtle differences.”

I loved this tasting. The samples we tried proved Cavi-Art is both delectable and vivacious. I can recommend it to anyone having a party, whether fun or fancy. I'll certainly give it a glowing review on any online outlet that markets it – for the taste as well as the way it advances respect for the ocean's bio-community.

But Trish's conclusion is the key. So here it is:

In some ways, it is reminiscent of caviar - briny, salty; the texture is very close. In other ways, not so much: you don't get the "pop" that you would get eating caviar, and the flavor has a more pickled taste. I'm glad it isn't an exact replica. But I think it's a really fun ingredient, and I can't wait to play with it some more. I loved the ginger and wasabi... with avocado, tamari and bell pepper. Looking forward to making some maki rolls. I also thought it was nice with the potato pancakes, and I LOVED IT with hot sauce and Mexican-type ingredients (who would have guessed?) I think this will appeal both to people who liked caviar, and those who have never tried it or are put off by the fishy, inky taste of actual caviar.

One more thing: the distributor, Plant Based Foods, Inc. offers an elegant website, easy ordering, and outstanding customer service.



Trish Sebben-Krupka is a professional chef, caterer, cooking teacher and a rescuer of New York and New Jersey cats. You can find Trish's work in print in [*The Best of Vegan Cooking*](#) (Nectar Bat Press, 2009), and online at [*Local Girl Makes Food*](#). **Lee Hall**, a rescuer of New Jersey and Pennsylvania cats, is the co-author of [*Dining With Friends: The Art of North American Vegan Cuisine*](#). The cats declined to review Cavi·Art.

DISCLAIMER: Lee bought three jars of the product, but to ensure we tried all five of the vegan varieties (NB: the salmon roe, which contains carmine, is the only current variety that isn't vegan), Robin, who handles U.S. distribution, sent us a jar each of wasabi and ginger varieties gratis.