

**Danielson**, Food & Drink

## Heirloom in Danielson Caters to Niche Diets with Delicious Food

— Mark M. Braunstein, 3.22.2025



Heirloom Food Company, Danielson, CT

Perched on a hillside on North Main Street, Danielson, **Heirloom** is a café whose charm is matched by the picturesque town it calls home.

Catering to all sorts of niche diets, Heirloom Food Company is unique in

this Quiet Corner of Connecticut. You want foods that are organically grown? You got it. Gluten free? Yours for the asking. Locavore? Yes, sir. Vegetarian? Step right up. Vegan? Yes, ma'am. Natural foods? That's a natural for Heirloom.

Only real foods here. GMOs? Never. Preservatives? No way. Hydrogenated oils? Nope. Ultra-processed foods? Not a chance. Salt shakers? Not on the tables. Fried foods? While some anomalous bags of outsourced potato chips appear on the menu maybe to add to lunch boxes, its own kitchen deep fries nothing. You can see that for yourself because the open kitchen is located four steps behind the order counter. Heirloom has nothing to hide.

To outsiders, the two above lists of Do and Don't may seem to be needless dietary restrictions. To the cognoscenti, these are mindful dietary choices. At Heirloom, choices abound. For cheeses, either cow cheese or nut cheese. For breads from a local bakery, either sourdough or sprouted wheat. All the desserts contain neither dairy nor eggs, sure to make vegans with sweet teeth very happy. Meat eaters, too, are made happy with options containing turkey or tuna. Real meat, not mock meat.

All the food here is fresh and wholesome, often organically grown, often locally grown, mostly gluten-free, and almost all vegetarian. Whatever appears on the menu as vegetarian can be veganized because eggs are completely absent. Quote from its website: "At Heirloom all of our recipes begin vegan."

As a vegan foodie, I felt right at home when I visited soon after its debut in 2012. Before I even sat down, I knew I would want to come back. And I've done precisely that dozens of times, even though my travels seldom bring me to this corner of the Quiet Corner.

Only whole grains are served. That's brown rice in the veggie bowls, quinoa with certain specials, and whole wheat in the wraps. The veggie

bowls and salads are wholesome and huge. Add-ons can make them even larger. My favorite additions are the thinly sliced Smokey Tempeh and the Mock Chick Salad, comprised of tiny cubes of roasted tofu. It's also sold refrigerated for takeout, so I notch on a container of Mock Chick while waiting for my order. Yet, the wait is never long, partly because the waitperson who takes your order often also prepares it, so nothing is lost in translation.

Weekly specials and weekly soups are posted online. The soups are always thick and luscious. The veggie burgers and sandwiches are tall and meticulously crafted. To fully appreciate their contents, I eat them with a fork, drilling down, layer by layer. My favorite is the Beta Burger, made with beans, beets, grains, and almonds whose flavor and nutrition far surpass industrialized mock meats.

To my delight, all the meals at Heirloom abide by my food mantra. *Delicious and Nutritious.*

Three idyllic eating areas complement the food. (Even the parking lot is idyllic.) In addition to the sunny central dining room (depicted in the photo), the interior hosts two booth-like nooks that assure an intimate dining experience. Outdoors, the patio by the front entrance and the two-tiered shaded deck in the rear provide al fresco dining.

Though the outdoor deck overlooks Main Street, the building is set back from the street and inclined up a hill, so treetops buffer the motorized hum of the passing cars below. And unlike many cafés whose loudspeakers impose music upon you, Heirloom remains peaceful and, except during busy lunchtimes, quiet. Quiet Corner indeed.

During summer, the exotic plants outdoors match the esoteric plant-based foods indoors. Year-round, the festive interior is furnished with potted plants, including vines crawling up the walls, and adorned with party decorations, including streamers hanging from the ceiling. If you

feel like you've walked in on a celebration, what's being celebrated is the food. And you.

You'd think that this eatery on the edge of town would be a little known, but the good word has gotten around. Lunchtime gets very busy, so try to visit at other times.

The café is one mile off Exit 38 of I-395. If taking this exit, you'll bypass Danielson's quintessential New England downtown. All four blocks of it. This exit does bring you past the town square, which is especially worth visiting around Halloween when it is occupied by an army of homemade scarecrows. Not even any advancing army of scarecrows could scare me away from Heirloom.

+ + + + +

**Mark Mathew Braunstein**, a vegan since 1970, is the author of the 1981 book, *Radical Vegetarianism*, the first book to espouse veganism. You can download a free PDF of the Lantern Books 30th-anniversary edition [here](#).