

# Can butchers be vegetarian?

**This one is. Jaap Korteweg, AKA The Vegetarian Butcher, sells plant-based 'meats' that confuse even the most dedicated of carnivores**

Words: Nione Meakin → Photography: Bart Homburg



Ninth-generation butcher Jaap Korteweg wasn't about to let being veggie get in the way of family tradition

Things aren't quite what they seem at Jaap Korteweg and Niko Koffeman's new butcher shop in Kreuzberg, Berlin. There's all the usual things – chicken, sausages, mince – but with one big difference: everything is made from plant proteins.

"I'm a lifelong vegetarian and a member of [Dutch party] The Party for the Animals," says Koffeman. "Jaap is a ninth-generation farmer who became vegetarian after the foot-and-mouth crisis, but he was missing meat. We decided to learn to create meat replicas indistinguishable from the real thing." They teamed up with chef Paul Bom, and The Vegetarian Butcher was born.

Even dedicated meat-eaters are fooled by their faux-flesh – not least former El Bulli chef, Ferran Adrià. "We gave him our 'chicken'," says Koffeman. "He said he thought it was chicken thigh, organic or free-range, possibly from the South of France."

So what's their secret? "We use algae and seaweed to give our 'fish' its flavour, and yeast, mushrooms and herbs in our 'meat'. Steak has been the biggest challenge, but we're nearly there."

The Vegetarian Butcher launched in The Hague in 2010. Since then its products have spread to 3,000 outlets in 13 countries. They recently opened a shop in Kreuzberg and a restaurant in Friedrichshain. "People think of Germany as the home of the bratwurst, but there are 80,000 vegans living in Berlin so it was an obvious choice."

Koffeman says that more and more meat eaters are choosing their products as a greener menu option. "Whether it's for the climate or animal welfare or health, there are so many reasons not to eat meat. If you can get the same taste without it, why bother?" [vegetarianbutcher.com](http://vegetarianbutcher.com)



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