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Interview with Alessandra Seiter

By OUR HEN HOUSE

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*Following is a transcript of an interview with **ALESSANDRA SEITER** conducted by **JASMIN SINGER** and **MARIANN SULLIVAN** of [Our Hen House](#), for the [Our Hen House podcast](#). The interview aired on Episode 241.*

JASMIN: Our first guest today is Alessandra Seiter, who you could follow at farmersmarketvegan.wordpress.com, it's a great blog. And today Alessandra is going to give us her expert opinion on which vegan mayonnaise needs to be central to your next sandwich.

Welcome back to Our Hen House, Alessandra.

ALESSANDRA: So excited to be here again, Jasmin.

JASMIN: I feel like this vegan mayonnaise review that you're about to do actually stemmed from another review we were doing here sitting on this very couch.

ALESSANDRA: What was that? Remind me.

JASMIN: I think it had to do with spring vegetables. Somehow we started talking -- or summer vegetables.

ALESSANDRA: Oh! Yes. I told you to dip your artichokes in aioli made with vegan mayonnaise.

JASMIN: Yes. Okay, I have to admit, I've never been much of a mayonnaise girl pre-vegan with the oppressive variety of mayo or post-vegan with the cruelty-free. I've just never been that into mayo, I admit.

ALESSANDRA: I am so into -- like, you have no idea. I'm so into mayo. I think it might stem from my childhood when I would go to my grandmother's house and she would make me mayonnaise sandwiches, which are exactly what they sound like. They're mayonnaise sandwiched between two pieces of bread. And they're delicious, I highly recommend them.

JASMIN: What? Your grandmother made you mayo sandwiches?

ALESSANDRA: She did. It was wonderful.

JASMIN: Wow. Grandmothers have this way of cooking where they just sort of like -- I think my grandmother was particularly adept at making me cereal.

ALESSANDRA: There you go. See? Simple things.

JASMIN: Yeah, exactly. Mariann, what about you? What's your mayo sitch?

MARIANN: I grew up as a Miracle Whip person. Yeah, I know that's kind of heresy. Miracle Whip is kind of like mayonnaise with sugar in it, which I figure just improves it.

JASMIN: Wasn't that your baby formula, mayonnaise with sugar?

MARIANN: No, my literal baby formula was cow's milk with sugar in it.

JASMIN: Wow. It's kind of the same thing I guess.

MARIANN: It's a wonder I'm alive.

JASMIN: But you still like mayonnaise, don't you?

MARIANN: Yeah, I love mayonnaise.

JASMIN: And today we're going to be talking about three different brands of mayonnaise, I believe, is that right?

ALESSANDRA: We are indeed. But before we get to the brands I'd just like to talk about what you can do with vegan mayonnaise.

JASMIN: Ooh, I know! Aioli.

ALESSANDRA: Yes, aioli, very good.

JASMIN: I have another one. Mayonnaise sandwiches.

ALESSANDRA: Yes! Oh, my God, perfect! Also, with a spoon is really nice.

JASMIN: Ew, gross.

ALESSANDRA: Please don't judge me. My favorite use for vegan mayonnaise though is for mixing into chickpea salad, which for anyone who hasn't tried it provides an amazing vegan option for anyone who grew up with like tuna salad sandwiches. But this is obviously much less oppressive and so much healthier and so much better for the environment.

MARIANN: Wow.

ALESSANDRA: And I also like to use vegan mayonnaise for dressing for picnic-style salads, like coleslaws, potato salads, macaroni salads, and as you say it makes a great dipping sauce.

JASMIN: But when you make these kind of dressing-y type things, is it just the mayo or are you adding other things as well?

ALESSANDRA: No, I usually use other ingredients depending on the flavor I want. Like, you can add garlic. For like a ranch dressing you could add herbs, onion powder, lemon juice, mustard, and nooch. And then for like a chipotle dressing you can add chipotles and adobo sauce.

JASMIN: That sounds like -- I've just remembered going to these kind of potlucky picnic things. Have you ever been to just like a potlucky picnic?

ALESSANDRA: Yeah, of course!

JASMIN: And I always feel, especially when you're with the meat eaters and the non-vegans, that anything with mayo goes over really well.

ALESSANDRA: Mm, definitely. Especially with the three brands that I'm gonna talk about, 'cause these vegan mayonnaise brands are like -- they will just impress any meat eater.

JASMIN: I'm curious how many different types of mayonnaise you could possibly have. Like, do mayonnaises really differentiate that much from each other, or is it the consistency or flavor? I just don't even know, I'm such a mayo novice.

ALESSANDRA: Yeah, so it's definitely consistency and flavor, texture, mouth feel for sure. Also ingredients, I think there is a very specific list of ingredients that needs to be included for vegan mayonnaise to be quality.

JASMIN: Well, you need oil.

ALESSANDRA: You do! Yes, you need oil, you need -- so the basic ingredients I would say are expeller-pressed oil, water, some sort of sweetener, apple cider vinegar, some sort of protein like a soy protein, salt, mustard powder, and lemon juice.

JASMIN: Okay, that sounds good. I have to admit, I have to rethink my mayo consumption.

ALESSANDRA: It's good stuff.

JASMIN: I always think it's gross when you have it in the refrigerator for a little too long and it gets a little watery, or when you kind of spoon it onto your bread and it's just kinda like this sort of white water -- like watered down glue.

ALESSANDRA: See, this is why you have to use your vegan mayonnaise frequently so it doesn't get like that.

JASMIN: Okay.

ALESSANDRA: Come on, Jasmin!

MARIANN: So when you're using vegan mayonnaise instead of egg based mayonnaise does that mean it doesn't kill you if it sits out in the sun?

JASMIN: Good question.

ALESSANDRA: I mean, I think it might have a longer shelf life but I think that anything will kill you if it sits out in the sun for too long.

JASMIN: Or the sun will kill you if you sit out in the sun too long.

ALESSANDRA: Yes, quite true.

JASMIN: That was like a PSA.

ALESSANDRA: Good job, Jasmin.

JASMIN: You're welcome.

ALESSANDRA: Awesome.

JASMIN: Okay, so let's move on. So what kind did you try?

ALESSANDRA: So I started with Earth Balance Mindful Mayo. They have both an original and an organic type, neither of which contain palm oil, which is awesome. None of these mayos contain palm oil. So Earth Balance, it had a nice, clean flavor and smooth texture. It's definitely one vegan mayo that I wouldn't feel unconfident about recommending to a non-vegan. And it has all the necessary ingredients for a vegan mayonnaise, and it's a good basic vegan mayonnaise to start with I would say.

JASMIN: Okay, I'm always impressed by the fact that Earth Balance seems to be rapidly expanding the types of products that they're creating.

ALESSANDRA: Yeah, definitely! They have a whole bunch of new lines and I think they do all of them pretty well.

JASMIN: They also are very into animal rights issues, which I always appreciate. I see that on their social networking.

ALESSANDRA: Definitely. I think they're very, very conscious of their consumer base.

JASMIN: Okay, so those were both of the types of Earth Balance, the organic and the non-organic.

ALESSANDRA: Yes. Yes, indeed. The next vegan mayonnaise is Vegenaïse, which...

JASMIN: Or is it Veganaïse?

ALESSANDRA: It's Vegenaïse!

JASMIN: Or is it Vayganaïse?

ALESSANDRA: Okay, maybe it's that one.

JASMIN: I think it probably is.

MARIANN: It's Vegenaïse.

JASMIN: All right, it's what Mariann says.

ALESSANDRA: Thank you, Mariann. So this is the mayonnaise that got me hooked on vegan mayonnaise. This is the stuff that's, well, to me, good enough to eat straight out of the jar, that I would gladly challenge any non-vegan to a mayonnaise showdown.

JASMIN: Wow. That's serious.

ALESSANDRA: Oh yeah, let's do it. It has a fluffy yet dense texture, a really full mouth feel, and like a creamy smooth texture and a very clean flavor. So Vegenaïse offers a bunch of

flavors. They have original, reduced fat, grapeseed oil, soy-free, and organic. I've tried the grapeseed oil, the organic, and the reduced fat before and they all taste pretty much the same actually, just with different ingredients.

JASMIN: Yeah, we actually have the reduced fat in the fridge right now.

ALESSANDRA: Yeah, I was really impressed with it because it managed to make a reduced fat mayo that tastes just as rich and creamy as its full fat counterpart, not that full fat is undesirable at all, I think. But the reduced fat was impressively rich.

JASMIN: Yeah, I was impressed by it as well, I have to admit. We have some nice little sandwichy things that we've been doing recently with some frozen veggie burgers and Ezekiel bread and just like a whole bunch of cabbage stuffed into that sandwich. And even though I'm not exactly a mayo girl, I have been enjoying my reduced fat mayo with that.

ALESSANDRA: Sounds great, my mouth is watering.

MARIANN: I wonder how much they actually reduce the fat by.

JASMIN: Yeah, it's a good question.

ALESSANDRA: Well, I think, the first ingredient is water instead of oil in the reduced fat.

JASMIN: Ah. It's sort of like how coconut milk, if you get a can of it, if you get a light can of it, it's just watered down coconut milk.

ALESSANDRA: Yeah, basically.

JASMIN: But it still holds together nicely.

ALESSANDRA: Right, right. So in addition to those basic flavors of Vegenaïse, they also offer what they call a Vegenaïse Gourmet line, and that has flavors like horseradish sauce, barbecue sauce, roasted garlic, chipotle, and pesto.

JASMIN: Wow, cool, pesto. I'm such a pesto fan.

MARIANN: I'm such a horseradish fan.

JASMIN: Okay. We should try and mix the two, see what happens.

MARIANN: Ahh!!!

JASMIN: Explosions.

ALESSANDRA: That sounds great. But so I tried their tartar sauce actually, which they add sweet cucumber relish and vegan Worcestershire sauce, neither of which contain any questionable ingredients, which I was super enthused about. And it's *so good!* It's like perfect mixed into a chickpea salad because it gets that like quote quote "fishy" flavor of tuna but without all the exploitation!

JASMIN: A lot of times if you just add some sea vegetables to something that's supposed to have the quote unquote "fishy" flavor, you have the exact same reaction as you would otherwise.

MARIANN: I absolutely love tartar sauce, and I have to admit that from back in the day even before I thought about being vegan, I never understood why you had to put it only on fish. I always used to put it on tomatoes.

JASMIN: Tomatoes, okay. Well, Alessandra had mayo sandwiches, so there's that.

ALESSANDRA: I never had tartar sauce sandwiches, though.

JASMIN: The night is still young.

ALESSANDRA: It is. It is indeed. So that was Vegenaïse. Now the last mayo that I want to talk about is Just Mayo.

JASMIN: You tried Just Mayo!

ALESSANDRA: I tried Just Mayo.

MARIANN: Where'd you get it?

ALESSANDRA: At Whole Foods!

JASMIN: I'm so jelly.

MARIANN: We've looked at Whole Foods a bunch of times and have not been able to find it.

ALESSANDRA: Really! I found it in, you know the section with like the tofu and the tempeh and the sauerkraut and stuff?

MARIANN: So maybe it was there but it just wasn't with the other vegan mayonnaises, which is pretty silly.

ALESSANDRA: Yeah, maybe. I'm not sure.

JASMIN: Okay, did this blow your mind? 'Cause all I hear from everyone is that this is mind-blowing.

ALESSANDRA: It blew my mind. So I was talking with Danielle Legg, who is Our Hen House's outreach manager, and we were getting a doughnut at Dun-Well Doughnuts. And she, I told her about this review that I'm doing and I was a staunch Vegenaïse fan girl, and Danielle was like, "Ooh, when you try Just Mayo, you're gonna be a new fan girl."

JASMIN: Say it ain't so.

ALESSANDRA: Oh. It was kind of so. I couldn't believe it! Just Mayo, the stuff is, I don't even know how to describe it. I didn't even think that it could have a more deeply flavored richer and creamier deliciousness than Vegenaïse, but it did.

JASMIN: And we had Josh Tetrick on the podcast last year or two years ago. He was one of our favorite ever interviews, he was the head of that company Hampton Creek Foods, and I just think what they're doing is groundbreaking. They're not only doing it, but they're doing it cheaply, and they're doing it in a way that large companies will be replacing their animal products with these vegan versions. And I love that it's called Just Mayo because it has that

kind of double entendre that I'm not even sure he meant, but like, *just*, it's just. Do you know what I mean?

MARIANN: I'm quite sure he meant it.

JASMIN: Okay.

MARIANN: He's not a dope.

JASMIN: No, Josh Tetrick is not a dope. That should be on his business card.

ALESSANDRA: But you know who also thinks that Just Mayo is amazing is celebrity chef and host of *Bizarre Foods* Andrew Zimmern who said, and I quote, that "I prefer the taste of Hampton Creek's Just Mayo to Hellman's, my must-have brand, in a blind test."

JASMIN: Nice job, Just Mayo people!

ALESSANDRA: Heck yeah.

JASMIN: Okay, so we have our Earth Balance, we have our Vayganaise -- I'm sorry, Vegenaize -- and we have our Just Mayo.

ALESSANDRA: Yes.

JASMIN: And the winner is...

ALESSANDRA: And the winner is, if you can find it, Just Mayo. It's available at Whole Foods, but it's also expanding to Safeway and Costco now.

JASMIN: Nice! It's going to Costco?

ALESSANDRA: It is.

JASMIN: Hello, America.

ALESSANDRA: That's right. But Vegenaize still provides an amazing vegan mayonnaise and it's much more widely available.

JASMIN: And Earth Balance gets my vote, I have to say, especially for the whole conscious consumer angle of their company.

ALESSANDRA: Oh yeah, they're a great company to support.

JASMIN: That's so -- well, I could see this was very hard for you to incorporate this job into your daily life. I know it's a lot of hard work for you.

ALESSANDRA: It's really hard. I have like eight jars of vegan mayonnaise in my refrigerator right now.

JASMIN: What are you going to do with it?

ALESSANDRA: I just don't know!

JASMIN: Time for a picnic!

ALESSANDRA: Yeah.

JASMIN: We're going to Alessandra's.

ALESSANDRA: Our Hen House picnic!

JASMIN: Yay! Okay, well, Alessandra, thank you so much for shedding your vegan mayo light on us today and I'm absolutely going to have a more open mind about it and maybe come over with a spoon and double dip into your various mayo jars.

ALESSANDRA: You are more than welcome to do so.

JASMIN: Well, talk to you soon.

ALESSANDRA: Thank you, Jasmin.

JASMIN: That was Alessandra Seiter, who we're lucky enough to be working with this summer. And you could find her again at farmersmarketvegan.wordpress.com.