

## The Latest News

# Is This Man The Next Colonel Sanders?



FEATURED FOOD HEALTH

NEWS

By Alexander Baron



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The story of the man behind the [world famous fried chicken](#) with the secret recipe is well known, including that he was over sixty when his company took off. Now with a bit of luck, a man from Sydenham might just follow in his footsteps, the big difference is that his product is not chicken nor any sort of meat, but vegan. And the novelty is that he has somehow managed to make it taste like meat.

I picked up one of his leaflets at the [Pengeulum Festival](#) last month, and another one more recently at the [monthly Saturday market](#) that is now held at the top of my road. I also tasted his fare on both occasions. We've seen this sort of thing before, of course, nut roast and all that jazz, but Barry Honeycombe has actually managed to create vegan recipes that to my palate taste just like the real thing.



*Barry Honeycombe*

As a lifelong meat eater I think I know what I'm talking about, this is not wine tasting after all. To date he is producing four recipes: sausage rolls, sausage patties, lamb casserole, and beef burgers. All meat-free. So how does he do it? Let him tell you himself:

## ***The Latest News: Were you a professional chef before you started your company?***

Barry Honeycombe: No – I was not. I was a keen amateur cook, and consumed too much of my own food and that cooked by others. I'm still not a chef, but combine my cooking and love of food with working 3 days a week for the Silicon Valley software company that I have worked for over the past 5 years. I am so fortunate that **Nomis Solutions** let me go part-time to pursue my dream.

## **TLN: What gave you the idea?**

BH: As a life long yo-yo dieter, I was fed up with being overweight. I was feeling disheartened as I had just put back all the weight that I had lost from a very unhealthy, very low calorie diet, and came across ***The China Study*** by T. Colin Campbell. As I read it, something in my mind clicked. Thanks to my very generous friends, I was given the means to study for the Certificate in Plant-Based Nutrition at **eCornell** which is taught by Professor Campbell. After that I attended a ***Farms 2 Forks*** weekend in Orange County, California, and from that point onward became "plant-based", eating nothing with a face or a mother. I do not routinely describe myself as vegan as I came at this from a health angle, but I am passionate about animals and animal welfare.

## **TLN: You appear to be operating only locally at present, and indeed from home, how many people does your company employ?**

BH: I am proud of being a South East London-based business. I love this part of our capital. As a start-up, I employ people to help me at local markets, as well as a wonderful production assistant, who happens to be Italian, has as much passion for food as I do plus a great palate. Also, I have a superb "virtual team" of professionals and consultants who are helping me launch my business. As, I think Richard Branson said: 'Surround yourself with people better than you', and that's just what I am doing.

**TLN: I must confess I am if not a big then a regular meat eater; I've tasted your products and they can**

## pass for meat, which must be unique for vegan products. How did you get that?

BH: I ate meat for about 50 years, but rapidly came to the conclusion whilst studying for the certificate that I no longer wanted to eat something, which I felt, was not positively contributing to my health. Given that I love cooking and am quite an experimental cook, I wanted to make my own things, which were healthy and delicious. Also, I could not find products that either had the texture and mouth feel that I was looking for, or the taste. So, I came up with my own. My friends then suggested that I sell them, so here I am. I know that not everyone wants to eat a meat substitute, but if they do I believe that it should be both tasty and as healthy as possible.

## TLN: At the moment your products are fairly expensive, then there is delivery of course, will you be looking to expand to get economies of scale, more to the point, will you be doing for veganism what Colonel Sanders did for chicken?

BH: My goal is simple, I want to offer people a choice of healthy and delicious plant-based alternative food products. My target market is not just vegans and vegetarians but anyone who wants to eat a little less meat. Compared with meat production my products are sustainable, and have far less impact on our planet. I would love my company to take off and become a plant-based rival to Colonel Sanders, I already have a veg "lamb doner" kebab in development! Who knows, *More Than Meat* could be in your high street soon. I know that on-line delivery is expensive as I send my products frozen overnight by courier. I do not pass on 100% of the cost of delivery, which is why I ask for a minimum order value of £15. I am working hard to be stocked as widely as possible. I'm making progress on that already but it is not easy to be stocked by the major retailers.

## TLN: Can you tell our readers what is in your food, or is it a secret recipe?

BH: Now we are back to Colonel Sanders and that secret blend of herbs and spices! All of our current range is based on wheat protein, as that provides the texture. Our burgers are a blend of the protein with creamy cannellini beans, flavoured with herbs de Provence, ketchup, capers, garlic etc. Our jumbo sausage rolls and our lorne sausages are made with a softer and less chewy "meat" which is flavoured with smoked apples, sage and fennel seeds. Our "veg lamb" casserole is flavoured with all the tastes that you would associate with lamb such as rosemary, redcurrants, mint, garlic, and then slow braised in a rich, full-bodied vegan red wine with carrots, celery and beans. We also have plans for many additional products, alongside plans for a gluten-free range, the first products of which will most likely be a spicy, rich, dark chilli flavoured with dark chocolate and cumin. We are completely open about our recipes and strive to ensure that our customers can trust our food to be as healthy as possible. We do not use any added fats in our range at the moment other than in the (vegan) pastry in our sausage rolls.

## TLN: "Are you looking for backers, investors, crowdfunding, or would you perhaps consider franchising?"

BH: "The honest answer is that we will need funding of some sort to expand and to scale up the business to supply a major retailer and to realise our goals. This has always been the plan. How

this will happen at this stage is anyone's guess. We would love for it to be by crowdfunding as I personally feel that this model is a way of staying close to your investors, and allows many people to invest. As for franchising, I had only really thought of that in terms of international expansion, which is some years away for us at the moment, but it is an interesting idea."

## TLN: "What do you plan on doing next commercially?"

BH: "Our next big step in the company's journey is exhibiting at *Food Matters Live*, Excel in London from November 17-19 in their *Enterprise Zone*. As part of those three days we want to meet some of the buyers from the major retailers and distributors. We have lots to do to be ready. We also want to build a network of local retailers, which we are working on now, so that our products are available across SE London.

## TLN: Are you going to expand your product range, perhaps to desserts or even drinks?

BH: We have expansion plans but not necessarily to desserts and drinks. Salad dressings are a possibility, as we already have a no-egg, no-oil mayonnaise that we serve with our burgers at markets. We are also looking at the vegan cheese space, as whilst there are many options, few have taste, and none could be described as remotely healthy.

## TLN: Anything you'd like to add?

BH: As a small business we are always looking for ideas, help and feedback, so please reach out to us. We are busy but we genuinely value honest and constructive feedback, as if we ignore that, we may as well pack up and go home!

## TLN: Barry Honeycombe, thank you very much.

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