

Cafe doesn't mince message

ITALIAN cuisine generally includes meat, but not for a West Brunswick family who switched to a vegetarian diet more than a year ago.

Maria Grazia Perfli and her younger brother Stefano Perfli instigated the change.

Ms Perfli said everything from global warming to the global food crisis and water shortages inspired them to stop and think about the lives they were leading.

"We were astounded to learn what we could save in energy and water consumption by leaving meat off our plates."

Ms Perfli looks back on her meat-eating days as "unconscious consumption".

She said even her mother Assunta – despite her age and love for food – did not struggle with the change.

Four months ago, the family left their jobs to share their new approach to Italian cuisine with the public. Each family member has a role in their takeaway vegetarian café on Lygon Street.

"We have become more creative with the way we prepare our meals, keeping them balanced while still staying faithful to traditional Italian flavours," Ms Perfli said.

Vegetarian Network Victoria president Mark Donecdu said many people were taking up a vegetarian diet as a result of a greater awareness of the environmental impact that animal industries were having on the planet.



Italian twist: Maria Perfli tosses a beetroot and bean salad at her family's vegetarian cafe Veg2go.

VEGIE FACTS

- 44 per cent of Australians report eating at least one meat-free evening meal over the course of a week and 18 per cent report eating at least three per week.**
- Young Australians (aged 18-24) are the most likely to go vegetarian, with just over half reporting they eat

more vegetarian meals than they did a couple of years ago.**

■ It takes 50,000 litres of water to produce one kilogram of beef, and 500 litres to produce one kilogram of potatoes.*

*CSIRO study. **Sanitarium Newpoll Study, 2000.