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Soupergirl brings vegan, kosher brews to Takoma shopping area

A rabbi, a vegan and a duck walk into a soup bar. The rabbi and vegan are thrilled to learn that the soups offered are

ON THE STREET

BETH COPE

kosher and animal-product-free. And the duck? He's just there for the comedy.

That's about the gist of Sara Polon's new soup shop in Takoma: After several years as a stand-up comic in New York, Polon returned to her native Washington area and launched a soup business, Soupergirl. A couple years in, the project has grown so much that she's opening a storefront space today.

"We never really thoughts about going retail. But this landlord found us, and he gave us an offer we couldn't refuse," she said.

Meanwhile, the comedy lives on, in her soup names (such as "Ratatouille — the Sequel — Rise of the Eggplant Soup"), and in stories she creates to go with the

soups (This week's begins, "As some of you know, I went to a soup-focused charter school growing up ...").

"I miss it very, very much," Polon said of her stint in comedy. Infusing humor into the soup business has eased the loss, she said, providing a creative outlet for her chuckles. Of course, not everybody gets the joke. "I wrote a story about how someone came up from Ellis Island with an immersion blender. And someone asked me if it was true. I was like, 'No. Noooooo.'"

But when it comes to her product, Polon is serious. Her ingredients are mostly local and organic, and all of her soups both vegan and kosher.

"I am kosher, and I feel there's a real dearth of kosher options," she said of the decision to subject all of her tools to a ritual cleansing and then her ingredients and kitchen to spot checks. She's hoping to get the word out to the Orthodox Jewish community. "We've really put a lot of effort into it," she said.

As for the vegan factor, that makes Soupergirl a good fit for



Bill Petros/The Current

Comic-turned-souper-slinger Sara Polon opens her shop today.

tree-hugging Takoma Park. (Her spot by the Metro station puts her in Takoma D.C., not Takoma Park, Md., but she's about a block from the border.)

In fact, Soupergirl was such a good fit for the spot that the landlord courted her. "I think that her business fits the ethos of the building," said Russell Katz, who constructed and owns the mixed-use facility, which uses geothermal heat, features a green roof and sustainable materials, and manages all of its storm water on site. "For the first time I was much more proactive with who I wanted in there."

"We said no" at first, Polon said, explaining that she was looking for just a commercial kitchen. "He said, 'Give it another

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SOUP

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thought.”

Now she's thrilled to be taking on retail. When doors open today, customers will be able to pick up cold soups from the shop's fridge, or buy hot soups and sit at one of her 25 seats. The shop will start with two soups and one salad per day, and it will also serve fresh

bread, pita chips and brownies.

Importantly for existing customers, Soupergirl will continue its deliveries: Soup lovers who can't make it to 314 Carroll St. NW can place orders at thesoupergirl.com for delivery the following week in most of D.C., as well as some parts of Maryland and Virginia, or for pickup at one of nine locations.

Soupergirl will be open 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Friday. Polon plans to eventually add later evening and Sunday hours, but she will remain closed on Saturdays.

And will Polon get to rest on the Sabbath?

“That's the one day I don't set my alarm. I'll say that.” But she doesn't really have much time to rest. “It's been more than full-time for three and a half years,” she said. “I still have things on my to-do list from 2008.”