

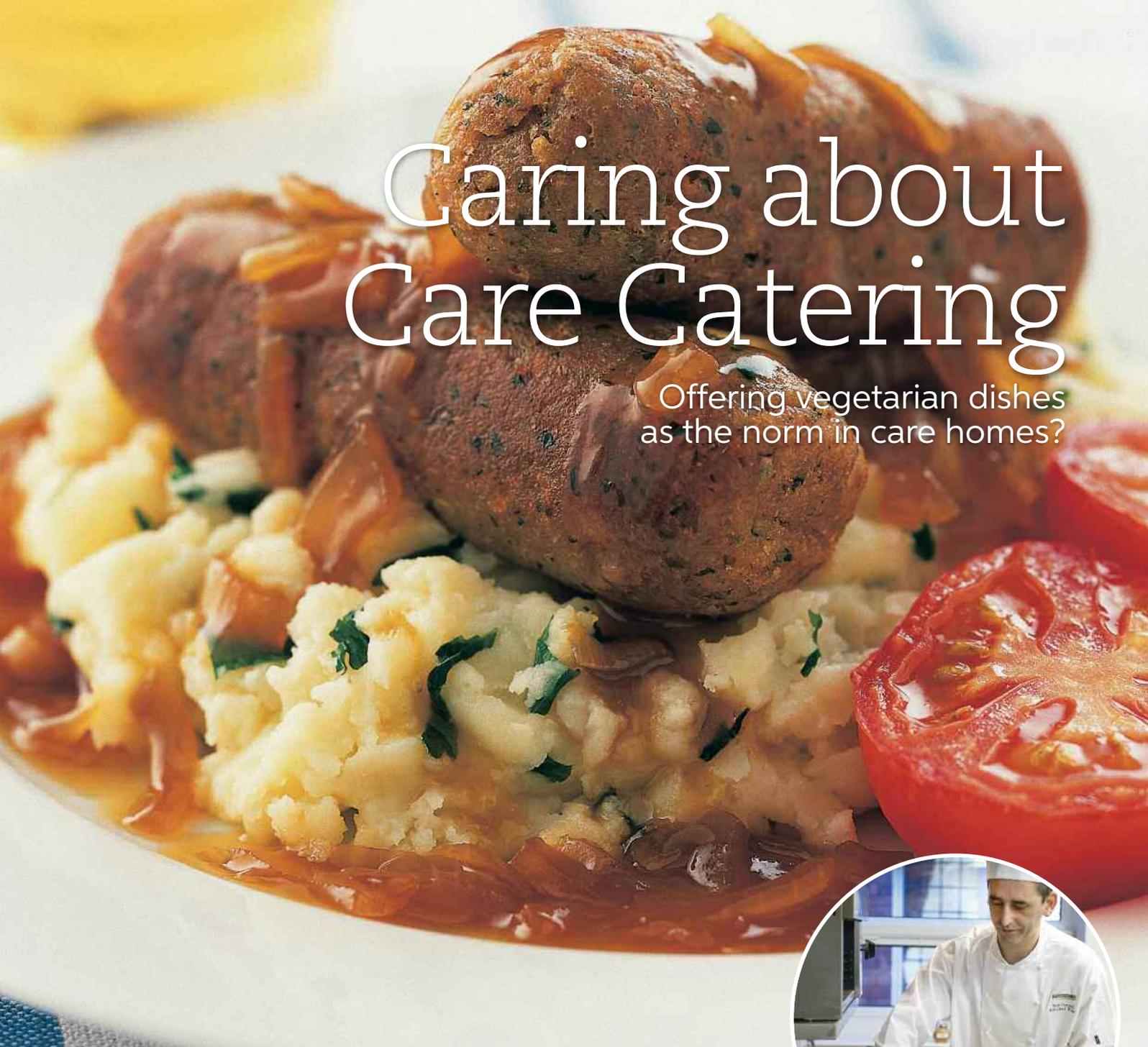
# eBites

Spring 2016

Published by **Vegetarian for Life**, the advocacy and educational charity working on behalf of older vegetarians and vegans

## Caring about Care Catering

Offering vegetarian dishes  
as the norm in care homes?



**[Meatless motorcycling](#)**  
London to Delhi with a  
full veggie belly

**[Soft and smooth diets](#)**  
Making the switch is  
easier if you don't eat  
meat

**[PLUS: Rewarding  
excellence in care  
catering | Tasty reader  
giveaway](#)**

# Welcome

Spring is the season of new beginnings. Fresh buds bloom, animals awaken and the earth comes to life again. Aptly, we're delighted to announce the launch of some exciting new projects.

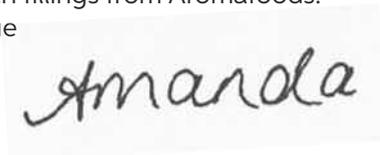
Firstly, nominations are open for our Award for Excellence in Vegetarian Care Catering. We're looking to reward a flexible and creative approach to meeting residents' preferences. If you can think of someone whose achievements should be celebrated, please turn to [page 4](#) and get nominating!

Committed to business excellence? Want your catering for veggies to be known as the best? Then our new Premium Accredited UK List Membership might also be for you. The standard that all organisations should aspire to achieve, it brings an incredible range of benefits to help your business prosper ([see page 8](#)).

If your organisation would like a further steer, we offer in-person training, and can even travel to you. Demuths Cookery School reviews a recent care caterer training day held at the School ([page 3](#)). Our Roving Chef, Jane Hughes, explains how vegetarian foods are useful in soft food diets ([page 5](#)).

Last but not least, we have a tasty vegan product giveaway for three lucky readers. See below for your chance to win a parcel of chilled deli snacks and sandwich fillings from Aromafoods.

I hope that you enjoy the issue  
Amanda Woodvine, Editor



Vegetarian for Life is an advocacy and educational charity working on behalf of older vegetarians and vegans throughout the UK.

**Vegetarian  
for Life** 

83 Ducie Street, Manchester M1 2JQ  
Registered Charity Number 1120687

Editor: Amanda Woodvine  
[amanda@vegetarianforlife.org.uk](mailto:amanda@vegetarianforlife.org.uk)

Design: The Ethical Graphic Design  
Company Ltd

© Vegetarian for Life 2016. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, reproduced or copied without written permission of the publisher.

**CONTACT US** Submit articles and tell us what you'd like to read about.

 [VfLUK](https://www.facebook.com/VfLUK)

 [@VfL\\_UK](https://twitter.com/VfL_UK)

T: 0161 257 0887

E: [info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk](mailto:info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk)

W: [www.vegetarianforlife.org.uk](http://www.vegetarianforlife.org.uk)

## In this issue...

### **3** [CARING ABOUT CARE CATERING](#)

Offering vegetarian dishes as the norm in care homes?

### **5** [SOFT AND SMOOTH DIETS](#)

Making the switch is easier if you don't eat meat

### **7** [MEATLESS MOTORCYCLING](#)

London to Delhi with a full veggie belly

### **8** [ARE YOU ON THE LIST?](#)

Want your catering for vegetarians to be known as the best?

## Reader exclusive

New members of our UK List, [Aromafoods](#), specialise in plant-based, animal- and wheat-free deli snacks and sandwich fillings. They operate out of a 100% vegan and wheat-free production kitchen based in Corston near Bath.

We're delighted to be able to give away an Aromafoods small chilled food parcel (RRP £28) to three lucky winners. Each will include 18 snacks: Greek Spinach Falafels, Mexican Bean Burgers, Sweetcorn & Pineapple Bhajias, Piri Piri Falafels, Seedy Cutlets and



**WIN!**

Spinach & Onion Bhajias. PLUS two tubs of Sandwich Fillings: Coronation Spinach Chutney with Omega 3 Seeds and Smoky Pulse Pâté.

For your chance to win, answer this question:

How many snacks are included in an Aromafoods small chilled food parcel?

A) 10 B) 14 C) 18

Email [info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk](mailto:info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk) with your answer by midday on 21/05/2016.

Terms and conditions: To view the Aromafoods range and for all enquiries visit [www.aromafoods.org.uk](http://www.aromafoods.org.uk) or call 0800 0744 876. Three winners will be drawn at random from all entries received. One entry per household only. UK addresses only. There is no cash alternative. By entering this competition, you agree to receive details of future offers from VfL and Aromafoods. If you do not want to receive this information, include 'no info' at the end of your email.



# Caring about care catering

by Christopher Robbins, Demuths Cookery School

Eight enthusiastic care cooks had booked on our care caterer training day in February. Organised and subsidised by Vegetarian for Life, the training took place at Demuths Cookery School in Bath.

With delegates from Sunset West and The Fairways care homes, the group was enthusiastic for vegetarian cooking, gelled well, and was interactive. They were a pleasure to work among and we felt they got a great amount from the day.

Vegetarians make up a small percentage of the residents in most care homes. Frequently, any one home may have only a single vegetarian resident, and there may be weeks without any.

Yet, these chefs came with the clear belief that vegetarian food would probably be enjoyed by anyone. One member of the group said she had delayed reworking their menu cycles until after the workshop. She said their group didn't have a 'vegetarian option' on the menus at present, but were

thinking of making two changes.

Firstly, to make the vegetarian meals the general menu items. They'd become more varied and interesting than the usual 'side-dish' form of vegetables. Secondly, the meat dishes would become the 'options' on the menus.

The fact the meat-eaters nearly always ate meat plus the two or more vegetables on their plate – meaning that even meat-eaters happily consumed vegetables – led to the obvious conclusion that vegetarian dishes were not 'special' food.

Most residents would be likely to choose vegetarian dishes, if not prefer them. This is because they can easily present more variety: different ingredients, vegetables, herbs and spices; more colour; fresher flavours and textures. Vegetarian cooking is visually and taste-appealing food, and can easily be cheaper.

With that conceptual clarity, the demonstration session was interesting. Our chef, Helen, made:

- Green Pea and Mint Pâté
- Spring Vegetable Frittata
- Nut Roast with Rich Onion Gravy
- Glamorgan Sausages
- Small Mediterranean Tartlets with options of: squash and red pepper; chickpea and spinach; broad bean and feta fillings
- Celeriac Fritters (amazingly tasting and with the texture of battered fish for Fridays)
- Fruity Muesli Bars (a high energy and soft fibre snack for small appetites).

Questions and discussion punctuated demonstrations of how to cook each dish. There were perceptive queries about adapting recipes to meet specific needs. Helen described how each recipe is adaptable to modifications such as:

- food processing ingredients like nuts, broad beans, oats, and even dried apricots to suit the needs of poor swallows, those with denture problems, or to reduce the risk of inhaling small solids.

- increasing flavour by increasing the amounts of herbs and spices used in dishes. (Loss of flavour and taste perception, even among the healthy elderly, is a common reason for lack of interest in eating.)
- increasing energy content by increasing amounts of olive oil in appropriate recipes. (The elderly may need higher nutrient density food if they eat smaller amounts than younger eaters.)
- helping increase soft fibre intake, and especially for individuals who don't eat much.
- having snacks with high energy and high soft fibre if appropriate

for meeting the energy gaps in individual residents.

The Fruity Muesli Bar was supplied to the group with their coffee on arrival. They clearly approved: the rather large plate of the bars disappeared rapidly, with sighs of pleasure mingled with requests for the recipe before they left.

After the 2 hours of demonstration, lunch was devoted to eating the resulting dishes. There was clear pleasure with repeated replenishing of plates. The food clearly looked inviting and there was no difficulty in enjoying it. One delegate was heard to say (and repeat): "I didn't know

that vegetarian food could taste so good."

One delegate said the cookery demonstration made her realise how simple the recipes were and how quickly such food could be prepared and cooked. She said that if she was just given a book or a set of these recipes, she knew they would never be opened again. This same person – along with several other delegates – said she would like to return to repeat the course, and would recommend it widely to colleagues.

[Find out more about Vegetarian for Life's subsidised care caterer training here.](#)



## The VfL Award for Excellence in Vegetarian Care Catering 2016

### DO YOU HAVE A VEGGIE HERO IN YOUR CATERING TEAM?

Our new Award for Excellence will be presented to someone who has responded creatively and enthusiastically to the challenge of catering for vegetarians in a care home setting.

As well as rewarding their flexible and creative approach to meeting residents' preferences, the award will highlight their wider commitment to respecting personal choice in the care home in which they work.

Don't miss this great opportunity to celebrate the achievement of someone who has successfully risen to challenge of catering for vegetarians in your care home. Not only is this a wonderful way to reward their hard work, but it is also a unique way to publicise your commitment to catering excellence.

### SOUNDS TOUGH?

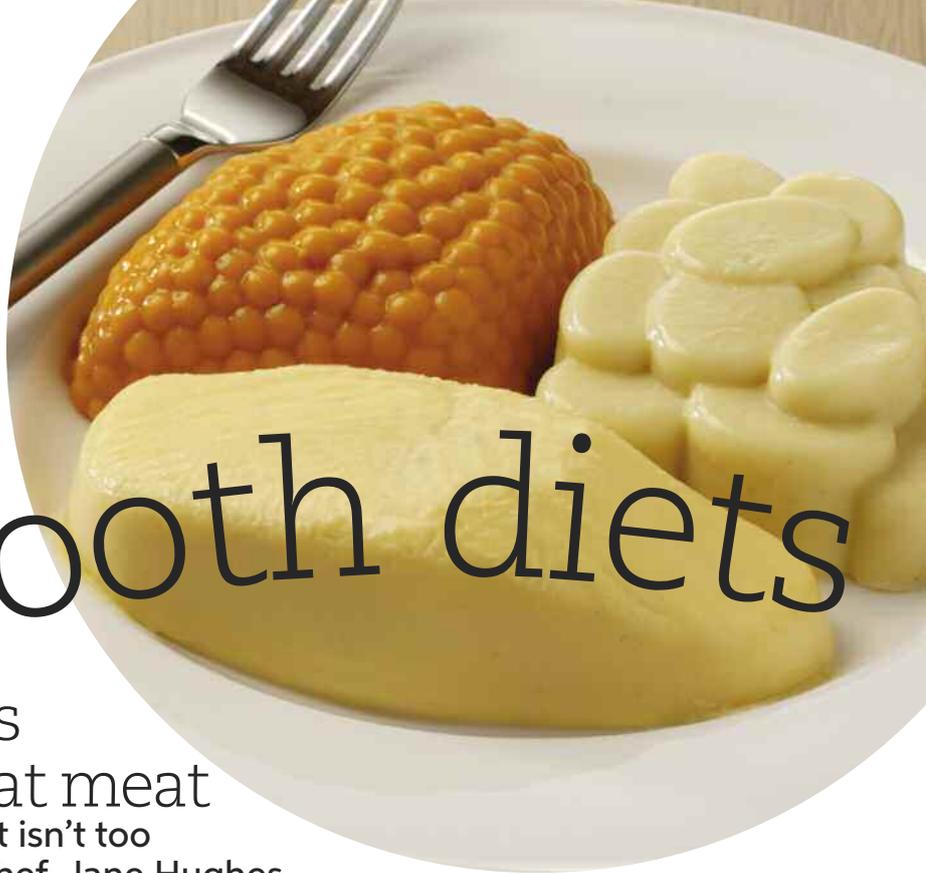
We want to promote rising standards of vegetarian catering in care homes. So we're on your side and we've made the submission

process as easy as possible.

We'd like you to write approximately 200 words about what excites you about vegetarian food, and which vegetarian dishes you love to serve to residents. We're also interested in how you consider the nutritional value of these meals, and whether these are offered as a meat-free option to all residents.

[You can find out more and make your nomination here.](#) All nominations must be received by Sunday 17 July 2016.

# Soft and smooth diets



Making the switch is easier if you don't eat meat

Switching to a soft or smooth diet isn't too complicated, writes our Roving Chef, Jane Hughes

There was a time, back in the seventies, when vegetarian food developed rather a bad reputation for being brown and mushy. It was around the same time that lentils became a laughing stock. Happily, lentils have been rehabilitated and are now reappearing on the smartest menus. But texture is still an issue of special concern.

When I helped to develop the Vegetarian Society's training courses for professional chefs, one of the themes we covered was recipe

development and how to create enticing menus. It might seem like common sense, but when you're doing that kind of work, it helps to think in terms of colour and texture.

To be fair, colour isn't really a big problem in vegetarian food because we have all the good, fresh, colourful things to choose from. If anything, by taking a lump of grey meat off the plate, we are making space for more eye-catching, appetite-stimulating foods.



But it's still true to say that vegetarian food tends to be quite soft. Certain meat substitutes like seitan (wheat gluten) can provide some chewy texture, and of course we can always enjoy crisp salads, but on the whole, cooked vegetables, Quorn and tofu, rice and grains, all tend to be quite soft.

As long-term vegetarians, we might not even notice this, but it can be a sticking point for new converts. The clever chef rises to this by adding toasted nuts and seeds to dips and spreads, and sprinkling seasoned breadcrumbs onto risottos. It's not hard to overcome the problem once you've spotted it, and it's surprising how a subtle change in texture can stimulate our interest in eating – which is useful to know if you're trying to tempt yourself or somebody else to tuck in.

But the relative softness of vegetarian food can be a blessing for people who need a soft food diet. Soft foods are generally defined as foods you can easily break up and eat with a fork or a spoon – no knife required.

Soft diets are often recommended when people are recovering from gastric surgery, or have trouble either chewing or swallowing. Dementia is frequently associated with a decline in our

ability to control our swallowing reflex, and this can be dangerous because it could lead to choking.

In such cases, a smooth diet is often the best solution. This means food is puréed or sieved to even out the texture. Chefs in the best care homes know that patients eating a smooth diet still need to be able to enjoy the taste, sight and smell of their food – otherwise, we may not pick up the signals we need to remind us to eat.

So there is currently a lot of creative work being done on finding ways to present smooth diets attractively, sometimes using moulds or piping the food into attractive and colourful shapes on the plate.

As Vegetarian for Life's Roving Chef, it's my job to remind chefs who are creating smooth food diets for vegetarians and vegans that they mustn't use gelatine to thicken puréed foods, and that they mustn't fall into the trap of offering puréed vegetables as a meal. It seems that awareness of vegetarian and vegan sources of protein is pretty good when care home cooks are assembling plates of food – but it's easy to forget about protein when you add the complication of a smooth diet to the mix.

For those people who need or prefer a soft food diet, vegetarian and vegan food can be a useful option to try, even if they aren't in the habit of eating a meat-free diet. Meat substitutes are generally relatively soft compared to meat, and may be easier to digest too.

Smooth food diets are trickier because we vegetarians and vegans are often accustomed to using wholefoods that don't always purée smoothly. Whole grains and beans have skins that can be awkward to process finely, and may need to be sieved where smoothness is essential. Although it seems to go 'against the grain', when appetites are small, it's important to pack small portions of food with essential nutrients. Bulking out with whole grains can make a person with a delicate constitution feel full long before he or she has eaten enough to get the nutrition they need.

It's something of a myth to think



## *Just remember to keep the calories up, boost the flavours, and make your food look as appetising as possible*

that, as we age, we naturally lose weight. In fact, losing weight can be a sign that we're not getting the nutrition we need, especially if it seems to go along with listlessness and a loss of energy.

If you're preparing a smooth food diet for anybody, remember that they need to get a lot of nutrients, and calories, from a small amount of food. Don't be afraid to use calorie boosters like chocolate spreads or the smooth Lotus biscuit spread which is vegan – many supermarkets stock this now.

Some meat substitutes don't purée too well, but tofu is a magical ingredient in soft and smooth diets. Tofu is one of the few plant-based foods that contains high quality protein and provides all the essential amino acids our bodies need. More than that, it's a very good source of calcium and iron.

Our taste buds can let us down as we age, so if you're cooking for somebody else, it's best to rely on feedback from them, and not your

own opinion! Don't compensate by over-salting food – we all know that's not good for us. Nutritional yeast flakes are worth seeking out – they're an excellent source of B vitamins and a small amount can add a lot of flavour to food. That savoury 'umami' flavour has been scientifically proven to help stimulate the appetite, so try making meals tastier with Marmite or a low-salt yeast extract.

Overall, it's much easier to make a successful soft or smooth meal from vegetarian and vegan ingredients than it is to make a palatable meat-based purée!

Switching to a soft or smooth diet should be straightforward for vegetarians and vegans. Just remember to keep the calories up, boost the flavours, and make your food look as appetising as possible – we eat with our eyes!

Photo credits: page 6 and top of page 5 © [Wiltshire Farm Foods](#). Wiltshire offers 28 vegetarian choices in its Softer Foods range for those with dysphagia. Of these, 7 are suitable for vegans.

# Meatless *motorcycling*

Peter Morrall, PhD, is an academic and author. He has been a vegetarian since September 1986. His last meat (or fish) meal was chicken and chips in a basket, bought in pub in North Yorkshire at about 8pm. He still goes to pubs and occasionally has chips, especially when there is no pizza.

Wherever it starts, it always ends in pizza. Well, nearly always, and not straight away. Before the pizza is the beer – two pints (or two 500mls) at the most. Setting off again next morning with a hangover is never a good idea. Not on motorbikes. The excessive eating of this Italian staple (no matter that is usually a counterfeit version) is not out of choice. It is out of a lack of choice when riding to far-off places.

Worry is always present, and can reach the psychological equivalent of Meerkat visual fidgetiness. When setting off from my home city of York and heading for such destinations as Marrakesh, Istanbul, the Arctic Circle, or the Greek Island of Skyros, there is always the worry of starvation.

This is not a worry of my carnivorous fellow travellers. Food-with-a-face, perhaps undercooked, overcooked, rancid, or its organic

origin completely unrecognisable, can be found everywhere we go. The men in my motorbiking life – friends – find their food easily but are always respectful of my dietary (and moral, ecological, and economic) standpoint.

Without resistance or complaint (they should be actors), they will search with me for some suitable sustenance. Of course this is invariably tomato-and-cheese-covered dough, possibly with a smattering of further food-without-a-face that is just as unrecognisable as my friends' meat option.

Other worries, such as having a puncture at high speeds, or engine failure in the middle of a forsaken stretch of land in a country that may not be replete with the means to mend our model of motorbike, are more paramount.

The years of overland travel have included going from London to Delhi – through a civil war and an invasion – in what can only loosely be described as a 'bus'. So I've learned to eat when food is found, not when hunger abounds. To wait until stomach pangs arrive is to invite disappointment. Such disappointment on a motorcycle is dangerous. When the body's glucose levels drop, so does concentration and tolerance. The road and other road-users become unclear. But credible threats, and serious injury – if not death – lie in wait for that one mistake in steering or overzealous gesticulating that results in hitting something, or being hit by someone, solid.

So, it could be some sort of sandwich with some sort of curd-  
whey mishmash at a motorway outlet. (I cannot, without bending reality, call these museums



of mangled gastronomy 'restaurants' or even 'cafés'.) More much tolerably, the said sandwich might be inside a food shop.

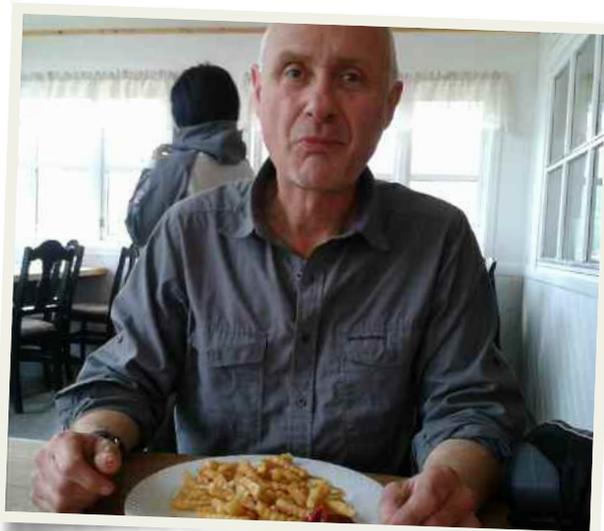
Finding the latter for a lunch-time break has become one of the highlights of the day. It is an event that should have been included in the philosophical treatise/cerebral adventure on this form of travel, 'The Art of Motorcycle Diaries'. My choice of book to take to a desert island. Motorbiking is not only physically exhilarating but existentially re-affirming.

As sad as it might seem, spotting an Aldi, Lidl, Spar, or E.Leclerc, raises the mood and heightens the consciousness – no matter how awful the weather conditions or painful the nether regions. It means fresh bread, bananas, tomatoes, nuts, peanut butter, fruit juice, and if we are lucky, the treat of dark chocolate. I try to avoid cheese. I know that after the trip I will be cheesed-off because I'm no longer astride my motorbike. And I will be

cheesed-out because of pizza.

Our serendipitous food shop feast is consumed either standing up under the outlet's awnings or sitting on the concrete wall bordering its car park. The sight of two more 'mature' men munching and guzzling so publicly causes much bemusement amongst the local shoppers. They arrive and leave without an interval of indulgent open-air nutritional re-fuelling.

Then we are off again, encountering the unexpected in bewildering places. Being lost in the mountains of Bulgaria and finding ourselves surrounded by astonished and intimidating villagers. Having to stay upright in gale-force Moroccan winds. Staying in an austere Turkish hotel after a challenging and long



ride. Facing a violent outburst by a young boy for inadvertently coming too close to a beach meant for women whom were not to be seen. Let alone met by hairy – well actually not very hairy these days – bikers.

Still, whatever the trials, excitements, and failures of the day's journey, the prize is a pizza! I wonder whether we'll find them in Albania?

## Are you on the List?

Regular readers will know that VfL operates a [UK List](#) – an online directory of care homes that agree to cater well and ethically for older vegetarians and vegans.

We're now pleased to announce a new tier of List membership. Premium Accredited Membership is the standard that all organisations should aspire to achieve.

Premium Accredited Membership offers you a unique opportunity to promote the high quality of your vegetarian and vegan catering. This membership will reflect your commitment to catering and customer service and will be seen as reflecting the high standards that run throughout your business.

This membership is not just a stamp of approval for your catering services. It

also brings with it a substantial list of benefits, which we have designed to help you grow and develop your business.

### YOU'LL GET:

- Independent approval of your menus by Vegetarian for Life, the renowned UK charity that supports older vegetarians and vegans.
- A personalised 'VfL Premium Accredited Membership' certificate for display in your premises or on your website.
- Use of the 'VfL Accredited' logo. This can be used on your menus, your promotional material and on your website. It will also be displayed next to your listing on our website.
- Your organisation or care home will be optimised to appear at or near the top of any UK List search, by region.
- A free 150 word description of your business next to your website listing, including an option for people to download some of your vegetarian and vegan menus.
- A free 12 month listing in our eBites magazine plus a 25% discount on any advertising.
- Whenever possible, we will display your leaflets or brochures at events that we attend.

**Vegetarian  
for Life**   
ACCREDITED

Simply [click here](#) for more information and to apply.