

eBites

Summer 2020

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

Public sector
caterers launch
20% less meat
campaign

VfL chef runs home marathon

Inspiring Alex crosses toilet roll
finish line in 5½ hours

PLUS: VfL in the news | Win
bodycare gift box worth £40



Welcome

They say that necessity is the mother of invention – a motto that many of us have adopted in these testing times, for work, rest, and play.

Undeterred by the cancellation of the 2020 Manchester Marathon, our in-house marathon-enthusiast, Alex, recently ran the full 26.2 miles in his own back garden. Read his full, inspiring story, on [page 4](#).

Like many, VfL's entire roving chef team has faced setbacks because of the pandemic. Their work for VfL would usually take them to UK care homes, lunch clubs, and community centres. But they have risen to the challenge of delivering such training online – now even reaching global platforms ([page 5](#)).

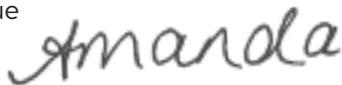
Care establishments remain under huge pressure to continue to cater to residents' requirements while keeping them and their staff safe. We recent caught up with Andy Jones, chair of the public sector catering group, to find out more about its new 20% less meat campaign ([page 6](#)).

Those who are ready to take their plant-based catering to the next level should check out VfL's new 'Care catering for older vegetarians and vegans' online training ([page 7](#)). Created by our team of chefs and nutritionists, the conveniently bite-sized training will help care establishments to take their plant-based catering to the next level – while maintaining that vital safe distance.

If you do need any extra support during this time, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We have shared some feedback from our service users on [page 8](#).

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.



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Reader exclusive

Yaoh is offering one lucky reader the chance to win a gift box (RRP £40.00).

Bristol-based Yaoh is one of the UK's original hemp companies, with a range of hemp bodycare and food products that are 100% vegan and free from animal testing. Yaoh's food range is also 100% certified organic.

For your chance to win, answer this question: What is the main product used in the all-vegan Yaoh range? A) Soya B) Hemp C) Apples

Email info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk with your answer by midday 12 September.

Terms and conditions: One winner will be drawn at random from all entries received. One entry per household only. UK addresses only. There is no cash alternative.



Press Life

V for Life in the news

Interview with Age Scotland

Our own fabulous Director (Scotland), Kim Stringer, was interviewed by Age Scotland and featured in the spring edition of its in-house magazine, Advantage.

Kim talked about the benefits of adopting a meat-free diet, how easy it is to take up vegetarianism in later life, and how to keep it cost-effective. She also mentioned VfL's work and vision, and the various ways in which we offer advice and assistance to older veg*ns living in care or independently at home.

VfL is delighted to work closely with other organisations such as Age Scotland, allowing us to make a real difference with our resources.



Get baking!

Our super new Vegan Baking guide featured in a 3-page spread in *Your Healthy Living Magazine*, and an article in *Ox Magazine* was followed up with a recipe per day for the length of National Vegetarian Week (11–17 May).

VeganFoodAndLiving.com also published an article on the guide, written by VfL Chief Executive, Amanda Woodvine.

Taking to the airwaves

Last but not least, VfL Roving Chef (North), Alex Connell, appeared on radio stations including Phoenix 98 FM to discuss our Good grocery shopping guide – explaining how to support older veggies and vegans during the lockdown, and what further help is available to them.

Spreading the word

Earlier in the year, Friend of VfL, Kate, in Swansea, helped spread the message by offering several of our leaflets and some wise words of advice as part of the Brontosaurus Vegan Lifestyle Store's Veganuary extravaganza.



Kate generously donated her time to the charity as part of our [Friends](#)

scheme, where volunteers can help to promote our work through various means. Since the launch of the scheme the positive impact of our volunteers has been incredible.

Distributing leaflets isn't the only way to help. There are many different ways that our volunteers lend a hand. If this is something that you would be interested in, please visit vegetarianforlife.org.uk/friends and request a starter pack.

Surviving self-isolation

As a leading charity working for older people, many of whom suddenly found themselves 'shielding' or in isolation during the COVID-19 lockdown, March saw us focussing all of our attention on those in need.

Our [self-isolation guidance](#) was the first step, offering a steer on where to shop for food, which foods to stock up on, how to maintain good nutrition, and simple recipe ideas. With additional advice on how to stay active at home, where to find home meal deliveries, and how to stay connected through organisations like The Silver Line, our self-isolation guide proved a vital piece of the puzzle and was promoted far and wide.

Both Veggievision.TV and HubPublishing.co.uk ran features on the guide. It also received mentions in a Confidential.com article of a similar vein, as well as Mad Promotions PR, OxVeg (Oxfordshire veggie group) and was spread by a plethora of local Facebook groups set up to help in the pandemic.

Sourcing veg*n food during a crisis

We also widely promoted our [Good grocery shopping guide](#) in March and April, as the lockdown began to hit – spreading the word to the entire UK age-friendly and volunteer network. The essential information included here would help people who might be struggling to shop for someone on a veg*n diet during the crisis. It contained information on where to buy certain foods, what to look out for when shopping, and what other factors to consider, such as a vegetarian-halal diet.

The guide was widely supported, including on social media, with generous sharing by Community First, Amber Valley CVS, Outside The Box South East, Community Action Wirral, Norden Coronavirus COVID-19 Help, and many others.



VfL chef takes first place in home marathon

Our very own Roving Chef, Alex, recently completed a lockdown marathon, crossing the toilet roll finish line in 5½ hours.

Alex Connell, from Manchester, has been a runner for a decade, starting around his 40th birthday.

Then initially aiming to do a half marathon, Alex quickly set his sights on the full 26.2 miles.

Said Alex: "I ran my first Manchester Marathon in 5½ hours, and each year since then I have improved my finish time, eventually getting to 3 hours 45 minutes in 2019."

As the 2020 race approached, the world seemed to be turned upside down. One of the consequences of social distancing has been a lockdown on events. The Manchester Marathon was one of those cancelled.

Alex said: "The day before the Manchester Marathon was planned, I looked at my garden and wondered: 'Would I be able to run a marathon in my garden?'"

"I measured the length and worked out that if I did 800 laps that would do it. To record the distance, my GPS watch was to prove useless. I would have to use an old school chalkboard and bar gates after each lap.

"I constructed a course with a feeding station, chalk board to record laps, and a

cone at the bottom of my driveway. I planned to start at 9:00am because this would have been the official start time. At 7:30am, I had porridge and a coffee. Through the window, I saw a runner going up and down the road. He had an improvised bib saying 'Urban Road Marathon'! I was not going to be the only one making the best of the day. It turned out he was called Mat and lived on the same road.

I put on a Mad Hatters hat for fun and started to run around the garden

"9:00am came around. I put on a Mad Hatters hat for fun and started to run around the garden marking the chalk board each time. Occasionally I would get encouraging cheers from Mat as we both progressed. One of the heartwarming experiences of running a marathon is the people cheering you on. My neighbours' children waved from their window and made posters for me.

"After a few hours, Mat, who had started earlier than me, was nearly finished. His children made an improvised finish line. I congratulated him and got back to the garden laps. Something was wrong, though.

"I knew that this was not going to be a fast run. After every 100 feet I had to practically stop in order to turn, and my garden was too small to get any pace. Nevertheless, it was still taking too long. Perhaps I had mis-measured the garden? My woodwork teacher at school would often say 'measure twice, cut once'. Sound advice. Out came the tape and this time my partner Fay measured. No, I had been correct in the measuring. However, I did not have to do 800 laps; it was 700! What a relief. My maths skills are lacking!"

The morning progressed and Alex felt encouraged with random cheers as well as strange looks from people walking past the house!

When Alex had about 30 minutes left, his stereo was switched on for some uplifting tracks: Eye of the Tiger, Thunderstuck, Don't Stop Me Now...

"Two more laps to go. Neighbours gathered in the street after following my progress on a WhatsApp group. Fay created a finishing tape to run through made from loo roll. So, after 5½ hours I crossed the line! First place in my garden marathon. I'm taking that!"

Alex enjoyed his garden marathon and would encourage others if possible to do the same. It gave a focus and distraction from current events. It also made a few people smile. Not such a bad thing these days.

"Would I do it again? Possibly."

Alex's work as a roving chef has also faced setbacks because of the pandemic. His work for VfL would usually take him to UK care homes, lunch clubs, and community centres, but he has adapted to delivering such training online.

Later this year, Alex was planning on taking part in the gruelling iron distance triathlon – 2.4 miles open water swim, 112 miles cycle, followed by a marathon. Sadly of course, this too has been cancelled.

"I'm not sure if this would be possible in a back garden. I will have a think... Turbo trainer for the cycle... run as was, but the swim? I had also entered a 24-hour running race in September. I'm already feeling dizzy. Hopefully, all of this will be behind us then. If not, well, we will see."

To watch an interview with Alex filmed for That's TV Manchester, [click here](#).



Yes, Chef!

Over the past few months, although physical meetings have had to stop, V for Life's work does still go on.

By switching to online meetings and live cookery demonstrations, our chef team has been busy providing live cookery demonstrations to age-friendly networks across the UK via Zoom and Facebook Live.

Although we cannot visit you personally, we can tailor a cookery demonstration or cook-along specifically to your group. The roving chefs – not roving so much these days – are cooking in their home kitchens, having set up mini TV studios. James Martin had better up his game!

Using the internet has several advantages. Distance is no object and participants, if shielding, can still take part without leaving their homes.

Chefs can answer your questions live and, because the demonstrations are recorded, you can watch them several times, should you wish to.

Although going online initially provided some hurdles to overcome, it is something that we are likely to continue once the world gets back to the new normal.

If you cater for older adults and would like to find out more about having a live online cookery demonstration, please get in touch. We work with a variety of organisations including Age UK franchises; age-friendly networks; veggie/vegan groups; housing associations; care establishments; carers' organisations; luncheon clubs and more. For further information please email ellie@vegetarianforlife.org.uk or call us on 0161 257 0887.

The V for Life Cookery School is delighted to be running the Professional Caterers Zone at VegfestUK Summerfest Online 2020, running Friday 14 to Sunday 16 August. Entry is FREE – [click here to register](#).

Public sector caterers launch 20% less meat campaign

Andy Jones, chair of the public sector catering PSC100 group, on why it has decided to take a lead on a key issue of our time...

I want to make clear at the outset that our #20percentlessmeat campaign is not about 'jumping on the bandwagon' and encouraging people not to eat meat, nor is it about supporting a diet fad. It is about the health and wellbeing of us all and contributing to a needed reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions.

At a recent PSC100 event we discussed a range of topics that present the public sector with major challenges, from the recruitment and retention of staff to allergens. All are important, but the potential benefits of 'reducing meat' was the one issue we felt was being driven by our customers, our suppliers and our staff.

The various catering associations shared how they are already working to cut the meat content on menus. It was clear that it is being done in many innovative ways, from meat-free days, to meal deals, to the introduction of new products to promote meat-free dishes.

It also highlighted why we cannot let the reduction of meat impact on nutritional intake in sectors such as hospitals and care homes. These settings have revised menus to offer a wider choice of meat-free dishes, as well as reducing the amount of red meat offered while ensuring that nutritional standards are fully achieved.

Such changes embody the idea of 'doing what's right for now and also for future generations' – and we agreed that if we aligned together, we can make a difference that impacts on the nation's health and wellbeing as well as the global environment.

What first inspired us was a presentation at a PSC100 seminar last year by Charlie Huson from the Humane Society. She left us with the feeling that we had to act.

And we saw the opportunity that we had, as public sector caterers, because we can do more than simply educate our customers now. The huge range of people we feed every day means we can influence the diet of the nation and at the same time contribute the wider drive to limit environmental damage.



Charlie's final words that day were: "We have less than 10 years to make changes before we have caused irreversible damage the world".

I, for one, don't want to be known as part of the generation that could have acted, even in a small way, but did nothing. That would, in any case, mean ignoring what our customers are asking of us, and I don't believe any caterer would do that.

We have seen many contractors leading the way and sharing good practice with us, such as the recent Future 50 Foods report that Sodexo partnered with Unilever and the

Launched in 2011, the PSC100 group comprises caterers, dietitians, politicians, healthy eating campaigners and suppliers who operate in the public sector and use their collective 'clout' to drive government legislation and action towards helping people adopt healthier lifestyles through catering and education initiatives.

WWF to produce. It aims to help us 'bring more sustainable meals to our customers'.

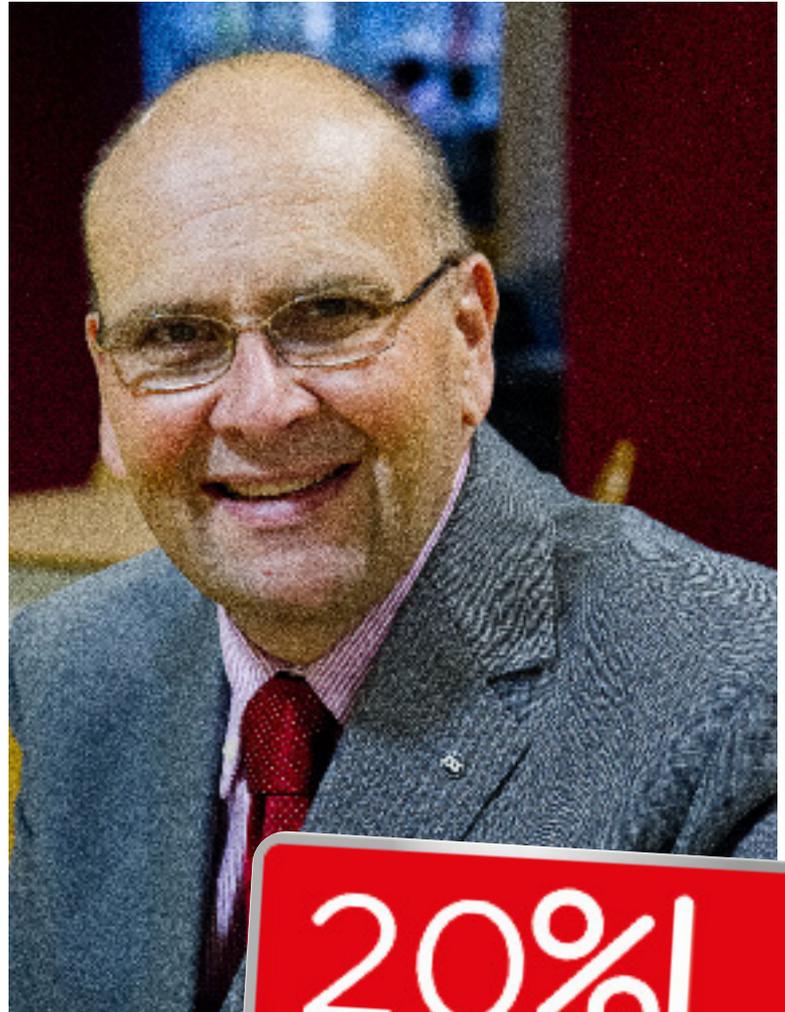
Now that we have our campaign up and running, there are many influential people who have the ability to support it via social media, and we will be direct messaging them asking them to retweet and share the #20percentlessmeat message.

I am thinking of people like Prue Leith and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, who have attended recent public sector catering events. But there are also non-foodies who are vocal on this issue, such as Lewis Hamilton, Paul McCartney, David Attenborough, and even Greta Thunberg.

Launching the #20percentlessmeat campaign is one of my proudest moments, especially knowing that the chairs of all the catering associations and supporters of PSC100 are fully committed to it.

I am sure that some will go beyond the 20% target, and may have already done so. I have already reduced my weekly meat intake by 20% and made diet changes to eat less red meat. I will champion the use of British food and support our great farmers and growers by encouraging public sector buyers to use better quality, locally sourced, traceable and sustainable produce.

If you are a caterer in the public sector I urge you to join us today:
20percentlessmeat.co.uk.



Take your plant-based catering to the next level with Vfl's online care caterer training series

Created by Vfl's team of chefs and nutritionists, this conveniently bite-sized training will help your organisation to take its plant-based catering to the next level.

The British Dietetic Association accredited training features five dedicated modules sharing best practice, and guidance on catering for veg*ns and meat-reducers in your care. Topics include what vegans and vegetarians eat, plant-based nutrition and fortification, meal planning, and how to cook with meat and dairy substitutes. Each module includes easy-to-follow recipe videos with some fantastic, tasty recipes for you to introduce to your menus.

Your team will have access to complete the training at a time that suits them. All that they'll need is a laptop and internet

connection. We know that getting cover in the kitchen for your catering staff can be a challenge, and this online training solves that issue. The full course takes about 2.5 hours to complete but doesn't have to be completed in one go. Once completed, there will be a short test. A certificate will be gained on completion.

So what are you waiting for? [Register](#) for this training to upskill your team, help to future-proof your career, and learn something new today.



Dear V for Life...

We really value the opinions of you, our service users – whether you're a vegan or vegetarian that we've been able to support (even simply, by producing this magazine); a carer looking for advice; or a care caterer interested in training. Below is a snapshot of some recent feedback. Sincere thanks to all who took the time to comment.

CATERER TRAINING

We've been offering a wide range of top-class vegan and vegetarian care catering training for over a decade now, with our programme expanding rapidly over the last 12 months – despite the pandemic. Our UK-wide team of roving chefs continues to adapt, providing experienced and innovative training – at a time when the demand for meat-free increases faster than the sector can keep up.

Feedback from these sessions has been overwhelmingly positive, as one UK List member noted: "Everyone really loved [Chef] Maggie, and the whole experience was great. We've already been having little tasters from what the kitchen staff were shown."

Justina, our Roving Chef (Central), was praised for delivering a cookery demonstration for care home residents and chefs alike: "One of the chefs complimented me for an informative and inspiring demo. She liked the recipes and she said that she would try to make sweet potato pancakes at home. The residents liked the food and said that it was very pleasant to eat and that the chocolate mousse was enjoyable and not over-sweet."

Our cookery demonstrations aren't always aimed at professional chefs. We frequently hold classes for community groups and charities, where people might be interested in learning new skills in later life.

One such place is the Mattie

Carwood Centre, in Glasgow, where participants and organisers alike were very forthcoming with positive feedback:

"The food is so simple and healthy."

"I enjoyed the way that you used budget ingredients to make lovely food."

"Thank you very much – my service users enjoyed the cooking classes, because it was a different activity and was something new. One lady said that it brought back memories of when her family was young."

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN RESOURCES

V for Life's Advocacy & Policy Officer, Yasmine, supported Eve in Scotland who was unable to get groceries delivered to her home during the pandemic, although she is vulnerable. After a few phone calls and Facebook messages with the supermarkets, Eve now has no problem getting deliveries from Sainsbury's and Tesco if she chooses.

Eve said: "Thank you so much for your help! We have a Sainsbury's order booked for Sunday. It's all very thrilling and it's a huge relief."

An Ageing Well Health Improvement Advisor is one of many who complimented VFL's Good grocery shopping guide: "I have just had a quick look. You have some really good resources on your website for getting through this difficult time, which I will share with team members and partners."

MATURE VEGANS AND VEGGIES UK FACEBOOK GROUP

It's great to see our [Mature Vegans and Veggies UK Facebook Group](#) thriving at a time like this, with group membership swelling during lockdown. The group provides a virtual community where older vegans and veggies can get to know each other and start discussions with likeminded people.

One user was full of positive feedback earlier this year: "I have been veggie most of my life and I have been vegan for the past 10ish years. It is really great to be a part of a mature vegan group. It seems to me viewing other groups that there are a lot of young vegans out there – which is brilliant – but I was feeling rather alone (at 63). It's nice to be part of a community."



Have your say: Don't forget that you can submit articles and tell us what you'd like to read about. Our contact details are on [page 2](#).