

eBites

Autumn 2025

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Veg*n lunch clubs

Food, friendship and community



Vegan Masterclasses

Cook with our
professional chefs

Learning from inspection findings

Best practice guides to help care
homes get it right



2 x prizes from K-9 Angels

Fabulous gear from animal lovers' charity

Welcome

In this issue we highlight improvements in caring for vegans and vegetarians (veg*ns) in the care sector. For many, diet is a decades-long commitment and an important part of identity. Recently, inspectors placed a care home into special measures after discovering that a veg*n resident had been served meat. We look at the implications and stress the importance of care homes listening to, and catering properly for, their veg*n residents ([see page 8](#)).

We're also keen to host more lunch and dinner clubs to bring older veg*ns together to share experiences, make friends and enjoy good food. This issue includes recipes from our *Lunch club catering guide* to help you host your own – download it free from our website ([page 7](#)).

Our expert chefs will be running online autumn masterclasses in vegan cookery – a great chance to learn directly from professionals ([page 5](#)).

And we hear from long-term veg*n Rory ([page 4](#)), who shares her journey of going vegan a couple of years ago – perhaps her story will strike a chord with you.

I hope that you enjoy the issue.

Amanda Woodvine
Chief Executive

Amanda

Thank you to all our featured supplier members. Full contact details can be found under the suppliers directory at vegetarianforlife.org.uk



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



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In this issue...

3 VFL UPDATE
Reaching out into the care sector

4 RORY'S STORY
Going vegan later in life

5 VEGAN MASTERCLASSES
Hands-on cookery with our chefs

6 VEGGIE NEWS FROM AROUND THE UK
VfL chefs at large

7 VEG*N LUNCH CLUBS
Food, friendship and community

8 CARE QUALITY COMMISSION
Advice for care homes

Reader exclusive

K-9 Angels is a UK registered charity devoted to rescuing and helping dogs worldwide through rehoming, shelter building, providing vital medical and food support, and spay and neuter campaigns. Run completely by volunteers, K-9 Angels turns stories of neglect and hardship into hope and forever homes. The charity is championed by patrons Sue Barker CBE and Eamonn Holmes OBE. Co-founder Victoria Featherstone Pearce is an advocate for animal rights as well as a proud ambassador for Vegetarian for Life.

K-9 Angels has generously offered TWO tote bags worth £25 each.

For your chance to win, answer the following question:
The co-founders of K-9 Angels were inspired to start

the charity after seeing the story of one abandoned dog. What was the dog's name?

A) Toto B) Angel C) Digby

Email

info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk

with your answer by midday on 31/10/25.

Hint – the answer can be found here:

k-9angels.org/about-us/about-k9-angels

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

WIN!



Reaching out into the care sector

It's been a busy summer for VfL Chief Executive Amanda Woodvine – including addressing audiences at both the Care Show at ExCel London and at the annual Care Home Catering Forum. At both events she emphasised the importance of ensuring that the needs of vegans and vegetarians (veg*ns) are fully recognised in care homes. With the numbers of residents following veg*n diets continuing to grow, Amanda highlighted that this is an area where the sector has great potential to develop further.

VfL's five-yearly survey of 1,000 care homes shows a steady rise in residents following veg*n diets – from one in five a decade ago, to one in three today. Currently, just four care homes in the UK cater exclusively for people who follow veggie diets – demonstrating both how popular this choice is, and how much scope there is to expand provision. “Research suggests that people, including me, are highly unlikely to move more than a few miles for care,” Amanda explains. “And with demand rising, it's clear we need more options available locally.”

On page 8 of this edition, we look at the challenges that can arise if a resident's dietary needs are not fully met. Amanda acknowledges that while many carers do their very best, there can still be situations where residents feel unsupported.

JOHN'S STORY

Amanda recalls John, a long-term vegan with dementia. His care setting naturally differed from his family home, and the vegan options were not always clear at mealtimes. “The main meal might be steak and kidney pie, with no alternative listed on the board outside the dining room,” Amanda says. “The carer was trying to be helpful by narrowing down John's choices to just two, which would be easier for him to retain – would he like the steak and kidney pie, or the vegan moussaka?”

As Amanda explains, for someone with a lifelong vegan commitment, the steak and kidney pie was never going to be a genuine option. “It's a little like being asked to choose between something you can't eat and something unfamiliar,” she says. When offered vegan moussaka, John found the name unfamiliar and off-putting.

Amanda suggests that the situation could have been improved if John had been offered two vegan options instead – for example, something familiar such as a lentil shepherd's pie alongside the moussaka. “That way, his choice would have been both meaningful and manageable,” she explains.

“And when you're used to eating with your family, you can feel isolated if your tablemates are having something different. It's not uncommon to hear of

someone like John then reaching for food from other residents' plates.”

Stories like John's underline the importance of clear communication and choice. “We would love to see more training and awareness, particularly for situations where residents are experiencing issues with capacity or cognition,” Amanda says.

Encouragingly, the sector is already engaging with these issues. Building on VfL's recent success with the Scottish Care Inspectorate, Amanda and her team are now working with the Care Quality Commission to strengthen provision for veg*ns. Being invited to address leading care sector events has been a positive sign that the industry is open to hearing and responding to the needs of older veg*ns.



Memory Care Pledge

Hundreds of care homes have already adopted VfL's Memory Care Pledge, which helps ensure that vegans or vegetarians with capacity issues or cognitive loss continue to be offered meals, drinks and snacks that respect their ethical beliefs.

The pledge supports care homes in delivering the very best for all residents. Its principles include:

- ensuring vegan and vegetarian options are available at mealtimes,
- upholding residents' moral and philosophical commitments,
- and, where preferred, offering the opportunity to dine at vegetarian-only or vegan-only tables.

At VfL, we believe every resident should be able to live the rest of their life in line with their values – and we're delighted to see so many care homes already taking positive steps to make this possible.

Find out more about our [Memory Care Pledge](https://vegetarianforlife.org.uk).



Going vegan later in life

Rory's story

"For me, it's important to support VfL's work so that older vegetarians' and vegans' wishes are respected," says Rory Arnese, who went vegetarian 40 years ago at the age of 24. She turned vegan in the last couple of years and says the biggest challenge she faced was finding a replacement for cheese. Rory adds that when she visits sheltered housing, she struggles to find anything suitable to eat.

Despite a proliferation of vegetarian and vegan restaurants, Rory says choices for veggies can still be limited in regular cafés, pubs and restaurants. "When I turned vegetarian, it was hard," she says. "Over the years vegetarian options have got so much better, but are still normally limited to the same things – jacket potato, veggie burger and now sometimes a veggie curry."

Rory says she went vegan because of the dairy industry's treatment of animals. "I don't want to make decisions for anyone else, but I don't want that on my conscience," she says. Rory adds that the biggest challenge she faced was replacing dairy in her diet. "I failed at being vegan for ages," she says. "There's nothing that replaces real mature cheddar for me. I've had to make the decision that either I want to be vegan or not. And if vegan, then I have to leave out cheese."

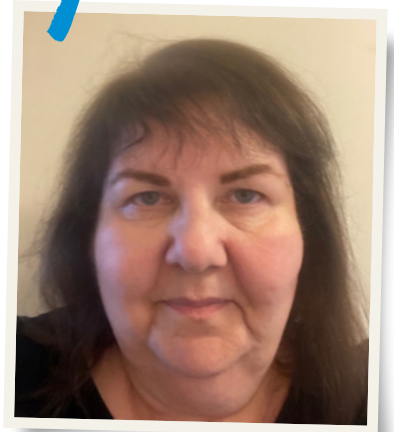
Rory likes to avoid ultra-processed food and cook from scratch. However, she has mobility issues, and finds cooking difficult. "Cooking is a necessity," she explains. "I am not a good cook, even though I have been on cookery courses. I cannot stand for more than a minute without being in agony with my bad back and

knee, although I do have a stool to sit on in the kitchen while I'm chopping vegetables."

Rory says she likes to batch-cook soups, curries and stir-fries (chopping vegetables and freezing them).

For breakfast, she likes overnight oats and smoothies. "I like bread, and you can get plenty that are vegan," she adds. "Spreads and soft cheeses are vegan, as are nut butters."

Rory offers advice for anyone thinking of going vegan later in life. "I'd say be prepared that your dining-out choices will be more limited and very similar in most places," she says. "Sometimes, I take my own filling for a jacket potato, and even my own plant milk in a small flask." She says there are plenty of protein-rich foods to replace cheese, including tofu, tempeh, beans and nuts. Vegans should look for variety, she says, such as overnight oats loaded with milk/yoghurt, nuts or nut butter, chia, hemp and flax seeds, dark berries and a little cinnamon. "A good old stir-fry can contain ten vegetables," she says, "with a nice sauce, plus tofu, tempeh or seitan for protein."



VfL is working hard to raise awareness

However, Rory notes that progress in catering for vegans can sometimes be slow. "I was at a sheltered housing place yesterday to attend a course," she says. "Even though I have asked in the past, there are no vegan options for any meals – even afternoon tea." She adds that she had to take her own sandwiches to be assured a lunch. "VfL is working hard to raise awareness and share resources with providers, but there is still more to do," she says.

Rory concludes: "If it's health you are after, then being vegan is certainly a great option. And if you want to be vegetarian or vegan because you don't want to eat animals, then just do it. It's great for the environment and good for your health."



Master the art of vegan cooking this autumn

Looking to add more plant-based meals to your repertoire? VFL's upcoming Vegan Autumn Cookery Masterclasses are the perfect way to explore fresh, seasonal ingredients while creating delicious, vibrant dishes. Whether you're a seasoned chef or just starting your culinary journey, these hands-on classes will equip you with the skills to impress with the perfect lunch or dinner party.

Each virtual class costs just £30 and lasts 1.5 hours, with only 6 places per session to ensure personalised attention.

Book your place via the V for Life shop: vforlife.org.uk/shop

TOFU MASTERCLASS WITH CHEF ALEX – TRANSFORM YOUR TOFU GAME

Cook along live from your own kitchen – and fall in love with tofu.

Tofu is often underrated, but in the right hands, it becomes savoury, satisfying, and even sweet. Join Chef Alex in this interactive masterclass and discover just how delicious (and versatile) tofu can be.

From crispy satay tofu to indulgent chocolate pots, you'll explore a world of techniques and textures – frying, marinating, blending, baking – all while cooking in real time.

DATE Friday 24 October
TIME 11am

What you'll make:

- Pad Thai with crispy tofu
- Satay tofu with peanut sauce
- Chocolate tofu pots

Why tofu?

Tofu isn't just a meat substitute – it's a powerhouse of plant-based nutrition, used for over 2,000 years. Learn how to shop for it, choose between silken and firm, smoked or sweet, and how to turn it into something truly exciting.

Even if you think you don't like tofu, over more than 20 years of teaching Chef Alex has converted countless doubters.

Questions? Contact

alex@vegetarianforlife.org.uk

Book your place via the V for Life shop: vforlife.org.uk/shop

DECEMBER: VEGAN CHRISTMAS FINGER FOOD & NIBBLES MASTERCLASS WITH CHEF JUSTINA

Bring the joy of festive cooking into your own kitchen. Join Chef Justina in this interactive masterclass and discover how easy it is to create a variety of plant-based finger food and nibbles that look and taste amazing.

From clever flavour combinations to presentation tips, you'll learn techniques that make seasonal treats both fun and impressive – all while cooking along live in real time. This class is suitable for cooks of any level, whether you're a confident chef or simply looking for festive inspiration.

DATE Wednesday 10 December
TIME 11am

Why join?

Step-by-step guidance, hands-on learning, and professional tips will leave you confident and inspired to create your own plant-based festive favourites this Christmas

Questions? Contact justina@vegetarianforlife.org.uk

Book your place via the V for Life shop: vforlife.org.uk/shop



Veggie news from around the UK

As ever, our team of VfL chefs has been out and about across the country – sharing skills, inspiration and plenty of delicious food. Through cookery demonstrations, lunch clubs, presentations and events, we've been showing how easy it is to make meals that are tasty, healthy and full of variety. Here's a flavour of what's been happening recently.

NORTHERN ENGLAND

Healthy food with a local focus

After giving a number of popular healthy cookery classes at Manchester's Platt Hall, chef Alex was invited to an open day at the museum to add some fun with food as well as to promote a healthy diet. The building, which is part of Manchester Art Gallery, is undergoing a period of transformation into a museum with a "hyper-local focus". Alex says he designed the demonstration to broaden the palate. "In many ways, the session is about finding new flavours without the unhealthy stuff," he says. "So there was no deep-frying. Instead, there were lots of fresh herbs and spices, colourful ingredients like peppers and sweet potatoes."



MIDLANDS

New ideas for retirement village

Chef Justina completed a cookery demonstration at a retirement village on the outskirts of Birmingham. The village, which is run by ExtraCare Charitable Trust, contains 180 apartments and houses over 200 people. Justina treated residents to a demonstration of veggie cookery. She cooked [butternut squash macaroni cheese](#), whipped up refreshing [banana and peanut butter milkshake](#) and finished the meal with [hazelnut truffles](#) for dessert.

Justina said: "I've kept these recipes basic; you can add extra ingredients,



such as more vegetables or fruit and change the flavour by adding different spices and herbs." She added that residents could alter the recipes if they tried them in their own kitchens.

SCOTLAND

Housing Association hosts Big Lunch

Residents of Calvary Housing Association in Glasgow's East End enjoyed a veggie meal as part of [The Big Lunch](#)

– a national initiative to bring together neighbours and communities. VfL chef Claire held a cookery demonstration at the Calvary Centre in the Barlanark neighbourhood. "Chef Claire made the cooking demonstration very enjoyable and explained to the audience what she was doing on a step-by-step basis," Calvary Centre manager Eddie Cusick said afterwards. "It was a very enjoyable session and delivered in a way that relaxed and informed participants."



SOUTHERN ENGLAND

Senior Care hands-on experience

VfL chef Ollie hosted a cookery demonstration for Home Instead Senior Care. As part of the demonstration, Ollie invited a couple of volunteers to come up to the front and help knead bread and cook their own flatbreads. Volunteers also made [courgette ribbons on salsa verde](#) from recipes featured in the VfL guide, [Gourmet vegan](#), alongside [pea and lavender soup](#), and a dessert of [vegan chocolate mousse](#).

TRY IT YOURSELF

We hope these stories inspire you to bring more variety into your own meals – whether that's adding extra vegetables, experimenting with herbs and spices, or trying out a new recipe. Small changes can make mealtimes brighter, healthier and more enjoyable.

Do you know of a venue that would benefit from a VfL cookery demonstration or lunch club?
[Contact VfL to discuss.](#)

Veg*n lunch clubs – food, friendship and community

Lunch clubs are about so much more than sharing a meal. They create welcoming spaces where people can meet, talk and build connections – all while enjoying tasty, affordable plant-based food. For some, they are a chance to try new recipes and ingredients; for others, they offer a lifeline against loneliness.

VfL's [Lunch club catering](#) guide supports anyone who wants to start or improve a club – whether you're a volunteer, café owner, or community organiser. Packed with recipe ideas, nutrition tips and practical advice, it shows how easy it can be to offer varied, balanced veg*n menus that bring people together.

SPOTLIGHT: EDINBURGH TURNS ONE

On 8 September, our Edinburgh Vegan Lunch Club celebrated its first anniversary! Thanks to Hendersons and our amazing volunteers, the club has grown into

much more than shared meals. Over the past year it has become a space where friendships flourish, conversations spark and community connections strengthen – helping to ease loneliness one lunch at a time.

By hosting lunches during quieter times of the week, cafés like Hendersons gain extra custom and visibility, while members enjoy a subsidised meal and warm company. "It's a simple idea with a big impact," says VfL Chief Executive, Amanda Woodvine. "Our lunch clubs support independent cafés and restaurants while also giving people a reason to connect, share stories and feel part of something."

Interested in starting a lunch club? Give us a call on 0161 257 0887.

TRY THESE RECIPES

Here are two simple ideas from the Lunch club catering guide – perfect for sharing.



Carrot and bean soup

Serves 8–10

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 4 large leeks, washed, halved lengthways and finely sliced
- 1.4kg/3lb 1oz carrots, chopped
- 2.8 litres vegetable stock
- 8 garlic cloves, finely grated
- 4 x 400g/14oz cans cannellini beans in water
- 1 pack parsley, roughly chopped

1 Heat the oil in a large pan over a medium heat. Add the leeks and carrots, and fry for 5 minutes to soften.

2 Pour over the stock. Stir in the garlic, the beans with their liquid, and three-quarters of the parsley. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until the veg is just tender. Stir in the remaining parsley before serving.

Baked apple crisp

Serves 10

Filling

- 10 large Bramley apples
- 150g/generous 5oz brown sugar
- 3 tsp cinnamon

Topping

- 120g/4¼oz margarine, such as Vitalite
- 50g/1¾oz plain flour
- 100g/3½oz brown sugar
- 100g/3½oz oats

1 Preheat oven to 160°C/315°F/gas mark 2.5.

2 Peel and chop the apples ½ inch thick.

3 In a large bowl, toss the apples in sugar and cinnamon, coating well.

4 Transfer to a large ovenproof dish.

5 In a medium mixing bowl, add all the topping ingredients. Rub together with fingertips until combined. Then pour over the apple mixture.

6 Bake for 45 minutes. Allow to cool slightly before serving.

7 Serve with custard, ice cream or cream.



Learning from inspection findings

When a Staffordshire care home was placed into special measures for list of deficiencies – including failing to respect the diet of a vegetarian resident – it highlighted how important it is for providers to meet residents' dietary needs.

Following the inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the head of adult social care inspection said: "It was concerning that several people had experienced unintended weight loss and no action had been taken to address this which placed them at risk of harm. People's dietary preferences weren't catered for and one person who was a vegetarian had been given meat to eat."

VfL Chief Executive, Amanda Woodvine, and Head of Research and Policy, Moussa Haddad, recently met the CQC to discuss how care providers can strengthen their provision for veg*ns, while protecting residents' philosophical and moral commitments. Amanda explains: "Even if vegans or vegetarians form only a small part of your business at the present time, it's well worth being

aware of how you'll be regulated – and using our best practice guides to make sure you get things right."

VfL and the Scottish Care Inspectorate's publication [Good care for vegetarians and vegans](#) is designed as a self-evaluation tool for both care services and inspectors, offering practical advice to ensure veg*ns receive the support they need. Its recommendations include:

- asking about dietary beliefs at admission – and recording them clearly;
- building these into care and nutrition plans;
- training staff – including agency and kitchen teams – so they understand why this matters;
- offering genuine choice at every meal, not just token options;
- monitoring meals to ensure what residents are served aligns with their plans;
- and using VfL's guidance to benchmark practice.

Amanda notes that vegetarianism and veganism are sometimes seen simply as dietary choices, when in fact they are moral commitments that can be central to a

person's identity. To highlight this, VfL commissioned an All-Party Parliamentary Group inquiry, [Respect for religious and philosophical beliefs while eating in care](#).

"It makes sobering reading," Amanda says. "We would love to see more training and awareness, especially when someone is experiencing issues with capacity or cognition."

With 1,500 care homes affiliated to VfL, Amanda is optimistic. "Most of us would want to be vegan or vegetarian for the rest of our days, but sometimes circumstances make that difficult – that's where we step in," she explains. "Whether it's the training our roving chefs provide for care caterers, or our practical resources on fortification and texture modification, there is so much support available. I absolutely believe people working in the care sector are deeply compassionate – and that, with the right tools, they will get this right."





Ethical Insurance



Working on behalf of older Vegans and Vegetarians

Every policy arranged Through Evergreen Insurance Services

Generates a donation of up to 25% to V for Life

"We offer a wide range of policies that you can check out on our website. You could also call us and one of our team will be on hand to help you find the best policy. Request a free no obligation quote today!"

Dave Gardiner - Managing Director

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