

# eBites

Spring 2025

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

## Vegan Cookery Masterclasses

Join our expert chefs and elevate  
your plant-based cooking skills

## Nutrition and Hydration Week Special Edition

Supporting veg\*ns in care and at home  
with creative meal ideas



**PLUS**  
2 x £50  
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## The Corner Shop Cookery Challenge

How VfL Chefs turned corner shop finds  
into delicious, nutritious meals



# Welcome

It's Nutrition and Hydration Week, and in this issue we highlight some of the challenges faced by older people while they maintain their dietary and philosophical lifestyles as vegans and vegetarians. The care sector also faces the challenge of adapting to an increasing population of residents with dietary requirements, and this may sometimes be a learning curve for many people who work in the sector.

That's why we have included a special feature in this issue to focus on nutrition and hydration for older veg\*ns. Our 30-minute webinar ([page 3](#)) features expert discussion and practical demonstration to understand and meet the needs of vegans and vegetarians in care.

We also report on the challenges faced by 'Margaret', a committed vegan in her 80s, whose story reflects the difficulties of accessing suitable food and social engagement as an older vegan (see [page 4](#)).

Meanwhile, our roving chefs have gone beyond the call of duty to source tasty, nutritious food from their local corner shops on a very tight budget ([page 5](#)). If you would like to meet our chefs, then please check out our Masterclass series to improve your culinary repertoire ([page 7](#)).

I hope that you enjoy the issue.

Amanda Woodvine  
Chief Executive

Amanda

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** **NUTRITION AND HYDRATION WEEK**

Insights on veg\*ns in care + new webinar launch

### **4** **VEG\*NISM IN LATER LIFE**

Challenges faced by older veg\*ns

### **5** **CORNER SHOP COOKERY**

Budget-friendly dishes from VfL chefs

### **6** **RECIPES**

Tasty ideas for Nutrition and Hydration Week

### **7** **COOKERY MASTERCLASSES**

Hands-on sessions with our chefs

### **8** **DEMENTIA AND MENTAL CAPACITY**

Panel discussion on residents' rights

## Reader exclusive

Yaoh is based in Bristol and 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.

The company says it is always working on perfecting its range, which currently includes dehulled hemp seeds, sunblocks, moisturisers, salve, body butters, bubble bath, shampoos and conditioners, shower gels and a range of lip balms too.

Yaoh has generously offered TWO prizes worth £50 each.

For your chance to win, answer the following question:

Yaoh is a regular sponsor of which annual event? A) Glastonbury Festival B) VegfestUK C) The FA Cup Final

Email [info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk](mailto:info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk) with your answer by midday on 30/04/25. Hint – you can find the answer by visiting Yaoh's online shop at [www.yaoh.co.uk](http://www.yaoh.co.uk)

Terms & conditions: To view Yaoh's full range please visit its website: [www.yaoh.co.uk](http://www.yaoh.co.uk). The winners will be drawn at random from all entries received. One entry per household. UK addresses only. There is no cash alternative.

WIN!



# Nutrition and Hydration Week

## (17–23 March)



## A call to action for the care sector

To mark Nutrition and Hydration Week, we are excited to release two new videos on our [YouTube](#) channel, each aimed at supporting different audiences with practical insights for improving nutrition and hydration.

Our first video, **The Corner Shop Cookery Challenge**, is designed to help individuals like Margaret, a long-term vegan in her 80s who faces challenges accessing nutritious, affordable food (see page 4). Margaret relies heavily on her local corner shop, where vegan options are limited and costly. Our roving chefs took on the challenge of preparing a day's worth of healthy meals using only ingredients from a corner shop, with a budget of just £4.50. This video not only offers practical meal ideas for those in similar situations but also raises awareness of food security issues faced by older vegans and vegetarians. Find out more about this challenge on page 5.

The second video is part of our new **webinar series** aimed at the care sector. Once associated mainly with younger generations, plant-based diets are becoming increasingly common among older adults. Research from Swansea University's OMNIPLaNT group, commissioned by VFL, shows that the number of vegans and vegetarians in UK care homes is set to more than double by 2031. This means thousands more people will rely on care homes to meet both their nutritional needs and their ethical choices.

This shift brings a significant responsibility. Legal frameworks such as the Equality Act 2010 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005 reinforce the need to respect dietary preferences, even when a person's ability to express them declines. But beyond legal obligations, this is about dignity, respect, and quality of life. That's why our **Supporting Vegans and Vegetarians in Care** webinar is so valuable. It will explore key aspects of nutrition and hydration for older vegans and vegetarians, offering practical demonstrations and insights into food fortification.

With plant-based diets on the rise in care homes, VFL urges care providers to take proactive steps to improve their provision for veg\*<sup>n</sup> residents. VFL's Chief Executive, Amanda Woodvine, encourages providers to adopt best practices by using resources such as VFL's [Good care for vegetarians and vegans](#) self-evaluation guide. [Staff training](#) is also essential to ensure knowledge of plant-based nutrition, including key nutrients like protein, calcium, and vitamin D. Partnering with plant-based [food suppliers](#) can help expand menu options and enhance meal quality.

Watch our videos for practical tips and inspiring insights into improving nutrition and hydration in care homes and for individuals facing food security challenges.

YouTube: <https://youtube.com/vfluk>

## Don't miss our YouTube Premieres

- Monday 17 March at 5:00pm: **The Corner Shop Cookery Challenge**
- Wednesday 19 March at 11:00am: **Supporting Vegans and Vegetarians in Care**

Watch on [YouTube](#) – subscribe now and set your reminders!



# Margaret's Story – maintaining a vegan diet later in life

Margaret, a committed vegan in her 80s, has encountered challenges in maintaining her plant-based lifestyle because of age-related health issues. Her deteriorating eyesight has made driving to supermarkets with diverse vegan options difficult, limiting her access to preferred foods. She currently relies on a local corner shop, where vegan food is both scarce and expensive. Additionally, rheumatoid arthritis hampers her ability to open jars and tins, complicating meal preparation.

Seeking social engagement, Margaret approached a local lunch club but discovered it didn't offer vegan meals. Although invited to bring her own food, she felt isolated, because she knew no other vegans in her area. Without internet access, Margaret relies on her social worker and TV advertisements for information about meal delivery services. However, most of these services offer few vegan options, which leaves her with limited choices and repetitive meals.

As an independent, long-term vegan in her 80s, Margaret's experience may resonate with fellow veg\*ns and carers alike. Health issues have made cooking difficult, while limited access to affordable, nutritious food compounds the challenge. For many vegans, her sense of isolation will also feel all too familiar. While Margaret's story highlights personal struggles, it also reflects broader, systemic challenges that older vegans and vegetarians often face.

Recognising the challenges faced by individuals like Margaret, VfL has developed several initiatives to support older vegans and vegetarians. One such programme is our [Veggie meals to your door](#) guide – a comprehensive directory that lists UK providers offering vegan and vegetarian meal delivery services, helping individuals find suitable options in their area. The guide is currently being updated for 2025, with new providers and improved listings, so stay tuned for the latest edition.

To promote inclusivity and community among older vegans, VfL has also introduced a [Lunch club catering](#) guide. This resource offers recipes and tips to help lunch clubs incorporate varied, well-balanced vegan and vegetarian options into their menus.

In tandem, VfL's [Roving Chefs](#) have been instrumental in delivering community cookery demonstrations across the UK, collaborating with a diverse range of organisations to promote plant-based cooking. Between them, the chefs have delivered over 600 training sessions to date.

Beyond teaching practical cooking skills, these sessions bring a variety of benefits to the community. "Food is more than just nutrition – it's about sharing memories, social engagement, and breaking the ice for conversations," says VfL Roving Chef Alex, based in the North of England.

Demonstrations allow time for questions and, of course, tasting the prepared food, which adds to the enjoyment. The cookery sessions have had a significant impact, especially among older participants.

Alex tells us: "I've had people approach me after sessions to share how much they enjoyed the experience. It's heartwarming to know that some have even expressed an interest in trying more veg\*n food after seeing how simple and delicious it can be."

To combat loneliness, VfL's [pen-and-phone-pal scheme](#) connects like-minded individuals through letters and phone calls, fostering friendships and a sense of community among older veg\*ns. This initiative has been particularly beneficial for those who may feel isolated because of their dietary choices. Many participants have shared how much they value the scheme, with one saying, "Writing to other like-minded people has been lovely after not knowing any others," while another described their pen pal as "a very loyal person." Others have spoken of the joy of exchanging letters and the hope of forming more connections in the future. One participant summed it up best: "Your scheme is very good indeed, and I have had some nice correspondence with another member."

Through these initiatives and more, we strive to ensure that older veg\*ns like Margaret receive the support and resources needed to maintain their dietary choices and enjoy a fulfilling lifestyle.

To find out more about the many ways you can support our work and help individuals like Margaret, visit [vforlife.org.uk/donate](https://vforlife.org.uk/donate).



# The Corner Shop Cookery Challenge

The VfL Roving Chef Team was recently challenged to create a day's worth of meals using only ingredients from their local corner shops – on a budget of just £4.50. Here's how they got on.

Corner shops are often the primary source of food for those with mobility or access issues, as well as people living in underserved communities. However, relying on a convenience store as the main source of groceries presents challenges, particularly when their shelves are mostly stocked with processed foods that are high in calories, fat, and salt.

Although VfL's Roving Chefs were pleasantly surprised by the range of products available, they found little fresh produce and no affordable vegan meat alternatives or plant-based milks. Even frozen vegetables, they reported, were too costly.

All VfL's chefs had to rethink their meal options, making use of canned beans, tomatoes, and vegetables instead.

"I found very limited choices, inflated prices, and a restricted selection," said Chef Ollie. "I came across some fresh produce, but the choice was limited, and the quality and freshness were certainly not good."

Chef Alex struggled to stay within the £4.50 limit. "Shopping daily rather than weekly meant that many items, such as a bag of rice or frozen peas, would be over budget for an initial purchase," he explained, "but could be used for further meals if you were able to shop for multiple days."

Chef Justina also had to rethink her menu because of the lack of plant-based alternatives within the budget. "I couldn't find any plant-based alternatives at all," she said, "not even plant milks."

VfL's chefs ultimately opted for a hearty bean stew as a rich protein source, which also helped meet the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. However, they admitted to using a few extra store cupboard ingredients to enhance the flavour.

Want to see how they got on? Watch the full challenge on [YouTube!](#)

## Cooking on a budget resources

If you're cooking on a tight budget, you can find a range of helpful recipes in our [Cooking on a budget](#) and [Cooking for one](#) guides.

We also offer resources such as a [Vegan rescue pack](#) and [Veggie meals to your door](#) for additional information and recipe inspiration.

Find our publications here: [vforlife.org.uk/resources/publications](https://vforlife.org.uk/resources/publications)

You can watch the full video where our chefs discuss this challenge on our [YouTube](#) channel.

For further support on accessing fresh produce and store cupboard essentials in the UK:

- [Your Local Pantry](#)
- [Scottish Pantry Network](#)



## Mediterranean bean stew

Serves 2

- 1 tbsp oil
- ½ onion, diced
- ½ 400g can chopped tomatoes
- ½ 400g can chickpeas (drained)
- ½ 400g can butter beans (drained)
- ½ 400g can mixed vegetables (drained)
- 1 tbs tomato purée (store cupboard)
- 1 tsp mixed herbs (store cupboard)
- 1 tsp paprika (store cupboard)
- ½ 300g can potatoes (drained)
- Salt & pepper to taste (store cupboard)

- 1 Heat oil in a medium pan. Fry diced onion until soft.
- 2 Add chopped tomatoes, chickpeas and butter beans. Cook for 5 mins.
- 3 Stir through the mixed vegetables, tomato purée, herbs and paprika. Cook for a further 2 to 3 mins.
- 4 Add potatoes and cook until hot. Avoid stirring too much to prevent potatoes breaking.
- 5 Season to taste.

**Chef's tip** When cooking on a budget, herbs and spices can really transform dishes. Garlic, chilli, mixed herbs and curry spices are great store cupboard items, along with vegetable stock cubes, soy sauce, Henderson's relish, and nutritional yeast to add extra flavour and taste.

# Recipes for Nutrition and Hydration Week

VfL Roving Chefs Claire and Ollie present some easy and delicious recipes to brighten up menus. Each dish offers a tasty way to boost protein while adding variety to everyday meals.



## Fortified jelly protein pots

This recipe is a colourful low-calorie dessert featuring delicious summer berries to satisfy a sweet tooth. Importantly, it combines hydration with a protein boost.

Nutritional information\* (per 100g)  
Energy: 23 kcal | Protein: 4.7g | Carbohydrate: 1.0g | Fat: 0.2g

### Serves 4

- 1 sachet of sugar-free vegan jelly crystals – raspberry or strawberry flavoured
- 568ml/1 pint boiling water (or as per pack instructions)
- 25g clear vegan protein powder
- 80g berries, diced

- 1 Add jelly crystals to a bowl or jug.
- 2 Stir in boiling water to dissolve.
- 3 Stir through protein powder, ensuring there are no lumps.
- 4 Divide between serving glasses.
- 5 Top with berries of your choice, such as raspberries, blueberries or strawberries.
- 6 Chill for 1 hour then place in fridge to fully set.

**Chef's tip:** Add additional calories by topping with whipped plant-based cream. This jelly can also be used in trifle.



## Scrambled tofu

A quick and easy protein-rich breakfast. Add extra calories by fortifying with vegan cream.

Nutritional information\* (per serving)  
Energy: 326 kcal | Protein: 17.2g

### Serves 2

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 tbsp white or gram flour
- 120ml soya cream
- 200g/7oz block tofu, crumbled
- Finely chopped vegetables of choice, such as peppers, mushroom or tomatoes
- ½ tsp dried mixed herbs
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp (or to taste) Dijon mustard
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

- 1 Fry the onion and garlic on a low heat until soft.
- 2 Stir in the flour, followed by the soya cream. Stir well to get rid of lumps, and cook for a minute or two.
- 3 Add the tofu, vegetables, herbs, turmeric and mustard and stir for 5 minutes.
- 4 Serve on vegan buttered toast, topped with fresh or dried herbs, and salt and pepper to taste.

Enjoy these recipes for a nourishing and delicious addition to your Nutrition and Hydration Week!

# Master vegan cooking this spring & summer

Impress your guests with vibrant vegan dishes. Our expert-led **Vegan Cookery Masterclasses** are perfect for building confidence in the kitchen with fresh, seasonal ingredients.

## CLASS DETAILS

- **£30 per class** (1.5 hours)
- **6 places per session** for personalised attention
- **Free goody bag** for the first 25 bookings – includes a printed recipe bundle and a 'Vegan' or 'Vegetarian' enamel pin.



## APRIL

### Easter-Themed Cookalong with Chef Alex

**Mon 15 April | 11.00am**

Create a sumptuous three-course feast with Chef Alex's expert guidance. Gain skills in presentation, organisation, and kitchen efficiency.

## MAY

### Vegan Curry Masterclass with Chef Claire

**Tue 27 May | 2.00pm**

Master spice blends and bold flavours with hands-on tips from Chef Claire.



## JUNE

### Vegan Summer Masterclass with Chef Ollie

**Tue 11 June | 6.00pm**

Enjoy fresh salads, smoky BBQ ideas, and dairy-free frozen treats — perfect for summer gatherings.

Learn directly from professional chefs and gain new skills to elevate your cooking. Book your place now at: [vforlife.org.uk/shop/category/membership-and-training](https://vforlife.org.uk/shop/category/membership-and-training)

# Dementia, mental capacity and the food we eat

Around 70 percent of people in care homes have dementia, making it crucial to understand how we identify and address changes in mental capacity. This January, we held a panel discussion with three experts to explore how diet – and the beliefs behind it – can be respected as mental capacity changes.

Neuroscientist and philosopher Andrea Lavazza shared the story of Oscar, a Swedish care home resident with Alzheimer's disease. Although he received vegan meals at his wife's request, carers mistakenly served him meatballs. Oscar enjoyed them and refused vegetables afterward. Lavazza asked: Had Alzheimer's affected his ability to decide?

Lavazza noted that Alzheimer's can impair moral reasoning and increase cravings for certain foods, like meat. He stressed that case-by-case decisions may be best. Had Oscar made an advanced directive specifying a vegan diet, this would have likely influenced the decision.

Glenda Roberts, Director of Older People's Services for the Salvation Army, highlighted the need for individualised care. She warned that in focusing on practical needs, care staff may overlook personal values such as dietary beliefs, risking distress and loss of identity.

Jenny Henderson, a Mental Health Tribunal Scotland panel member, emphasised that capacity is always decision-specific and must be assessed accordingly. She stressed the importance of exploring different communication methods to understand a resident's wishes fully.

The panel agreed that education is vital, and respecting food preferences is key to preserving autonomy and identity.

Care establishments can take the [Memory Care Pledge](#) – a set of five key actions designed to protect residents' rights and identities if their mental capacity changes. As Chris Bonner, Executive Chef at HC-One, said:

"If we're to cater to our residents and to make ourselves attractive to this growing segment of the market, we're going to have to inform and educate ourselves, and the Memory Care Pledge and the support from Vegetarian for Life is going to continue to

play a huge role in that."

VfL has also partnered with the Care Inspectorate in Scotland to develop guidance on providing [good care for vegetarians and vegans](#), aligned with Health and Social Care Standards. For these resources and more, visit our website.

On a personal level, the most important step you can take is to express your wishes clearly in advance. VfL's [Self-advocacy pack](#) offers practical guidance to ensure your dietary choices are respected should your mental capacity change. Guides for [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#), and [Wales](#) are available for download or purchase from our website.

To explore this topic further, you can watch the panel discussion in full [here](#).

