

# eBites

Winter 2025

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

## A winter treat

Add a splash of colour to the winter months

Win  
stylish  
Votch non-  
leather  
pouches

### PLUS: Winter hydration

Great ideas to stay warm and keep well

VfL awards showcase  
Excellence in Vegetarian  
Care Catering





# Welcome

We hope this issue warms you up with some great ideas for winter. Whether you're enjoying winter festivities, or gearing up for Veganuary, we have recipe ideas, health advice and some fantastic examples of industry excellence.

Our chef Ollie has some top tips on winter hydration ([page 6](#)). During the colder months, it can be easy to forget to drink sufficient fluids. Ollie has some great suggestions to stay warm and feel energised.

We also share some ideas for affordable gifts for someone in your care ([page 8](#)). Or why not treat someone special (or yourself) to one of our vegan cookery masterclasses? Our chefs share their expertise in accessible and friendly live online sessions.

And finally, we give a big shout out to all who attended our [Awards for Excellence in Vegetarian Care Catering ceremony](#) in the Houses of Parliament. It was a great showcase for the sector, and highlighted people who are making a positive difference to the lives of vegans and vegetarians receiving care.

I hope that you enjoy the issue.

Amanda Woodvine  
Chief Executive

Amanda

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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 BEYOND THE PLATE**  
Our awards celebrate excellence in veggie care catering

**5 CARING THROUGH FOOD**  
Get ready for Veganuary with our member spotlight

**6 WINTER HYDRATION**  
Ideas to stay warm and well in cold weather

**7 RECIPES**  
Clementine cake to brighten your day

**8 FESTIVE TREATS AND VEGANUARY IDEAS**  
Simple and affordable gift ideas

## Reader exclusive

Votch is a sustainable brand making stylish cruelty-free vegan accessories and watches. Their elegant and sophisticated essentials pouch is crafted from 100% AppleSkin and has a lining made from recycled plastic bottles. AppleSkin is a bio-based material produced using residual fibres from the apple juice industry, which is turned into a durable leather alternative. The slimline versatile design of the pouch, coupled with its rich textured matte exterior makes it the perfect partner for any occasion.

We have two pouches to give away to two lucky winners (RRP £45). To enter, answer: Votch is the leading vegan watch and accessories brand. What materials does Votch use?

- A) Pineapple, apples
- B) Bamboo, stainless steel
- C) All of the above!

Email your answer to [info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk](mailto:info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk) by midday on 31/01/26.  
Hint – the answer can be found here: [votch.co.uk/pages/our-materials](http://votch.co.uk/pages/our-materials)

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!



# Beyond the plate

## Celebrating excellence in vegetarian care catering

This year's awards went beyond the plate to establish a veggie identity in the care sector.

On a crisp October afternoon, the Jubilee Room at the Houses of Parliament hosted this year's VFL Awards for Excellence in Vegetarian Care Catering. Bringing together caterers, suppliers, sector professionals and advocates, the event celebrated the theme Beyond the Plate – a powerful reminder that food in care settings is about identity, dignity and belief, not just nutrition.

VfL Chief Executive Amanda Woodvine opened the ceremony with moving reflections on the progress made in vegan and vegetarian provision, while emphasising the work still to come. Real-life stories demonstrated how the right meal can uphold a person's values – or erode them when choice is ignored.

Head of Research and Policy Moussa Haddad reinforced the importance of embedding philosophical and religious dietary rights within regulatory frameworks and person-centred care. Award sponsor Neil Duncan-Jordan MP shared a personal message of support, followed by vegan rights campaigner Jordi Casamitjana, whose passionate testimony connected deeply with the audience.

VfL's chefs raised the event's energy and engaged attendees with some fun veggie challenges. Chef Justina Kesterton hosted a lively quiz, Veggie or Not Veggie?, before chef Alex Connell guided a collaborative workshop exploring how excellence in plant-based care looks in practice. Delegates discussed themes from menu planning to memory care, generating ideas and sharing challenges across tables.



### VEGAN/VEGETARIAN CARE/HOSPITAL CATERER OF THE YEAR

Satpal Kambo of Garden City Court, Quantum Care, was this year's winner – she was noted for transforming plant-based dining through resident-led menu development and imaginative dishes that have become weekly highlights.



## CHEFS' HERO PRODUCT AWARD

Veggie staple Marigold Engevita Yeast Flakes was celebrated for its versatility and umami boost in everyday care catering.

## SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR

West Yorkshire-based co-operative, Suma, was recognised for its extensive range of vegetarian and largely vegan products, ethical operations, and sustainability leadership.



Special guests Peter Egan, Heather Mills and Paul Higgins attended the event to lend their support to the movement for compassionate catering in later life. They helped present and accept awards, and recognised achievements across the sector.

This year's theme, Beyond the Plate, was more than a celebration of excellence in care catering – it was a call to action.

Attendees were challenged to move from asking 'why vegetarian care catering?' to 'how do we make excellence consistent?'

Attendees left inspired to return to their care settings with renewed purpose: to ensure that plant-based meals don't simply nourish, but also affirm identity, uphold choice and enhance wellbeing.

Congratulations to all finalists, winners and everyone driving positive change in care catering.



## MOST INNOVATIVE VEGAN/VEGETARIAN RECIPE

Philip Meyer of Avery Healthcare wowed the judges to take this year's award with an inventive but commercially viable butternut squash roll and vegan mousse.



## BEULAH CHARITY TRUST SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD

Maureen Behan of Little Sisters of the Poor received special recognition for more than 30 years of heartfelt service, consistently delivering meals that meet modern dietary needs without losing a homely touch.



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# Caring through food

## Showcasing excellence in vegan and vegetarian provision

Veganuary is a great opportunity for the care sector to reflect on provision for vegan and vegetarian residents. Among the UK's 11,000 care homes for older people, almost one in six are now committed to veggie catering excellence through membership of [VfL's UK List](#). Once signed up, members receive regular expert support, resources and news. Both Basic and Accredited membership options are available – and many core services are completely free.

Across the UK, members are transforming plant-based dining.

**Garden City Court**, part of Quantum Care, has earned national recognition, with Chef Manager Satpal Kambo named VfL's Vegan/Vegetarian Care and Hospital Caterer of 2025. Monthly meetings and tasting sessions ensure menus are shaped collaboratively, while Family and Friends Evenings offer a fully plant-based dining experience.

At **Primrose Bank Care Home**, a dedicated vegetarian champion ensures dietary needs are met and beliefs respected. Operations Manager Nick Dutton says the team has “pledged to keep reviewing our menus, especially around our vegan and vegetarian options to keep them fresh and exciting”.

**Meallmore Limited** supports its chefs through the Academy of Care Kitchen Excellence, where plant-based nutrition and menu design are key modules. Residents take part in demos, themed food days and tasting sessions – a hands-on approach that ensures plant-based dining “isn't just catered for – it's celebrated”, says Group Hospitality Manager Jody Marshall.

VfL also offers [Featured Supplier Membership](#) for UK suppliers committed to our Code of Good Practice. The 'VfL Featured Supplier' logo provides trust and reassurance for care clients, while suppliers gain direct visibility with our care-home community.

## A compassionate start to the year with our Featured Suppliers

Veganuary, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2025, inspires millions to try plant-based living. VfL's own 'Veganuary all-stars' – our Featured Suppliers – help care teams bring compassionate, flavour-packed dining to the people they support.

### Gallo UK

Italy's oldest risotto rice producer offers a rich vegan recipe collection, graded by difficulty. Try roasted pumpkin and gorgonzola-style risotto, mushroom arancini or global-inspired dishes such as Catalan Romesco red rice salad and cauliflower black rice tacos.



### Vegetarian Express

A specialist distributor with more than 1,300 plant-based ingredients, including hard-to-source items and UK-produced staples. Their Seedbank recipe hub offers 400 dishes with nutritional and environmental data.



### Brakes

With a dedicated vegan hub and Veganuary ideas page, Brakes makes it simple to source ready-made vegan savouries, prepared meals, dairy alternatives, bakery items and desserts.



### Bidfood

A long-standing supporter of meat-free creativity, with online guidance, ideas and a dedicated meat-free space for care caterers.



### ProSauce

Pioneers of high-protein plant-based gravy – 12g protein per serving – gluten-free and nutrient-dense for care settings. Free 20-portion sample boxes available through their website.



### Lancashire Sauce

A century-old flavour booster – now in a vegan version – perfect for enhancing Veganuary favourites such as Vegan Spaghetti Bolognese.



## Other Care Catering Suppliers

For full details, please visit our [Suppliers Directory](#).

To find out more about membership options, visit: [vegetarianforlife.org.uk/uk-list/about](https://vegetarianforlife.org.uk/uk-list/about)

**greetwell**  
PURCHASING SOLUTIONS





# Stay warm and hydrated this winter:

## A guide for older vegans and vegetarians



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Credit: wernerimages

It's easy to forget about hydration when it's cold outside – we're often drawn to hot meals and cosy jumpers rather than glasses of water. But staying hydrated is just as important in winter as in summer, especially for older adults.

Staying hydrated helps maintain energy, concentration, and healthy digestion. It also supports supple skin and joints, and keeps you active. And hydration doesn't have to mean endless glasses of cold water – there are plenty of vegan-friendly ways to keep warm and well-hydrated.

Here are a few comforting ideas to help you sip your way through the season.

Plain water is great, but in the colder months, a steaming mug of something soothing can be much more appealing. For instance, you could try herbal teas such as chamomile, peppermint, or rooibos; they're naturally caffeine-free and gentle on the stomach. Fruit infusions made with lemon, orange slices, or perhaps frozen berries steeped in hot water are another great option as are warmed plant milks like oat, almond, or soya milk. You could even add a pinch of cinnamon or ginger for a fragrant winter twist. And who doesn't love a mug of hot chocolate on a chilly afternoon – try making them with fortified plant milk and add a pinch of cinnamon or a drop of vanilla for extra comfort. Fortified plant milks are an excellent source of calcium, vitamin B12, and often iodine, too.

Soups and broths don't just fill you up; they hydrate you too. A hearty vegetable or lentil soup is both warming and nourishing. One of my

favourites is [Hearty Lentil Soup](#) – you can find the recipe on our website.

Try making a big batch of soup and storing it in portions or keeping a flask of hot soup handy for a mid-afternoon pick-me-up. Even clear vegetable broths count towards your fluid intake.

It's easy to think of hydrating foods as summer staples, but winter produce can help too. Fruits such as oranges, pears and apples, and vegetables such as courgettes and squash, all contain water.

Snack on orange segments, add grated apple or slices to porridge, snack on, or stir roasted veg into soups and stews for both hydration and nutrition.

Sometimes the biggest challenge is remembering to drink. Keep a jug of water or herbal tea near your favourite chair, sip something warm with every meal, or set gentle reminders throughout the day.

If you notice darker urine, feel unusually tired, or get mild headaches, these can be early signs that your body needs more fluids.

Hydration isn't just for summer. With a little creativity, your winter drinks can be just as comforting as they are good for you. Whether it's a warming herbal brew, a hearty soup, or that perfect mug of vegan hot chocolate, every sip supports your wellbeing through the colder months.

For more nourishing and hydrating recipes check out the [recipe section](#) on our website.

You might also like these vegan drink topper ideas from NHS Somerset/Patient Webinars.

### FORTIFIED MILK

1 pint of vegan milk + 20g powdered protein = fortified milk

- Pea protein ~ an extra 80kcal & 16g protein
- Soya protein ~ an extra 72kcal & 18g protein
- Rice protein ~ an extra 85kcal & 15.6g protein
- Hemp protein ~ an extra 81kcal & 9.4g protein
- Vegan protein blend ~ an extra 74kcal & 11g protein

Nutritional information per 20g serving. © NHS Somerset/Patient Webinars

### DRINK TOPPERS



Vegan Cream  
25kcal/1tbsp



Peanut Butter  
90kcal/1tbsp



Hot Chocolate  
61kcal/1tbsp



Flaxseed  
76kcal/1tbsp



Vegan Horlicks  
50kcal/1tbsp



Vegan Ice Cream  
160kcal/1tbsp



Golden Syrup  
49kcal/1tbsp



Flavour Syrup  
47kcal/1tbsp

# Clementine cake

This makes an excellent winter dessert. It's very moist; more like a pudding, and excellent with custard. It's gluten-free so it may sink a little, but will still taste great.

Serves 8

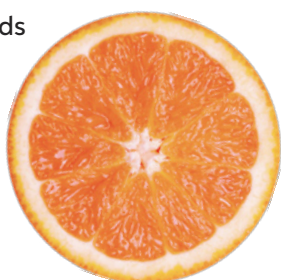
- 500g/18oz unwaxed clementines\*
- 165ml/⅓ pint aquafaba (the liquid from a can of chickpeas)
- 170g/6oz sugar
- 250g/8¾oz ground almonds
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- Pinch fine salt

## Topping

- Two unwaxed clementines\*
- Half an unwaxed lemon
- 50g/1¾oz granulated sugar
- A couple of sprigs of rosemary
- Icing sugar to dust

\*If you can't find unwaxed clementines you can place them in a bowl and pour boiling water over them until they are completely submerged. Leave for 5 minutes before washing in cold water.

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4. Lightly grease a 20cm round baking tin and line with a large single sheet of parchment paper on the base.
- 2 Peel half the clementines and discard the peel. Leave the remaining clementines with the peel intact. Cut all the clementines into quarters. Place all peeled and unpeeled clementines in a food processor, and process for 30 seconds, or until smooth.
- 3 Place the aquafaba and sugar in a large mixing bowl and using an electric beater, beat them for 3–5 minutes. Once the mixture starts to turn white, add the puréed clementines and beat it for another half minute or so.
- 4 Add the ground almond, baking powder, vanilla, and salt and beat the mixture until it's well combined and a smooth batter forms.



5 Pour the batter into the prepared tin and spread evenly. Using an insulating cake strip will allow the middle of the cake to set better.

6 Bake for 50–60 minutes, or until the cake feels firm to the touch. Allow to cool then transfer to a wire rack and let it cool completely.

## For the topping:

- 1 Peel one of the clementines and cut the peel into thin 0.5cm strips.
- 2 Juice the other clementine and the half lemon and pour the juice into a small saucepan with the strips of clementine skin, sugar, and the leaves from the rosemary sprigs.
- 3 Place the saucepan on a high heat, bring it to a boil, and then turn the heat down to the lowest setting and simmer it for about 5 minutes, until all of the sugar is dissolved.
- 4 Using a toothpick, prick holes in the top of the cooled cake and then gently pour the topping over the cake. Dust with icing sugar.

Stored in a sealed container, this moist cake will keep for 3 to 4 days.





# Festive treats and Veganuary ideas for you and your loved ones

If you're looking for gift ideas to treat those you care for (or even yourself) this winter – or gearing up to celebrate Veganuary – check out [vforlife.org.uk/shop](http://vforlife.org.uk/shop) for fabulous and affordable veggie treats.

## Book a VfL Masterclass for yourself or a friend

Join our expert veggie chefs for online interactive Masterclasses. With their accessible and friendly sessions, our learners amaze their friends and liven up their mealtimes. Masterclasses last 1.5 hours and cost £30. Book them through our [online shop](http://vforlife.org.uk/shop).

### TUESDAY 20 JANUARY: COOKING FOR ONE ONLINE MASTERCLASS WITH CHEF ALEX

With the right approach, cooking solo can be satisfying, simple, and full of flavour. Join Chef Alex for this friendly, hands-on, masterclass and learn how to create delicious dishes designed just for one. You'll gain tips on scaling recipes, reinventing leftovers, batch cooking, savvy shopping, and more – all while cooking along in real time.

### WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY: VEGAN NUT CHEESE AND FERMENTATION ONLINE MASTERCLASS WITH CHEF OLLIE

Dive into the world of vegan nut-cheese and fermentation. You'll learn to create delicious vegan nut cheese from scratch as well as essential accompaniments. Ideal for beginners and experienced cooks alike, this masterclass will introduce you to the exciting possibilities of making your own cheese for vegan cuisine.

New masterclasses are added regularly, so do check back.

## Small gift ideas

### VFL BANNER PEN £2 + P&P

A special VfL ball-point pen with a handy double-sided pull-out. The pull-out details some essential information on what is suitable for vegans and vegetarians to eat, and the food groups that should be included in a weekly food plan.

### VFL MUGS £11.99 + P&P

Perfect for that morning cuppa, choose from our range of glossy white mugs, emblazoned with either: 'V for Life', 'The Vegan One' or 'The Vegetarian One'.



## VfL cookery guides and recipe ideas

Our handy and affordable guides are packed with ideas for fantastic recipes. Our range includes:

### VEGAN BAKING (36 PAGE GUIDE) £2 + P&P

Discover how to create a range of tasty vegan bakes – from light, airy sponges, to traditional puddings, and eggless meringue.

### VEGANISING CLASSIC DISHES (32 PAGE GUIDE) £2 + P&P

Fourteen tasty, traditional and classic dishes to inspire those new to vegan catering.

## VfL sets up a stall in an online Christmas Market

We love this initiative from the Charity Excellence Framework – and we're thrilled that VfL's products are featured!

Their Small Charity Christmas Market is full of festive, feel-good gifts from 80+ amazing small charities – from stocking fillers under £1 to presents for friends, family, or colleagues. Every £1 you spend goes directly to the charities you choose – no profit taken. It's a wonderful way to shop consciously and support causes that matter. [Browse their charities](http://vforlife.org.uk/shop).

8 eBites

