

eBites

Summer 2026

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

Summer treats
from our Gourmet
vegan guide

How we're
improving care
for older
veg*ns

FREE
texture-
modified
resources
for care
settings

Combat loneliness through
friendship and connection

WIN Create stunning vegan desserts
with Pretty Pink Potato meringues



Welcome

As summer arrives, we're delighted to bring you an issue focused on connection, community and compassionate care.

This edition coincides with both Loneliness Awareness Week and Care Home Open Week. For Loneliness Awareness Week ([page 4](#)), we're highlighting our Pen- and Phone-Pals Scheme and sharing stories from readers who have found friendship and support through exchanging letters and phone calls. If you've been considering joining, we hope their experiences inspire you to give it a try.

For Care Home Open Week ([page 6](#)), we're opening our own doors to showcase how we're supporting older vegans and vegetarians to live well in later life. Our team shares how we're helping to improve care provision so people can continue living according to their values as they age.

We're also pleased to introduce a new resource: our IDDSI Menu Cards ([page 3](#)), packed with practical advice and simple ideas for boosting protein intake.

Finally, we've selected a [summer recipe](#) from our Gourmet vegan guide that's perfect for sharing with someone special.

I hope you enjoy this 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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for Life** 

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Almond Magnum with salted miso caramel

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



The iddsi Guy Ltd
Dysphagia Training
Provider



Reader exclusive

Created by Pretty Pink Potato, Veringue® is a light, crisp, and delicious plant-based meringue made from organic and non-GMO plant proteins and starches. What makes them especially unusual is that they are made with potatoes. Veringue® makes beautiful desserts – add whipped plant cream and fresh fruit for a beautiful pavlova, Eton mess or your own creation. We have three super 150g bags to give away. To enter, answer:

Why does Pretty Pink Potato use potato protein instead of aquafaba (chickpea water) in its Veringues®?

- a) It makes them bright pink
- b) It leaves little to no aftertaste
- c) It makes a great fruity meringue pudding

Email your answer to

info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk by midday on 31/07/26.

Hint – the answer can be found here:

prettypinkpotato.co.uk/veringue

WIN!



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.

New IDDSI Menu Cards support texture-modified catering

Providing vegan and vegetarian options for people who require texture-modified diets can be a challenge for busy care catering teams. To help, VfL has launched a new set of free [IDDSI Menu Cards](#) developed in partnership with dysphagia specialist Andy Cullum – The iddsi Guy.

Designed for caterers and care professionals, the cards provide practical recipes, presentation ideas and nutritional guidance for every level of the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) framework.

Recipes range from comforting savoury dishes to indulgent desserts, including Borlotti Bean and Dill Pâté, Almond and Vegetable Korma, Moussaka and Vegan Tiramisu.

Organised by month, the cards provide seasonal menu inspiration throughout the year.

Each card includes the relevant IDDSI level, serving suggestions, chef's tips and simple ways to increase protein content – helping teams create meals that are safe, nutritious and enjoyable.

“An IDDSI meal doesn't have to be a blob on a plate. With the right knowledge and resources, care teams can create meals that are safe, nutritious and enjoyable to eat. These menu cards are designed to help make that process easier,” says Andy.

The new resource complements VfL's existing [Vegan texture-modified guide](#), which offers recipes, nutritional advice and practical guidance for supporting vegans

and vegetarians who require texture-modified diets.

Together, the two resources aim to help care providers ensure that people can continue living according to their values while receiving the support they need.

Both resources are free to download from the Vegetarian for Life [website](#).



Expert support for dysphagia care

Andy Cullum – The iddsi Guy has more than 30 years' experience as a care sector chef, trainer and dysphagia specialist. He provides practical guidance and training to help teams implement the IDDSI framework and create safe, appealing meals for people with swallowing difficulties.

Find out more at theiddsiguy.com

See the IDDSI Menu Cards in action

The IDDSI Menu Cards are just one part of the support available from VfL. To accompany the resource, we've created a series of videos showing how some of the recipes were developed and prepared.

The playlist includes behind-the-scenes footage from the creation of the menu cards, demonstrations of selected dishes, guidance on vegan-friendly thickeners, and practical advice on testing foods at IDDSI Levels 4, 5 and 6.

Whether you're new to texture-modified catering or looking to build confidence in applying the IDDSI framework, these videos offer practical tips and techniques that can be used in everyday care catering.

Visit VfL's [YouTube channel](#) and look for our Dysphagia care catering – IDDSI & texture-modified foods playlist.



Beat loneliness and connect with like-minded veg*ns



Loneliness Awareness Week (15–21 June) is a chance to recognise the importance of meaningful connections and the positive impact they can have on our wellbeing.

Loneliness can affect people of all ages, but older people are particularly vulnerable. Life changes such as retirement, bereavement, ill health or reduced mobility can make it harder to stay socially connected. According to The Marmalade Trust, around half a million older people in the UK go 5 or 6 days a week without seeing or speaking to anyone.

For older veg*ns, feelings of isolation can sometimes be compounded by a lack of opportunities to meet people who share their values and experiences. Some are the only vegan or vegetarian in their social circle, while others find it difficult to connect with like-minded people because of health issues or limited mobility.

That's why VfL runs its Pen- and Phone-Pal Scheme.

Open to vegans and vegetarians aged 50 and over across the UK, the scheme helps people connect through letters and phone calls. Some members exchange recipes and gardening tips, others discuss

books, current affairs or everyday life. For many, the simple pleasure of corresponding with someone who understands their outlook can make a real difference.

The scheme is flexible and participant-led. Some people form lasting friendships, while others enjoy the reassurance of knowing there is someone they can contact who shares their interests and values.

If you'd like to connect with other vegans and vegetarians, find out more about joining the Pen- and Phone-Pal Scheme. The scheme is available to VfL supporters aged 50 and over.

[Turn the page](#) to hear from members who have formed friendships and found connection through the scheme.

Interested in joining?

- Open to vegans and vegetarians aged 50+
- Available to VfL supporters
- Updates sent 3–4 times a year
- Visit our [website](#) to find out more



Finding friendship through the Pen- and Phone-Pals Scheme

Three members share their experiences of connecting with like-minded veg*ns through VFL's Pen- and Phone-Pals Scheme.

Cheryl

Cheryl joined the scheme around 5 years ago to meet and exchange letters with other vegans and vegetarians.

"It means a lot not to have to explain yourself and your beliefs to other people," she says.

With restricted mobility making it difficult to get out and about, Cheryl enjoys corresponding with people who share her interests.

"I like to talk about anything really – gardening, or what I'm reading or listening to," she says. "I like to receive physical letters, and it is interesting to see how the conversation develops."

For Cheryl, one of the pleasures of letter-writing is the slower pace.

"Something I like about exchanging letters is that I don't feel pressured to respond instantly," she says. "You can take your time and think about what you have to say."



Jacqueline

Jacqueline and her husband have been vegan for 25 years. Living in an area with few other vegans or vegetarians, she joined the scheme to connect with people who share her values.

"We live in an area where we don't come into contact with other like minds," she says. "When you're a committed vegan or vegetarian, other people sometimes make you feel you have to justify yourself – your beliefs aren't the norm."

Although she expected to use the scheme mainly for telephone conversations, Jacqueline has particularly enjoyed receiving letters from fellow members.

"It's nice to know there's someone else out there who shares the same views, and it's nice to connect with people," she says. "Even if you're not talking about the issues, it's good to have that communication."



Lynette

Lynette, 80, joined the scheme after her daughter encouraged her to sign up.

Today, she exchanges letters with three or four people of a similar age, sharing recipes, news and everyday experiences.

"It's nice to get a written letter, rather than just bills," she says. "I look forward to receiving the latest collection of members."

For Lynette, the scheme offers both companionship and a sense of connection.

"It's nice to know there are people out there who are in the same situation as myself," she says. "Writing letters helps people to think about what they have been doing that week – about the things they can be grateful for."

Visit our [website](https://www.vegetarianforlife.org.uk) to find out more

Opening our doors

A Care Home Open Week special

Care Home Open Week is traditionally a chance for care providers to welcome local communities through their doors and showcase the support they provide every day.

This year, we thought we'd turn that idea around and open the doors on VfL itself.

What does it take to support older vegans and vegetarians to live well in later life? The answer goes far beyond what's on the menu. From working with care homes and suppliers to training chefs, supporting volunteers and developing guidance, our team works every day to help older veg*ns continue living according to their values.

Here is a snapshot of some of the work taking place across VfL and our network of members and partners.

Opening doors in care homes

Food is often central to quality of life in care settings. It's about much more than nutrition alone – meals can provide comfort, familiarity, choice and a sense of identity.

Across the UK, care homes are increasingly recognising the importance of providing high-quality veg*n options as part of their everyday dining experience.

For Jody Marshall, Group Hospitality Manager at Meallmore, inclusion starts with making plant-based meals part of everyday life.

“Every resident should be offered the same level of choice, respect and dignity at mealtimes, regardless of their dietary preferences or lifestyle choices.”

Demand is also changing. Jody has seen growing interest in plant-based options not only from residents but from families and prospective residents as expectations around food continue to evolve. As a result, Meallmore has expanded its approach to include vegan breakfasts, snacks, baking and celebration dining alongside main meals.

Richard Pearshouse, Head of Hospitality at Colten Care, believes creativity is key.

“Be adventurous. Don't assume you can't offer as much variety as meat or fish dishes. Layer the flavours. Vegetarian dishes can be beautiful and colourful.”



Behind every successful menu is a supply chain that works. Chris Dean, Founder and Chief Procurement Officer at Procurement For Care, has seen encouraging changes in recent years, with more care homes viewing veg*n dining as part of their overall food offer rather than a separate category. He believes the best results come when homes focus on familiar, well-loved dishes enhanced through vegetables, pulses, grains and other plant-based ingredients that residents genuinely enjoy eating.



Opening doors in the community

But supporting older veg*ns doesn't begin when someone enters care.

Many people want to remain independent for as long as possible, and VfL's community work aims to help them do just that.

Across the country, VfL's Roving Chefs continue to share practical skills, confidence and inspiration with older people.

In Scotland, Claire Bannerman has recently been teaching older people how to make curry from scratch.

“This reduces the need for takeaways and saves money. It also gives people more independence.”

In the South, Roving Chef Ollie Bragg delivered a Vegan Nut Cheese Masterclass for older vegans and those interested in plant-based cooking. The event combined practical culinary skills with opportunities for social connection.





Meanwhile, in the North, Alex Connell has been preparing to speak to catering students about veg*n cookery and the rewarding opportunities available within the care sector. By encouraging future chefs to think about the importance of catering for people with lifelong dietary commitments, he hopes to help shape the next generation of care catering professionals.

Connection is just as important as practical support. Office Administrator Alison Smith recently coordinated the latest round of VfL's Pen- and Phone-Pals Scheme, helping older veg*ns connect with others who share their values and interests.

As Care Home Open Week coincides with Loneliness Awareness Week, we explore some of their experiences in more depth on [page 4](#).

Our volunteer network also continues to play a vital role. Volunteer Liaison Lisa Buckley has recently been responding to enquiries from people interested in becoming VfL Friends.



Volunteers support the charity in many ways, from helping at events and cookery demonstrations to raising awareness of our services in their local communities.

Meanwhile, VfL continues to hear from older vegans and vegetarians seeking advice and support.

"Some conversations stay with you," says Lisa.

Recent enquiries have included an older vegan struggling to access nutritious food in a remote area, a man thinking ahead about future care options and a woman who told Lisa that calling VfL was the final item on her day's to-do list – and it was only 10am.

"Working for VfL gives me great insight into the worries that older vegans and vegetarians have about going into care."

Supporting people at home is another important part of the picture. This week, Head of Business Support Tom Wise reached out to hundreds of care professionals to raise awareness of VfL's [digital carers resource](#).

The free resource offers practical advice for anyone who shops, cooks or provides care for older veg*ns.

Opening doors to change

Alongside our direct support, we continue to work behind the scenes to help create lasting change across the care sector.

In Scotland, Director Kim Stringer has been reviewing guidance developed jointly by VfL and the Care Inspectorate. The [resource](#) helps care services and inspectors understand what good care for veg*ns looks like in practice.

"Being vegan or vegetarian can be a huge part of someone's identity and more than just a diet," says Kim. "It's important that this is honoured in later life."

For Head of Research and Policy Moussa Haddad, the Scottish guidance demonstrates how policy work can create impact far beyond individual care settings.

"In policy and research, we tend to work a step or two

removed from the direct experience of people in care homes," he says. "By collating individual experiences and studying patterns, we aim to have impact across the whole sector."

VfL's collaboration with the Care Inspectorate in Scotland has helped establish a model that could be replicated elsewhere.

Building on that success, Moussa and VfL's Chief Executive Amanda Woodvine have recently been exploring how similar guidance might be developed in Wales alongside Care Inspectorate Wales and aligned with the country's existing inspection framework.

"Our aim is simple: we want older vegans and vegetarians to be able to live according to their values throughout later life," says Amanda. "By working with care providers, regulators and inspectors, we can help ensure those values are recognised and respected wherever someone receives care."

As protected philosophical beliefs, veganism and vegetarianism deserve the same consideration as other deeply held beliefs. Yet guidance for care providers is not always easy to locate. Developing dedicated guidance in Wales would help ensure residents receive consistent, person-centred support.

VfL has of course continued to support care providers across England. Last month, [UK List](#) members received a factsheet explaining how to meet the Care Quality Commission standards when catering for veg*ns, developed with input from the CQC itself.

These projects may happen away from the spotlight, but they have the potential to influence care experiences for thousands of older people for years to come.



Looking ahead

Whether it's supporting a care home chef, helping someone learn a new recipe, welcoming a new volunteer or working with regulators to improve guidance, the aim remains the same.

We want older veg*ns to be able to live well, remain connected and continue to be recognised for who they are.

Care Home Open Week is about opening doors and building connections. Whether those doors lead into a care home dining room, a community cookery class, a volunteer's living room or a meeting with regulators, every conversation helps move us closer to a future where older veg*ns can age with confidence, dignity and choice.

To support our work, please visit vforlife.org.uk/donate

Summer recipe from Gourmet vegan



Almond Magnum with salted miso caramel

Looking for a special summer treat? This indulgent Almond Magnum with salted miso caramel is taken from Vfl's Gourmet vegan guide. Combining creamy cashews, dark chocolate and a rich miso caramel sauce, it's a dessert that's sure to impress.

Serves 5

- 245g/8½oz coconut cream
- 140g/5oz raw cashew nuts. Soaked overnight or at least 8 hours
- 120ml/4¼fl oz maple syrup/rice malt syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp salt
- 30g/1oz cocoa nibs/vegan dark choc chips

Coating

- 200g/7oz vegan dark chocolate
- 2 tsp coconut oil
- 45g/generous 1½oz chopped almonds

Salted miso caramel sauce

- 215g/7½oz brown sugar
- 240g/8½oz full fat coconut milk
- 2 tbsp white miso paste

- 1 Add the coconut cream, soaked cashews, maple syrup, vanilla extract and salt to a blender then blend until smooth.
- 2 Add the choc chips/cocoa nibs and blend until broken up and combined.
- 3 Pour this chocolate mixture into mini silicon ice cream/Magnum moulds with a stick positioned at the bottom and freeze for 3–4 hours or until completely set.
- 4 Gently melt the chocolate and coconut oil together in a pan. Stir the chopped almonds through.
- 5 Dip the set Magnum bars into the melted chocolate mixture and place on a parchment paper lined tray.
- 6 Put them back in the freezer to set for 10–15 minutes or you are ready to serve.
- 7 Add all the salted miso caramel sauce ingredients to a non-stick saucepan set over high heat.

8 Once the mixture begins to boil, reduce the heat to medium and simmer for 6–10 minutes, whisking it constantly so that nothing sticks to the bottom of the pan. The caramel sauce is ready once it has noticeably thickened and sticks to the back of a spoon; it will also thicken as it cools!

9 Smear onto a plate, plating the magnum slightly next to it. Garnish with strawberries, shards of dark chocolate, and perhaps a bed of chocolate soil.

Notes

Pour the miso caramel sauce mixture into a sealable jar or container and let cool before storing. If the mixture thickens too much in the fridge, simply microwave for 10 seconds or so and stir well to loosen the sauce up.

Magnums inspired by a recipe by Holly Dyson:

[instagram.com/growthegrin](https://www.instagram.com/growthegrin)

Discover Gourmet vegan

This recipe is taken from Gourmet vegan, Vfl's guide to creating attractive, flavourful plant-based meals and memorable dining experiences in care settings.

Featuring recipes, plating techniques and practical advice, the guide shows how creativity and presentation can transform everyday ingredients into dishes that delight the senses and enhance residents' quality of life.

Whether you're looking for menu inspiration or ways to elevate your food presentation, Gourmet vegan offers practical ideas that can be adapted for a range of care settings.

To find out more, purchase a copy or download the PDF, visit our [website](#) or call 0161 257 0887.

