

## Levy: How caterers can go plant-forward all year round this Veganuary

4 years ago



*Insight from Jon Davies, Managing Director, Levy UK + Ireland*

In light of the ambitious pledges made at the COP26 climate conference, it is imperative for businesses to make renewed and meaningful commitments to ethical and sustainable values in order to protect the planet.

As the hospitality industry continues to pursue an eco-friendlier future, Veganuary presents the ideal opportunity to put sustainability at the forefront of the agenda for 2022 and beyond. By promoting and implementing a range of plant-forward initiatives, caterers can make positive contributions to industry-wide sustainability goals while providing customers with delicious, environmentally friendly offerings.

### The Importance of Veganuary

The significant increase in the uptake of plant-based diets is indicative of society's changing attitude towards meat consumption. With the vast majority of caterers now offering at least one meat-free option, vegetarianism and veganism have become part of the norm, and made the all-important cross-over into mainstream dining.

The wide availability of plant-based dishes reflects consumers' growing demand for a diverse range of sustainable options, based on the principles of free, personal choice and responsible consumption. Veganuary is the perfect time for caterers to build upon the significant progress that the industry has already made by developing a plant-forward strategy for the year ahead, as well as creating and promoting exciting new meat-free dishes which expand upon current menu offerings.

The ethical and sustainable principles of Veganuary are valuable and viable causes that food businesses should seek to uphold on a year-round basis. As the market leader, we know that the industry has a clear responsibility to continue to do more to decrease its carbon impact, which is why Levy UK+I has committed to a 50% reduction in beef consumption for 2022, with menus to use a minimum of 80% British seasonal fruits and vegetables.

By getting creative with plant-based meat alternatives, caterers can reduce their reliance on animal protein across menus and promote more sustainable options. When such promotion takes place alongside the championing of local, seasonal produce, we can forge a clear path for the creation of eco-friendly offerings, made from outstanding quality, British ingredients.

### Implementing Change

While many diners have already transitioned to a solely vegan diet, we see reductionism as the most inclusive method of reaching out and encouraging as many customers as possible to make more eco-friendly food choices. For many diners, the concept of consciously considering a reduction in the amount of meat, fish, and dairy they consume is a much less intimidating prospect than removing it. To avoid disheartening diners, small and gradual changes should be celebrated – especially considering that there are considerable benefits to decreasing meat consumption in general.

Compromise is key, which is why Levy UK+I is working in partnership with our sports venues across the country to provide a more modern, sustainable variety of offerings, with 25% of our menus consisting of vegetarian, vegan or plant-based options, alongside more traditional choices with a reduced meat content, such as our Katsu Chicken Burger.

Embodying the idea of reductionism, the burger only uses three to four ounces of chicken, instead of usual six to seven ounces. Our chefs have enhanced the burger by replacing the chicken with locally sourced vegetables and a flavour packed onion bhaji. This has resulted in plant-filled burger that allows our customers to make a positive impact on the environment, without compromising on flavour.

### Supplying Sustainability

To make offerings more eco-friendly, businesses must reassess both manufacturing and supply chain processes, with a view to building a more cohesive and sustainable long-term food strategy. By taking a greater stake in food production and working more closely with manufacturers and suppliers, caterers can ensure they are building menus around products that adhere to the sustainable principles of Veganuary, while working towards demanding environmental targets.

Sustainability works best when it's considered within the wider context of seasonality and local provenance. What this means in practice is that menus will likely need to be consolidated around more locally sourced produce that hasn't been transported thousands of miles from farm to fork. By utilising more British-grown ingredients, caterers can use fresh, seasonal produce to create delicious dishes with lower carbon footprints.

Just as consumers are encouraged to shop locally and support small business, the hospitality industry must lead by example by forging closer relationships with local manufacturers and suppliers. Greater industry-wide collaboration will play an essential role in making eco-friendly food options more readily available, ensuring that the principles of Veganuary are implemented on a year-round, long-term basis.

