

focus on... plant-based

56 New blood

A 6.5% rise in shoppers help add £44.1m to category sales, taking it past the £350m mark

62 Inside the Wicked Kitchen

Tesco's Derek Sarno discusses his mission to make plant-based an everyday choice

60 Retailer ranges

What innovations are the major supermarkets bringing to the plant-based table?



Quick draw

As retailers up their game in plant-based, you have to be quick off the mark to win the battle for this ever-more influential consumer

Rachel Graham

There's no allowing for slow reactions in the world of plant-based. In the past two months alone, two of the big four have launched new ranges, alongside too many branded innovations to mention. For the winner of this quick-fire activity, there's plenty of growth to be had. Sales of meat-free and vegan items have shot up by 14.3% to £352.1m over the past year [Kantar Worldpanel 52 w/e 12 August 2018]. Outside of free-from, that makes it the second fastest-growing category in grocery in percentage terms.

That retailer ranges are spearheading this growth – own label is up 20.3% – is no accident. For this has been the year supermarkets have begun an all-out fight for the plant-based consumer. Tesco launched its 20-strong Wicked Kitchen range in time for Veganuary

(the number of SKUs has since doubled to include cakes, pies and desserts). Sainsbury's has unveiled a number of innovative products from BBQ jackfruit to mushroom-based 'shroomdogs'. Morrisons unveiled a range of frozen ready meals, nut cutlets and veggie burgers in September, shortly followed by the rollout of Asda's plant-based ready meals at the beginning of October.

It's not just the big four, either. Iceland has pushed its No Bull range, most notably including the 'bleeding' burger that became

“Over 90% of vegans felt there was a lack of plant-based snacking products on the market”

its bestselling product of the summer. Just last month, Waitrose debuted 30 own label veggie meals after reporting a 71% increase in sales of vegan and vegetarian products compared with 2017.

Consumer demand shows no sign of slowing. According to the Vegan Society, there were 542,000 vegans in the UK in 2016, representing a 360% increase over the previous 10 years. But it's not just an increase in veganism that's fuelling the plant-based trend. Consumer research by Mintel found 56% of UK adults eat vegetarian or meat-free foods, and 34% have reduced their meat intake, pointing to plenty of growth opportunities with mainstream consumers.

So who's winning the fight for the ever-more influential plant-based consumer? Which retailers have been quickest off the mark? And what will be the tactics for ensuring future growth? ➔



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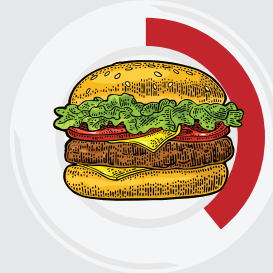
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Plant power: meat-free value sales



Sausages
£53.9m
(▲ 13.3%)



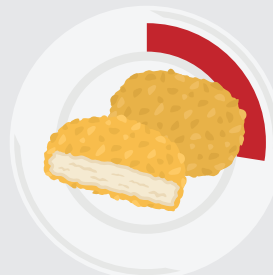
Burgers
£39.2m
(▲ 13.6%)



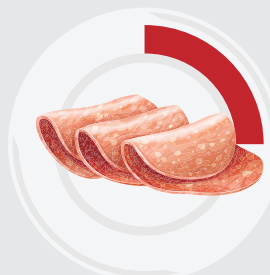
Ready meals
£37.4m
(▲ 22.7%)



Pastry
£32.1m
(▲ 4.2%)



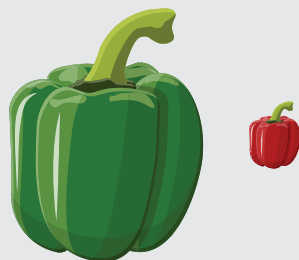
Snacks
£27.7m
(▲ 38.6%)



Deli
25.0m
(▲ 12.4%)

Brands vs own label

Branded
£278.6m
(▲ 12.8%)



Own label
£73.5m
(▲ 20.3%)

Source: Kantar Worldpanel 52 w/e 12 August 2018 For the full data, visit thegrocer.co.uk

- The meat-free market has racked up growth of 14.3%, which has added £44.1m to the category, taking it to £352.1m.
- This growth has been mainly driven by a 6.5% rise in shoppers. Shoppers now make 9.4 trips a year to buy meat-free products.
- The category is also seeing more full-price sales with over 60% of sales made not on promotion – resulting in a 5.1% rise in average prices.
- A sizeable 36.7% of sales were made on promotion.

Temporary price reductions remain the most frequently used promotional tactic, up 2.9%. However, x for y is becoming more important, representing 44% of promoted sales.

- Brands have nearly 55% share, but private label has also contributed to overall growth. Private label's growth is mainly driven by ready meals and meal

centres (non-carbohydrate products that make up the core of meals), which have seen growth of 30.8% and 43.3% respectively.

- Frozen products are still the biggest area in meat-free, with just over 56% share. However, chilled is growing at 20.9% – faster than frozen's 9% growth. **Dilip Dhanjala & Cristina Noriega, Kantar Worldpanel**

KANTAR WORLD PANEL

The take-home snapshot is produced by Kantar Worldpanel. Kantar Worldpanel monitors the grocery retailer take-home purchasing habits of 30,000 demographically representative British households. Call 020 8967 0007 or visit www.kantarworldpanel.com for details

“We’re focusing on the Mediterranean style of eating, which means putting plants first”

⊕ In terms of share, there are two dominant players. Sainsbury's and Tesco jointly account for over half of the meat-free value sales through the supermarkets and discounters, overtrading and dwarfing other players [Kantar Worldpanel 52 w/e 12 August 2018]. They're continuing to press that advantage with value growth of over 15% each.

Battle of ranging

This success is partly linked to the size of their ranges. An analysis of retailer sites by E Fundamentals in September (p59) found Sainsbury's and Tesco had the largest number of vegan SKUs available, aside from Ocado (which hugely overtrades in the meat-free market). It may not be that way for long. Asda and Waitrose are close behind and are rapidly increasing their offerings, meaning there's still everything to play for.

Whoever wants to win that battle will have to pay attention to the quality of their range as much as SKU count. Looking at Kantar data (see left), it's clear some subcategories are growing much faster than others.

One area showing particular promise is vegan snacking, up by nearly 40% or £7.7m. “Research by the Vegan Society identified that over 90% of those following a vegan diet felt there was a lack of plant-based snacking products on the market,” says Nicola Yates, marketing manager at Fry's, whose range includes offerings such as vegan sausage rolls or chicken-style strips. “There has been shift in emphasis from offering a few easy options to genuine interest in new flavours and ingredients, offering a wider and more sophisticated selection of plant-based choices.”

Ready meals are another area that stands out. At a total level, this was the second fastest-growing sub-category by percentage, with a 22.7% rise. The growth was even more apparent in own-label ranges, whose value shot up 30.8% to net an extra £4.3m.

This demand perhaps stems from the fact vegan cuisine is relatively new to UK consumers, who may need a little guidance in putting together an entirely plant-based meal. Alpro UK & Ireland marketing director Vicky Bhattu explains it requires a change in mindset. “The traditional western diet starts with the non-plant element and adds things around it, whereas we're focusing on the Mediterranean style of eating, which means putting plants first,” she says. ⊕



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Energy 1669kJ/ 397kcal	Fat 13g	Saturates 1.3g	Sugars 8.1g	Salt 1.8g
20%	19%	7%	9%	30%

% of your Reference Intake
Typical values per 100g: Energy 915kJ/218kcal

SERVING SUGGESTION



*Source: Nielsen ScanTrack data to 06.10.18

Tough competition: number of vegan options by retailer

● Ocado, Sainsbury's and Tesco had the most choice in this analysis of online offerings, which looked at products that sat in the virtual vegan aisles or were described as vegan. These included vegan burgers, mince, sausages, ready meals and dairy alternatives.

● In terms of user experience, Iceland, Waitrose, Sainsbury's and Ocado all have dedicated vegan pages. However, there is generally an inconsistent use of key terms across retailers and the term 'plant-based' has not been incorporated.

● Retailers including Tesco, Morrisons, Ocado and Asda have introduced format-style language around frozen meat alternatives to allow shoppers to make occasion-based choices (segmenting the category into sausages, burgers, mince and ready meals). However, others

range them all together, meaning shoppers have to look through the whole range. This could mean shoppers turn to the search function to look for a specific products.

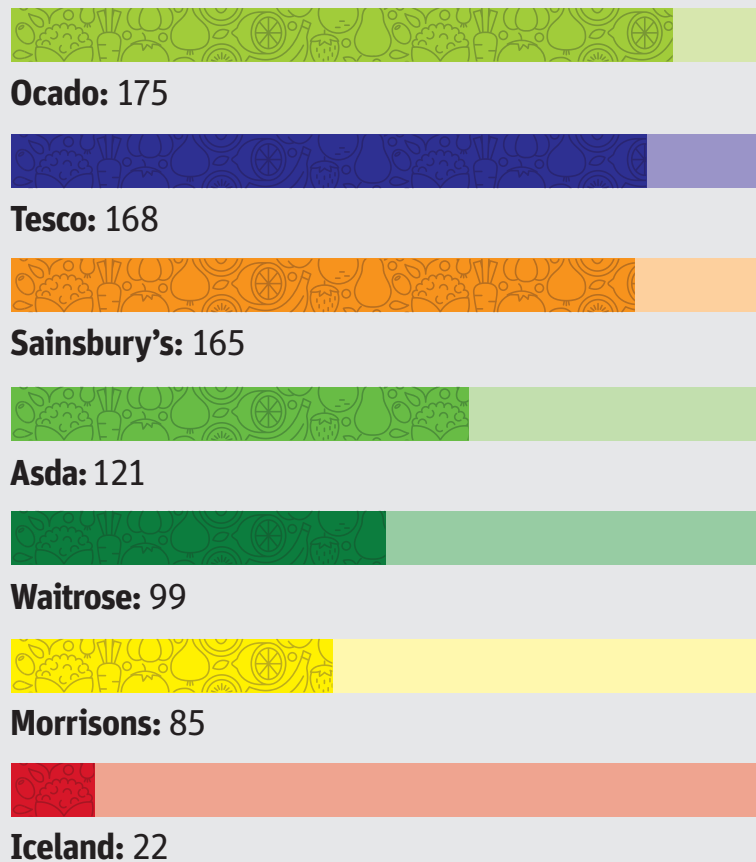
● Searching specifically for vegan products can return irrelevant search results rather than only returning specific results. For example, 35% of results for the term 'vegan mince' were meat-based or contained egg.

● Keeping the category clear is vital, as it can be difficult for novice vegan shoppers to identify vegan products if they aren't clearly marked on pack as vegan, or if the product name does not include the term 'vegan'.

**Helen Thomas,
E Fundamentals**

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Source: E Fundamentals, September 2018

➤ The plant-based boom hasn't just required a change in mindset among consumers, though. Retailers have had to put a huge amount of thought into merchandising. At a first glance there seems to be little strategy from retailer to retailer, or even product to product. Sainsbury's, for example, launched Naturli Plant Based Mince straight into its meat cabinet earlier in the summer, but last month placed The Meatless Farm Co's burgers and mince into meat-free chillers. On the other hand, Waitrose partitions its vegan and vegetarian ranges in specialist sections of the store. As both retailers overtrade in meat-free and vegan sales, you could argue there is no right or wrong answer.

Yet the lack of united strategy could leave consumers confused, warns Tony Watson, director of Meat The Alternative. He'd like to see retailers place plant-based alternatives next to the meats they take inspiration from, to help capture the growing number of consumers who want to reduce their meat intake.

Many of the new wave of meat alternative brands agree. Beyond Meat recommends

retailers merchandise its Beyond Burger alongside standard hamburgers when it makes its debut in Tesco (news of the arrival date is expected next week). After all, at one Californian chain, the Beyond Burger became the bestselling patty in the meat cabinet, outselling beef and turkey burgers, according to executive chair Seth Goldman. Richard Harrison, commercial director at The Meatless Farm Co, adds: "Long term, we'd like to see our products in what would be reclassified as a protein aisle."

It's a view that doesn't sit quite as well with established players such as Quorn. "Our view is that the category needs a home to help people to shop it effectively," says marketing

"Our view is that the category needs a home to help people shop it effectively"

manager Alex Glen. "Almost half of the population are actively trying to reduce their meat intake, so having increased visibility for the space is massively important."

The most loyal plant-based customers also want that visibility. In September, the Vegetarian Society asked its social media followers whether plant-based products should be stocked alongside meat and dairy. The vast majority of respondents – some 78.9% – wanted vegetarian and vegan lines to be kept separate. Sixty per cent said they wouldn't want to visit the meat aisle, while 25.9% wanted to keep veggie food easy to find.

Richard Harrow, partner at private label consultancy IPLC, says there is also the issue of in-store impact. "Putting these products within the normal lineup appeals more to the flexitarian, which is the larger market," he says. "But when Iceland brought out its No Bull range, it did so with great authority by putting a six-foot cabinet of vegan products together – you can't miss it.

"Now, compare that with Tesco's Wicked Kitchen range, and you could be ➤

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Tesco

Flagship range: Wicked Kitchen
Launched: January 2018

Tesco's flagship vegan range was co-created by brothers Chad and Derek Sarno – the latter of whom became Tesco's director of plant-based innovation in 2017 (p62). Launched to coincide with Veganuary, the range initially comprised 20 ready meals, pizzas, salads and on-the-go sandwiches and wraps. A further 26 SKUs will be added to the lineup before Christmas, including cakes, pies and desserts.



Sainsbury's

Flagship range: Love Your Veg
Launched: June 2018

This vegetarian range launched back in June to complement Sainsbury's flexitarian Love Meat & Veg range. It saw a host of the supermarket's previously vegetarian SKUs reformulated to become vegan, including its 'next-generation' shroomdog duo, thereby boosting its vegan range by 10%.

Asda

Flagship range: Vegetarian
Launched: Spring 2017

Last month, Asda extended its Vegetarian range to include a number of chilled own-label vegetarian and vegan options. The ready meals and meat alternatives set the pace for another raft of NPD due in the new year. The retailer also has added to its food-to-go staples with a vegan Bubble & Squeak Sandwich in time for Christmas.

Morrisons

Flagship range: V Taste
Launched: September 2018

Morrisons' frozen vegan range is the start of a wider push in response to customer demand for more vegan options. The V Taste range made its debut in September, featuring a Coconut Katsu Curry Melt, Quarter Pounders and Sweet Potato Nut Cutlets, while future innovations are set to include a range of dairy-free cheese alternatives.

“The key challenge is finding the right formula built around taste and health”

↳ hard-pressed to find them in store unless you know what you're looking for as they often sit alongside other ready meals.”

Alongside merchandising, there is another pressing question for both retailers and brands to answer: consumer scrutiny. Despite the trend for 'dirty vegan' (p65), most shoppers are reducing meat to improve their health, the environment and animal welfare. Yet not all plant-based products will achieve these aims. A recent Action on Salt exposé on heavily processed meat alternatives found high salt levels. There is also growing scepticism over the environmental impact of soya farming, historically the main ingredient in meat substitutes.

“It's a similar trend to what we see in the gluten-free space – just removing gluten or meat isn't enough – people want the overall health profile of the product to be boosted, not simply replacing gluten or meat with processed fillers,” explains Nick Croft-Simon, co-founder and director of the White Rabbit Pizza Co.

“If the nutritional benefits of a plant-based meat substitute are there, consumers will opt for it, but the key challenge is finding the right formula built around taste and compelling health credentials.”

That means there may be a lot more interest in veg-based propositions, rather than meat alternatives with a long list of ingredients. “There is certainly a lot of interest in other proteins, like peas, which we're looking into ourselves,” adds Meat The Alternative's Watson. “It's not an allergen, but as an ingredient, it's significantly more expensive and unlike soy, doesn't deliver all nine essential amino acids you'd get from meat.”

Meat brands shake up the establishment

Even meat brands are getting involved. Yorkshire sausage maker Heck recently converted its old production plant into a vegan-friendly factory where it is producing a new range of veggie bangers filled with wholesome ingredients such as quinoa, spinach, cauliflower and green lentils.

This rise of these veg-based alternatives may explain why the typically more processed subcategory Kantar refers to as 'ingredients' – featuring the likes of tofu and Quorn minces – was one of just two in volume decline. (Although premiumisation kept it in healthy value growth of 6.9% to £73m.) ↻



Paul, Founder



Turns out my Mum was right, we need to eat more veg

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*Shopmium Online Consumer Panel 2018 **Nectar data from Self Serve vs average Sainsbury's shopper 26w/e 13.10.18





Derek Sarno: secrets of a plant-based guru

The man behind Tesco's Wicked Kitchen range, Derek Sarno, joined the retail giant in 2017 as executive chef and director of plant-based innovation. He describes himself as a plant-pusher, mushroom enthusiast and squirrel whisperer (he raised one when he lived in Portland, Oregon). We caught up with him on the thinking behind his plant-based cuisine.

What's your goal at Tesco?

When Tesco approached me for this, I told them straight that they were behind in plant-based and if I joined, I wanted to bring them to the absolute forefront. Now that I'm here, it's amazing how well the Wicked Kitchen range

has done – it sold more than four million units in its first 33 weeks on shelves and sales of plant-based are up by a quarter compared with last year. I also travel to find the newest and best innovations in plant-based cooking from around the world and bring them over.

Why didn't the initial Wicked Kitchen lineup contain any meat alternatives?

I'm not opposed to alternative proteins, like you can see in the Italian



Style Cold Cuts Sub we launched this week. But for the first round of launches, I wanted to prove that you can do vegan without those kinds of things.

What is your favourite ingredient?

Mushrooms. By far. They feed off decay, they can grow in pretty much any condition. They're so versatile and easy to cook like meat. Seriously, there's a great TED Talk about mushrooms I'd recommend everyone to watch.

What's next on the horizon?

For the moment, we're busy launching the new wave of Wicked Kitchen products. But there won't be much downtime. Along with my brother Chad, I'm launching Good Catch, which we think is going to be the best alternative to fish out there. We also run our Wicked Healthy website and recently wrote a cookbook.

"It's an easy switch to make ... reducing meat intake without making seismic change"

Quorn isn't particularly worried for now. "Traditionally, new customers come in through mince and ingredients," says Glen. "It's an easy switch to make in everyday favourites like spag bols, lasagnes or chillis, reducing meat intake without making a seismic change."

However, the brand is keen to keep abreast of latest developments. In July, Quorn announced a £7m NPD investment drive that will see its range extended to include family favourites such as a vegan battered fish product, set for launch in spring. The R&D will see the brand "lead innovation in the category and truly invest behind it to drive scale", says Glen.

It has also entered a new aisle by striking a deal with Dr Oetker to top the pizza giant's Ristorante range with its Vegetarian Chicken and Vegetarian Bacon. It marks just one of the many plant-based pizza innovations of late. Swedish brand Oumph brought its vegan pizza to the UK in September, having collaborated with Greek cheese alternative brand Violife to ensure the perfect topping. Meanwhile, Linda McCartney's, Magioni, White Rabbit Pizza Co and Kirstys have all launched products in recent months.

This innovation shows how quickly the market is moving in branded, as well as in retailer lines. Brands like Oumph, Vivera and Naturli were yet to launch in 2017. Homegrown lines such as The Meatless Farm Co and Feed Me Vegan (created by Lucy Watson of Made In Chelsea fame) have touched down in the mults as recently as October, while frozen stalwart Fry's forayed into chilled with an ambitious new lineup.

Arguably, this level of activity is necessary to compete with the retailers' razor-sharp focus on plant-based. Although there appears plenty of growth to go around, IPLC's Harrow warns there could be some casualties as the market grows. "As retailers develop their own label ranges, tertiary brands might start to disappear," he says. "Unless they offer something really different, I can't see them surviving when the competition hots up."

And, as another Veganuary looms on the horizon, this competition is certainly set to get hotter. Considering more than 78,000 Brits took part in this year's, the next event could be big business – and Asda and Morrisons are among those promising some timely NPD. Get ready for another quick draw.



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*Source: The Grocer Britain's Biggest Brands 2018 report, (based on brands ranked in the Top 50).

*¹ Euromonitor. *² IRI & Kantar 52 w/e 21st July 2018. *³ Kantar 2017.

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66 Going mainstream

How vegan fish & chips and smoked salmon are going down at the Greene King pub chain

66 Animal-free alternatives

An egg, an Ogg and some fish-free tuna feature in our lineup of vegan innovations

68 Sweet and savoury luxury

The restaurants, vans and shacks taking indulgent vegan fast food across the country



Dirty vegan

Greasy kebabs, fried 'chicken' and decadent doughnuts: the new wave of vegan food is as far away from virtuous as you can get

Angelina Mason

Think of veganism and a big juicy burger piled high with ketchup, cheese and onion rings probably isn't what comes to mind. After all, this is the lifestyle embraced by many a celeb for health reasons. Yet in new wave eateries such as Biff's Jack Shack, whose 'big flavour' burger is pictured above, vegan is getting dirty.

From crispy fried 'chicken' to fresh doughnuts, these products are about as far away from clean eating as you can get. The ethos is clear: just because consumers are increasingly concerned about welfare and sustainability doesn't mean they want to spend the rest of their lives chomping on carrot sticks.

So food trucks, restaurants and pop-up eateries are pushing boundaries with delicacies that would make even a dedicated meat-eater

drool. It may be niche and largely London-based for now, but it isn't likely to stay that way for long. In the world of vegan, out-of-home has proved a strong influence on what's being sold in the supermarkets. So how are the latest innovations shaping what we see on the shelves?

Classic British dishes are at the forefront of much of this new-wave vegan cuisine. Take London-based pie shop Young Vegans, for example. "We specialise in British comfort food with a vegan twist," explains founder

"The point is showing vegan food can be as tasty as traditional meat-based dishes"

Marco Casadei. "The whole point is showing vegan food can be as tasty as traditional meat-based dishes and I think we are proving this with every pie sold."

The proof does appear to be in the pie. Amid growing demand, Young Vegans is looking to expand "to several new sites in London and major cities in the UK". Casadei also intends to develop its online shop selling frozen pies.

Mimicking classic flavours such as steak & ale and chicken parmigiana, the pies mainly use "mock meat" seitan as a base, made from wheat gluten by the shop itself. Although the ingredient remains largely absent from mainstream supermarket aisles, it is hot property in the out-of-home arena. "Seitan is a massive favourite for mock meats," says Casadei. "Most restaurants in London use it."

Fish and chips is another classic dish getting the plant-based treatment. Vegan fast food chain By Chloe (p68) used tofu to

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Good Catch Fish-free Tuna

Launching: January 2019 **Manufacturer:** Good Catch Foods

The man behind Tesco's Wicked Kitchen range, Derek Sarno, is bringing a new venture to market with his brother Chad. Working alongside eco entrepreneur Marci Zaroff, the duo created seafood startup Good Catch, whose fish-free tuna is set to launch online in January. The "six-bean protein blend", which uses algae oil for seafood flavour, will be produced both in the US and the UK, and will first be available from Thrive Market and Fresh Direct.



Just Egg

Launching: 2019
Manufacturer: Just

The mention of mung beans might not leave the mouth watering, but US food tech company Just has used them to create a product that it says "tastes and cooks just like a conventional chicken egg". Already available from US grocery stores, Just Egg could be making its way to the UK next year through distributor Eurovo Group.



Loma Linda Meal Solutions

Launching: 2019
Manufacturer: Atlantic Natural Foods

Loma Linda is launching its vegan Meal Solutions range at the start of next year in a bid "to disrupt the ambient convenience food category". The microwaveable meals are "globally" inspired with six recipes on offer (rsp: £2.99/284g). Gluten-free and containing up to 9.8g of protein per serving, they certainly tick a few boxes.



Alternative OGGs

Launching: 2019
Manufacturer: Alternative Foods

Long used by vegan bakers, aquafaba (or chickpea water) could soon be sold under this brand as an egg replacement. Though the price of the product has not yet been finalised, the liquid formula "is expected to retail for around £2.40", or as "equally priced to six free-range eggs as possible" says founder Hannah Carter.

"Being vegan doesn't have to be boring or mean foregoing fantastic food"

➤ create its own version of the dish when arriving in the UK earlier this year. London-based Sutton & Sons used banana blossom and samphire to create its version, fried in crispy batter. After trialling a variety of options for Veganuary, it went on to open the capital's first vegan fish & chip shop in Hackney.

Hitting the mainstream

These are admittedly niche businesses, but vegan seafood is starting to hit the mainstream. For proof, look no further than Greene King, which has over 2,900 pubs, restaurants and hotels to its name. In June, it introduced a variety of vegan options including fish & chips, tuna pâté and smoked salmon. Greene King says the range from vegan supplier VBites, produced from a mixture of plant-based ingredients including konjac flour, "offers truly revolutionary alternatives to real fish that look and taste the same".

Considering VBites already has listings in Ocado, it's easy to see how these dishes could translate to the supermarket aisles. In fact, Quorn is already busy preparing a vegan fish product. And a tuna substitute is among the many innovative new products lined up for next year (see left).

Other propositions, however, seem very much rooted in out-of-home culture. Take plant-based kebab shop What the Pitta, which is putting a vegan twist on post-pub grub. Its meat-free doner kebabs with spiced soya pieces have gained such a loyal following in London that it's now looking to expand beyond the capital, with a fourth site set to open in Brighton by the end of the year.

"Demand for grab-and-go food is booming but it's no longer enough just to be fast," says co-founder Cem Yildiz. "It's got to taste amazing too. Any business can add a vegan item to their menu, but veganism is at our core."

This business is clearly aimed at late-night revellers, but even this trend has potential in the supermarkets. Waitrose, for example, is already selling the Vivera Veggie Shawarma Kebab, made from rehydrated soy protein.

The retailer is also ahead of the game with another piece of NPDP: a vegan jackfruit taco, set to arrive in stores in time for Christmas. For it's not all about indulgent British items – world food is another emerging area for vegan cuisine. At the forefront of the movement is Club Mexicana, which serves its ➤

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Stem & Glory

Opened: October 2016 **Location:** Cambridge

Vegan restaurant Stem & Glory will be opening its third location in January 2019 after smashing its crowdfunding target earlier in the year. With £600k in the bank, founder Louise Palmer-Masterton is bringing the Cambridge-based concept to the capital for the first time. Dishes include luxury gluten-free lasagne for the adults, and coconut and cauliflower curry for the kids (a far cry from the usual chicken nuggets and chips). A new menu will be created for Londoners to enjoy next year.



The Spotless Leopard

Opened: 2012
Location: Bristol

If its barbecue pulled jackfruit wrap or shepherd's pie with Marmite gravy aren't tempting enough, The Spotless Leopard has plenty of sweet options on show. Sticky toffee cake and cinnamon rolls adorn the menu of the truck, which has been roaming Bristol since 2012, becoming "the first full vegan place" in the city, says founder Louise Abel.



By Chloe

Opened: February 2018
Location: London

By Chloe seems keen to make an impact since coming to the UK this year. Just last month, the vegan fast food chain launched its range of cannabis-infused desserts in London, including a 'Chocolatey Leafy Brownie', with a decorative fondant marijuana-shaped leaf. Even dogs can enjoy a CBD-infused peanut butter bone.



Biff's Jack Shack

Opened: May 2017
Location: London

The Samuel Hell Jackson and Dirtbag Melt might sound like band names, but these are two of the meals on offer at edgy vegan fast food joint Biff's Jack Shack. Abolishing any notion that a vegan diet has to be 'clean', co-founder Christa Bloom says it hosted "the UK's first vegan wing eating competition" with its "jackfruit wingz".

"Veganism is growing in popularity but vegans can struggle to find decadent sweet treats"

Own vegan twist on Mexican dishes, from deep fried avocados to baja 'tofish' (tofu fish) tacos. "I set up Club Mexicana to show people that being vegan doesn't have to be boring or mean foregoing fantastic food," says founder Meriel Armitage.

Then there are vegan desserts. Byron Burger has started to sell its own vegan brownie freakshake. The Canvas Café in London has become renowned for its vegan freakshakes using alternative milks such as soy and oat, with flavours ranging from Oreo to peanut butter. "Veganism is growing in popularity, but vegans can struggle to find decadent sweet treats," says owner Ruth Rogers. That is already changing with developments such as the expansion of Tesco's Wicked Kitchen range to include sweet treats such as a pineapple dream cake and red velvet brownie.

The demand is certainly there, if Crosstown Doughnuts is anything to go by. "We started serving vegan doughnuts last May, initially with just a couple of flavours on select days," says co-founder JP Then. "They were such a success we had to work into our processes how we could hand-make them every day."

Crosstown has since opened a vegan store in Marylebone where customers can choose from nine mouthwatering flavours such as Rum & Pineapple or Chocolate Truffle, which use "a combination of coconut butter and chia seeds alongside premium plant-based milks" at no extra cost to standard doughnuts.

Christa Bloom, founder of Biff's Jack Shack (see left) says selling vegan options at a "similar price point" to their meaty counterparts is important. "On every level except from the product not being made from meat, we want to be equal to meat. That means we need to give the same speed of service, the same dining experience and the same pricing."

The message is clear: just because you're vegan, it doesn't mean you have to miss out. Founder of the newly opened Plant-based Supermarket in east London, Harry El Araby, believes this wider approach to veganism – with just as much option to be healthy as well as unhealthy – will start translating to the major mults. There "will be a shift in the big supermarkets to supply mock meats and various other highly processed products" he says.

So the plant-based movement may be about to get a lot less virtuous and a lot more experimental. Bring on the dirty vegan.

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