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INDUSTRY WEEKLY DIGEST

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management

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VEGANUARY

With global sign-ups to '[Veganuary](#)' topping **540,000** so far this month - the fast growing popularity of this annual month-long event seemed like an appropriate topic for the first issue of our Industry Digest for 2021.

Indeed, with [The Vegan Society](#) claiming that over 1% of the population of Great Britain is vegan and a further 1 in 5 would consider being so, [Mark Ashton](#) explores how the food service sector is innovating its offering to complement this growing demand.

Have a great weekend!



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PLANT-BASED INNOVATION IN THE FOOD SERVICE SECTOR

MARK ASHTON

Given the multiple **determinants** of people's choice to become vegan: the animals; their own health; and the environment; some also suggest **COVID-19** may be a further driver. The powerful **statistics** listed by **The Vegan Society** exemplify the opportunity to target both official vegans and a growing number of flexitarian consumers, and are ignored at food service providers' peril. Indeed, the exponential rise in searches (and orders) for vegan food on **Deliveroo** in the first week of this month, along with widespread **coverage** (and **advice**) in the trade press, and the launch of the first **plant-based training programme for Chefs**, spell out the business case for capitalising on this market.

High profile examples of restaurant groups expanding their focus on plant-based menu options are plentiful, ranging from **Burger King**, recently announcing a re-brand with a new logo, modern design and cleaner food (including plant-based menu items) to **Wagamama**, who has vowed to make 50% of its main menu meat-free by the end of 2021, in a bid to tackle climate change, and launched a trial to remove red meat from its test kitchen restaurant. Similarly, **Itsu** has launched a new vegan offer as it also strives to make 50% of its menu plant-based with plans to continuing adding further vegan dishes throughout 2021. Other brands, including **Frankie & Benny's**, **Iberica** and **Chiquito**, have also added to their vegan offerings.



MOST INSTAGRAMABLE VEGANS:

[15 Instagram accounts to help you through Veganuary and beyond](#)

Beyond menu item development, Veganuary appears to continue to fuel a hot bed of restaurant innovation (as we saw with COVID-19 back in Industry Digest 0102), with brands diversifying their offers across multiple channels. Whilst **Veggie Pret** (in the form of a brand extension through physical stores) may already be in consumers' minds from the past year, **Leon** has this month launched a vegan subscription and burger at-home kit in partnership with **Meatless Farm**, in a bid to help people eat more plants this January - the new monthly subscription service (priced at £6) will give guests 30% off every vegan menu item in Leon restaurants nationwide; **The Acai Girls** launched its second dark kitchen in the space of six months with a Veganuary menu now available to a south west London audience and other **brands** expand their offer through retail on the supermarket shelves. With the apparent plethora of new products now available through omni procurement channels, the days of a lack of choice for vegan consumers are hopefully now firmly behind us!

Follow **#restaurantinnovation** further examples of contemporary innovation in the food service sector.