

# MAKE VEG A STAR *not a side*

*this isn't about vegetarianism or veganism  
it's about a changing mainstream*

Many chefs, and a growing number of diners, recognise that a culinary culture in which meat, fish, and dairy are the focus of the plate is bad for the planet and our health. In response, lots of restaurants are creating delicious dishes which make plant protein and vegetables the 'stars' of the show.

Many would argue that an element of animal protein in a dish is absolutely acceptable, and we agree, but how much of it do we really need? And how can you help people put veg and plant proteins at the centre of their plates?

## FLEX YOUR MENU

Identify opportunities on your menu to increase and improve your offer for people looking to eat more plant-based meals:

- **Remove or reduce meat in a few dishes**, (especially those where it was not the centrepiece to begin with). Recommended daily portions range from 70-130 grams, depending on the type of animal protein (including fish) you're serving. In general we are eating far more than we need.
- **Experiment with more plant protein in your dishes**, and feature more flexitarian or semi-vegetarian dishes on the menu.
- **Add new and exciting veg-led options to your menu**. There are many creative opportunities to not only increase but also improve the veg and plant protein offers on your menu.

## VEG REIMAGINED

Once you have aced your offer you can try different approaches to increase people's curiosity. Our members have used a variety of methods to do this:

- Serve only meat-free starters or support meat-free initiatives, such as Meat-Free Mondays.
- Set goals to increase your veg and plant offer. Increasing the amount of veggie dishes or the amount of veg and plants in each dish.
- Make sure vegetarians always have at least 2 choices of mains.
- Make meat an addition to veg-led plates.
- Promote vegetarian and/or vegan daily specials.
- Tell the story behind the menu; showcase local suppliers, promote sustainable innovation, praise good practice and high standards. Share a story with your customers. Let them know they are part of the positive change and that every bite makes a difference.

## MAKE VEG A STAR: TOP TIPS

### *Choice*

- Start by choosing your veg and/or plant protein. Decide whether your dish will be based on fava beans, carrots, peas, haricot beans etc.
- Choose good quality sustainable produce the same way you would for a beef, pork, or chicken dish.
- Choose your vegetable based on seasonality/locality. If you are looking to impress, perhaps look for interesting heritage varieties (carrots for example can also be found in red, white, purple and yellow varieties each with different flavour profiles and appearance).

### *Flavour*

- Work with different techniques to harness the potential of umami flavours.
- Use spices to enhance the natural flavour profile of your veg and plants.
- Work with textures to help make your veg and plants more interesting. Try various cooking techniques such as BBQ, grilled or cooked over a fire, smoked, roasted, steamed, poached, pureed etc.

### *Presentation*

- Rethink your plate-scapes. Meat tends to sit at the top of the food hierarchy in terms of people's perceived value on food. It is often the centrepiece in plating presentation. If you want to change that perception, you have to change the way veg and plants are presented.
- Think about the visual opportunities with veg and plants; using various colours, showing depth through textures and garnishes (even use emulsions to raise the complexity and skill behind the dish, if that suits your brand).