

MENU SOS



Introduction

This is a standalone task, not a full lesson, for KS4 Food Technology. Students are given a pre-written three-course vegan menu for a vegan supper club and asked to evaluate it critically against five professional menu planning criteria. The menu has been written with deliberate weaknesses: it is protein-poor, contains an allergen that is not flagged, uses a seasonally inconsistent ingredient and lacks organoleptic variety across the three courses. Students identify the problems, explain why each is a weakness using food technology terminology and recommend specific, justified improvements.

The task practises the analytical and evaluative skills assessed in both the written paper and NEA across all main GCSE specifications. It works well as a standalone task, a peer assessment exercise or revision activity.

Relevant Links

Recipe Database – [The Vegan Society](#)

Nutrition and health – [The Vegan Society](#)

TASK OVERVIEW

Timing

25-40
minutes

(flexible according
to your needs)

Setting

classroom
or as a revision/
homework
task.

Curriculum links

AQA GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition (8585):

Plan and modify recipes to reflect nutritional guidelines; Factors influencing food choice; Sensory evaluation; Micronutrients; Written paper analytical questions.

OCR GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition

(J309): Section A – Nutritional content of dishes; Section D – Judge and manipulate sensory properties.

WJEC Hospitality and Catering (Level 1/2):

Reviewing of dishes; Factors affecting menu

planning; Understanding the importance of nutrition.

Pearson Edexcel GCSE Food Technology:

Evaluation and modification of dishes; Nutritional analysis.

What you'll need

Menu Worksheet

Additional resources

Pens, access to laptops/tablets (optional)

Before the lesson

- Print Menu Worksheet on A4 (1 per student)

Learning Objectives

1. To evaluate a menu against a food technology criteria.
2. To recommend improvements to address the identified weaknesses, using accurate key terms.



THE TASK

Timings are a guide – adjust to suit your class.

Introduction – [5 minutes]

- The menu in this task has been written for a vegan supper club in celebration of World Vegan Day which is on the 1st November.
- The menu is intentionally flawed, which students must identify.
- They should not be told what the problems are – finding them is part of the task.
- Students work independently using the Menu Worksheet.

Suggested teacher script

You are going to look at a menu that has been created for a vegan supper club in celebration of World Vegan Day which is on 1st November each year. On paper it sounds reasonable, but there are several things wrong with it. Your job is to find them, explain why each one is a problem using food technology terminology, and recommend a specific improvement. You will work through five criteria – nutrition, cost, seasonality, organoleptic properties and allergens. I've already given you a clue to consider in terms of the criteria – when did I say World Vegan Day was? What criteria does this link to? What considerations will you need to think about? Carefully read through the menu where there will be some more obvious problems. One or two you will need to look more carefully to find.

Evaluation task – [15-25 minutes]

- Students work through the five criteria while evaluating the menu: nutrition, cost, seasonality, organoleptic properties and allergens.
- For each criterion they state whether the menu meets it, explain the problem if it does not and recommend a specific improvement with justification.
- Students can annotate around the menu as they go,

they could use highlighters to match issues relating to the five criteria e.g. allergens highlighted in pink.

- The allergen question is deliberately harder – students need to read the ingredients carefully and match against the 14 allergens. Ground almonds (tree nuts) are the problem.

For all the problems and suggested improvements, see Appendix A at the end of this document

Consolidation discussion – [5-10 minutes]

- Use this time to bring the class back together to tie things up.

Potential questions to pose

- Which problem was hardest to spot? Why?
- In a real professional kitchen, which of these problems would be most serious? (The allergen omission is the answer – it is a food safety and legal issue, not just a quality issue).
- What does this task tell you about what a food technologist actually has to think about when designing a menu?

Differentiation

Support – Students could focus on three criteria only (nutrition, seasonality and allergens) as these are the clearest and most concrete problems in this menu.

Stretch – Ask students to rank the problems in order of seriousness and justify the ranking. Write a revised version of the menu that addresses all five weaknesses and annotate it explaining what was changed and why. Encourage reference to the fact that the allergen omission is a legal issue, not just a design quality issue.



Appendix A

Criterion	The problem	Suggested improvement
Nutrition	No HBV plant protein across any of the three courses. Cauliflower and potato provide minimal protein. The menu is low in protein overall and the amino acid profile is not adequately balanced – all sources are LBV.	Add tofu, tempeh, edamame or chickpeas to the main course. Alternatively, replace the cauliflower curry with a lentil and chickpea dish. Quinoa is a rare high quality plant protein source, which contains a balanced essential amino acid profile and could be used in the starter or main.
Cost	Avocados are expensive and price volatile. Strawberries out of season are also costly. For a supper club that needs to be profitable, these are high-risk ingredients. Any reasonable discussion of ingredient cost awareness is acceptable.	Replace avocado with a more cost-stable ingredient. Replace out-of-season strawberries with a seasonal fruit. Consider portion control on the pear dessert.
Seasonality	Strawberries are not in season in the UK in November. They would need to be imported, increasing cost, food miles and environmental impact and reducing quality and freshness. This is the primary seasonality problem.	Replace strawberries with a November-seasonal fruit or ingredient. Look for: students who name a specifically seasonal alternative rather than just saying 'use a different fruit'. Avoid pears as these are already in the dessert.
Organoleptic properties	All three courses are pale/cream/beige in colour, all are soft in texture and the flavour profile is mild throughout. There is no colour contrast, no textural variety and no development across the meal.	Introduce colour: add a vivid herb oil, a brightly coloured vegetable. Introduce crunch: toasted seeds on the starter, crispy shallots on the main. Add a biscuit base or crumble to the dessert. Look for: students who address at least two of colour, texture and flavour separately.
Allergens	Ground almonds in the dessert are not flagged. Tree nuts are one of the 14 major allergens under UK food labelling law. Failure to declare this allergen is a serious omission – it could cause anaphylaxis and would constitute a failure to comply with allergen labelling requirements.	Clearly label the dessert as containing tree nuts (almonds). Offer an allergen-free alternative – replace almond cream with coconut cream only. Allergen information should be available in writing before the meal.