

A Guide to Vegan Food Alternatives for Education and Childcare Providers

created by The Vegan Society's Education Network

This guide is a helpful resource for education and childcare providers looking to accommodate vegan dietary needs.

Ethical veganism is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Educators must not discriminate against vegan children and have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to accommodate their dietary needs. Childcare providers have additional duties under the Early Years Foundation Stage regulations.

Here we outline the foods vegans avoid and provide simple, plant-based alternatives, making it easier to create delicious, balanced meals that meet the needs of vegan learners. Whether you are preparing snacks, meals or treats, these alternatives ensure that vegan learners can enjoy nutritious, flavourful options without compromising on taste or variety.

Please note, this list is not exhaustive. While following these suggestions will help reduce the risk of excluding vegan learners, additional care may still be needed to ensure full inclusivity.

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Vegans choose not to eat...



Meat

including all animal flesh (beef, pork, lamb, chicken, turkey, fish, seafood, etc.)



Dairy Products

milk, cheese, butter, yoghurt, cream, ice cream and any product containing dairy ingredients



Eggs

from chickens, ducks and other birds



Honey

and other bee products like beeswax (E901), bee pollen and royal jelly



Gelatine (E441)

a protein derived from animal bones, skin and connective tissues, commonly found in gummy sweets, marshmallows and some desserts



Stock

made from meat or bones



Whey and Casein

proteins derived from dairy milk, often found in processed foods



Animal-Based Additives

such as:

Carmine (E120) or cochineal – a red dye made from crushed cochineal insects

L-cysteine – an amino acid sometimes sourced from animal feathers or hair and used in bread products

Rennet – an enzyme from calf stomachs used in cheese-making

Isinglass – a fish bladder-derived substance used in clarifying some beers and wines, should be taken into consideration at any family fundraisers and events where alcohol may be used.



Certain Fats and Oils

like lard (pork fat), suet (beef or mutton fat) and some margarines containing milk and/or animal-derived vitamin D3



Certain Breads and Baked Goods

that include eggs, dairy or L-cysteine



Confectionery Ingredients

like shellac (E904), an insect-derived glaze sometimes used to coat confectionery and sweets

Vegans choose to eat...



Meat Alternatives

Plant-Based Meats – options made from soy or pea protein, mycoprotein (vegan Quorn™), vital wheat gluten (seitan), tofu or tempeh

Vegetable-Based Dishes – roasted mushrooms, jackfruit, aubergine, cauliflower steaks and other veggies for hearty meals. Don't forget to add a source of protein to vegetable-based dishes such as lentils, beans or chickpeas



Dairy-Free Alternatives

Milk – almond*, soy, oat, coconut, rice (not suitable for under 5s), hemp and cashew milk*

Cheese – cashew*, almond or coconut-based cheeses and nutritional yeast for a cheesy flavour

Butter – vegan margarine, coconut oil or plant-based butters

Yoghurt – almond*, coconut or soy yoghurt

Ice Cream – made from soy, nuts*, coconut or oat milk



Egg Substitutes

Baking – apple sauce, mashed banana, aquafaba, flaxseeds or chia seeds mixed with water and baking soda with vinegar

Scrambled Egg Alternatives – tofu scramble, chickpea flour or mung bean-based egg replacers like CRACK'd™ and JUST Egg™



Honey Alternatives

maple syrup, agave nectar, date syrup or molasses



Gelatine Replacements

agar-agar (seaweed-based), pectin (fruit-based) or carrageenan for gelling and thickening in desserts



Stock

vegetable stock



Animal-Based Additive Alternatives

Carmines – beet juice powder, paprika extract or synthetic food colouring

L-cysteine – synthetic versions or avoid foods with this additive

Rennet – microbial or vegetable-based rennet for cheese-making

Isinglass – vegan-friendly fining agents in beers and wines or look for "vegan-certified" labels (for all family fundraisers and events)



Vegetable Oils

rapeseed, olive oil or plant-based margarine for cooking and baking



Whey and Casein Alternatives

plant-based protein powders (pea, soy, rice or hemp protein) for baking, shakes and other uses



Vegan-Friendly Breads and Baked Goods

look for 'egg-free' and 'dairy-free' labels or try vegan recipes that use plant-based milks and egg replacers



Vegan Confectionery

Gummy Sweets – look for brands that use pectin or agar-agar instead of gelatine or choose vegan gummy brands

Chocolate – choose dark chocolate with no dairy or brands that specifically label their chocolate as vegan (nut allergy aware)

Marshmallows – vegan marshmallows that use plant-based gelling agents instead of gelatine

Glazed or Shiny Coatings – replace shellac (an insect-derived glaze) with natural alternatives like vegetable-based waxes or just look for 'shellac-free' or vegan-certified sweets ...Or perhaps choose a healthier option of fruits!

*Contains nuts



Look out for the Vegan Trademark on products (either at the front or back of packaging) as well as on website descriptions. This mark means the product has been certified vegan to strict standards by The Vegan Society.

If you have any questions or need further assistance with creating vegan-friendly meals for your learners, please don't hesitate to email us at education@vegansociety.com, nutrition@vegansociety.com or knowyourrights@vegansociety.com. We're here to help you easily incorporate plant-based alternatives into your childcare provision, ensuring that vegan learners enjoy a variety of nutritious and delicious options.

If you would like to learn more about allergens, E-numbers and vegan labelling, please visit...

<https://www.vegansociety.com/news/blog/TM2021/allergen-vs-vegan-labelling>

<https://www.vegansociety.com/resources/nutrition-and-health/allergen-labelling>

Food-Info.net (E-numbers of animal origin)