

HOW PLANT+ BY FINER DINER INSPIRED PLANT-BASED EATING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS



Plant+ by Finer Diner was a 'digital-first' plant-based concept that was trialled across 15 schools where Sodexo provides catering services. Its aim was to inspire future generations to make sustainable food choices through creating memorable experiences centred around education and plant-based food.

The campaign involved inclusive 'planet-first' challenges within schools, tasting days, and educational resources for catering teams, students, and teachers. The additional support from Student Ambassadors helped us in spreading the word from the ground up.

The result? A deeper understanding of food's impact on the planet, diverse and sustainable food choices, and healthy habits that can be taken and applied moving forward.

WHY SUSTAINABLE DIETS?

Environmental issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss are having drastic impacts around the world and food is at the very heart of these issues - from the way our food is grown, to the way we eat it. Something needs to change, and we're passionate about engaging people to make this happen.

A snapshot of the facts:



Around **75%** of the food we eat comes from just **12 plants and 5 animals**, a diversity of healthy and sustainable food choices is key.¹



One-third of all food produced in the world goes to **waste** – equating to about **1.3 billion tonnes**.²



Plant-based diets are associated with the greatest reductions in **greenhouse-gas emissions**.³



Eating a vegetarian diet could save the same amount of crop-land as **10,670 football fields**.⁴

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But talking about the issue only goes so far. How does someone eat more sustainably? The six 'Livewell Principles' outline how to lead a sustainable and healthy lifestyle diet:



EAT MORE PLANTS

Enjoy vegetables and wholegrains.



EAT A VARIETY OF FOODS

Have a colourful plate.



WASTE LESS FOOD

One third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted.



MODERATE YOUR MEAT CONSUMPTION, RED AND WHITE

Enjoy other sources of proteins such as peas, beans and nuts.



BUY FOOD THAT MEETS A CREDIBLE CERTIFIED STANDARD

Consider MSC and ASC, free range and fairtrade.



EAT FEWER FOOD HIGH IN FAT, SALT AND SUGAR

Keep food such as cakes, sweets and chocolate as well as cured meat, fries and crisps to an occasional treat. Choose water, avoid sugary drinks and remember that juices only count as one of your five a day, however much you drink.

We need a more sustainable, plant-based approach to diets so we can improve our own health and the health of the planet. It's all about understanding the little things we can all do that will make a difference, a key message outlined in the Student Ambassador toolkits provided pre-Plant+ trial launch (of which we go into further detail later). Engaging with and educating younger generations on fun, healthy and planet-friendly ways they can boost their eating habits and lifestyles is fundamental if we are to turn the tide on climate change and biodiversity loss.



WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE HEALTHIER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE MEALS

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WHERE IT ALL STEMMED FROM – ABOUT FINER DINER

In 2019 we trialled a concept called Finer Diner in Sodexo universities as a street food pop-up. It offered tasty, plant-based alternatives to students' favourite meals. The aim was to showcase plant-based food as inspiring and exciting, while explaining how food impacts the planet and climate change. The results were insightful and promising, and the feedback gained proved there was more to be explored.

Pre-activation



The success of Finer Diner sparked a new idea to evolve the concept – adapting it to suit the younger generation. If we could encourage a new generation of planet-conscious consumers at an early age, then there was a strong chance this shift in eating habits would be a positive change that could last a lifetime.

For this developed concept to be a success, we needed to dial up our approach even further, building on the enthusiasm and momentum from Finer Diner. We had to create a completely holistic experience for school students, catering staff, and teachers alike.

The aim was to educate and inspire younger students on the environmental and health benefits of eating more plant-based meals at school. Through the promise of engagement with fellow students, teachers, and wider catering staff, plus memorable experiences through collaboration with peers and exciting meals, Plant+ by Finer Diner was born!



The perfect partner to education on sustainability is tasty, plant-based alternatives to students' favourite dishes. So, the Plant+ menu had to be exciting enough for students to talk about and offer enough variety to keep them interested and coming back for more!



Following the Future 50 Foods as a guide, we teamed up with Sodexo to create a mouth-watering menu that included delicious dishes like...



VEGAN BURGERS



CHICKPEA AND SPINACH CURRY



LENTIL SAUSAGE ROLLS

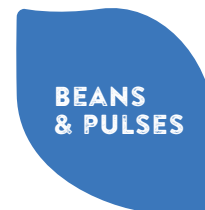


CHOCOLATE AND KALE BROWNIES

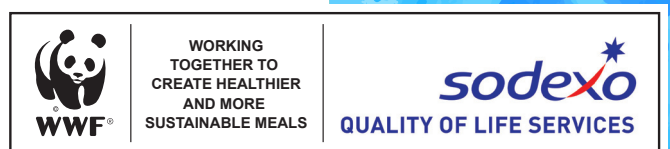
About Future 50 Foods

Did you know that 75% of the foods we eat come from just 12 plants and five animal species.⁵ So, Sodexo partnered with Knorr Professional and us to create the Future 50 Foods initiative – a collection of 40 exciting plant-based recipes using 50 of the most sustainable ingredients from 11 unique categories.

Those categories include:



Every ingredient within these categories was chosen for its high nutritional value, low environmental impact, easy accessibility, exciting flavours, and affordability.





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Activation

HOW PLANT+ WAS BROUGHT TO LIFE

The Plant+ trial ran from January - April 2022 across seven independent schools and eight state schools in the UK. Participating schools had numerous stakeholders involved, from Student Ambassadors to catering managers and teachers – all of which were fundamental to the success of the concept.



Catering managers were at the core of Plant+ and were instrumental in the success of its roll out. In the build-up to launch, the catering teams were given toolkits showcasing everything they needed to know, including guidance on how to run Plant+ successfully and encourage plant-based eating, as well as learning materials and insights on sustainable diets and the Plant+ story.

To boost excitement and awareness, they were also given early marketing collateral to share, presentations that they could show to relevant committees, and a selection of Plant+ recipes that were ripe and ready to work in the school environment! Monthly briefing calls were also held with catering teams prior to the Plant+ launch to help showcase and explain the concept.

Upon launch, the catering teams were then able to cook new Plant+ recipes and educate students confidently. They were encouraged to hold regular sampling days where students could try Plant+ dishes and learn about the food they were eating, and by using a visual and fun 'carrot measure', catering teams could publicly track the school's progress, showing students a running total of how many Plant+ dishes were being served!



Ahead of the launch, Student Ambassadors were recruited in each school. We challenged these Plant+ heroes to help drive student engagement with the Plant+ concept, providing them with toolkits, reading materials, and online videos to inspire and educate them on making plant-based choices before spreading the Plant+ message to their peers.

The Student Ambassadors were true champions for sustainable diets and were instrumental to the success of Plant+. From the toolkits and online training videos, they were able to confidently share useful hints and tips on how students could eat more sustainably as well as answering any questions their peers had.

To help drive excitement, they handed out samples with catering staff on sample days and sparked conversations amongst students. They also encouraged students to make a pledge on the 'pledging tree', where students committed to eating more plant-based food in the future.



We also created educational resources for teachers, to encourage the buzz around making more sustainable choices in the canteen, move into the classroom, so students could learn more about the food system and its impacts. They were given their own toolkits prior to the Plant+ roll out, which explained what they needed to do and provided them with learning materials on sustainable eating and impacts of the food system on the environment.

From there, they were tasked with educating the students further on planet-friendly eating, using the activity resources for KS3, 4, and 5 provided. Once the programme wrapped up, they were sent surveys to reflect on their experience of Plant+.

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Post-activation



WHAT WE LEARNT

CATERING

The catering teams tracked their progress through a 'carrot measure', showcasing dishes sold/served and by taking photos of their Plant+ set up. They also conducted feedback surveys halfway through the trial before submitting final findings at the trial's end.

From the catering surveys completed, we found that:

100%

of catering teams involved said they will continue to use Plant+ recipes and actively promote plant-based alternatives on their menus.

89%

of catering staff believed their knowledge had become better as a result of the Plant+.

100%

of schools found the catering toolkit and marketing collateral useful.

7/10

Plant+ was rated an average of 7 out of 10 for ease of implementation (10 being extremely easy).

“OVER 600 SAMPLES WERE GIVEN OUT OVER THREE DAYS AND AROUND 200 PORTIONS SOLD ACROSS ONE MAIN, ONE SNACK AND A DESSERT. FREE FOOD IS ALWAYS A WINNER. I THINK OUR AMBASSADORS FOUND IT TOUGH GOING AS WHEN IT CAME TO SAMPLING TIME, WE WERE BOMBARDED. THEY DID A GREAT JOB OF COLLECTING THE PLEDGES THOUGH AND WE VIRTUALLY FILLED THE TREE ON DAY ONE.”

Gary Periti, Chef at Oasis Academy Media City

STUDENTS

The Student Ambassadors were the beating heart of the programme, conducting peer interviews, completing questionnaires, and encouraging other students to complete pre and post-lesson surveys. From these, we gathered vital insight on how students felt about Plant+ and what they learnt from the experience.

From these measurement tools, we found that:*

- 50% of students felt more informed and inspired to eat more sustainably in the future.
- 100% of students felt their knowledge of how food choices and systems affect climate change had increased.
- because of Plant+, students had cooked **PLANT+ DISHES** at home and chosen vegetarian/vegan options when out-of-home.
- 50% of students planned on taking sustainable actions in the future after trialling Plant+ by Finer Diner. For example, some were even planning to start a plant-based society at their school!
- Student Ambassadors enjoyed the experience - scoring their involvement in Plant+ a **7 OUT OF 10**, with 10 being an extremely enjoyable experience.

“THERE’S A REAL BUZZ IN THE SCHOOL AND LOTS OF PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO TRY THE NEW PLANT-BASED DISHES WHEN WE RUN TASTER SESSIONS. I HOPE THIS WILL HELP THEM MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES AT MEALTIMES.”

Year Nine Plant+ Student Ambassador at Oasis Academy Oldham.

* Numbers are based on a total of six responses to the student survey and 19 responses to the catering survey and three responses to the teachers survey.

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TEACHERS

Teaching staff were also asked to complete a post-trial survey, giving us valuable insights into their Plant+ by Finer Diner experience...

From these resources we found that:*

- teachers scored the success of Plant+ an average of **8 OUT OF 10.**
- 66%** of teachers claimed they now felt more confident in knowing how food choices and food systems affect climate change and nature.
- teachers said that before Plant+ they rarely ever included **FOOD AND DIET** related topics in their teaching.

ADDITIONAL INCENTIVES

To maximise engagement and investment, we handed out engaging resources to participating schools.

All Student Ambassadors were given goodie bags and a letter of recognition for participation, while a 'best-in-class activation' trophy was awarded to the winning catering team, with two runner-up prizes.

Further, a £1000 eco-prize fund – to help continue the promotion of sustainable practices – was awarded to Oasis Academy Sholing for:

- 1. the highest number of meals sold/served, as a percentage of the schools size**
- 2. the most pledges placed on the tree, and**
- 3. the best participation across activation.**

The schools were judged and awarded prizes by a Sodexo and WWF panel, and the judging was based on a combination of surveys and questionnaires submitted, along with collated feedback, photos, and the overall number of meals served (measured as a percentage of the overall number of staff and students in the school).

FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

We were delighted to find that Plant+ delivered positive results across the board in participating schools.

We found that early involvement with senior decision-makers was key to driving engagement. Further, consistent dialogue with each school throughout (e.g., regular briefing calls with catering managers) was key to delivering the Plant+ message. We also learnt that engaging with Sodexo account managers was crucial for briefing the schools. This way we could ensure the correct information was being passed onto schools before the launch of Plant+.

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Students who engaged with Plant+ felt a greater connection with plant-based eating. They claimed they would be more likely to take a plant-based approach moving forward. This kind of feedback affirms Plant+'s original goal to educate and inspire students to eat more plant-based foods!

WHERE CAN WE GROW FROM HERE?

Looking back on the Plant+ by Finer Diner campaign, we couldn't be more hopeful on what the future holds for sustainable eating in schools. However, on reflection engaging with and receiving more buy-in from teachers could have helped strengthen the impact of the activation especially within the classroom.

Of the teachers surveyed, 66% didn't use the teacher's toolkit. Additionally, catering managers and chefs asked for more training on how to engage with students on plant-based eating. Lastly, a stronger plan on how these plant-based recipes will sit within menu development in the future. These are elements that could be strengthened for the next phase.

So, what's next for Plant+? By delivering memorable experiences and combining sustainable education with delicious dishes, we believe Plant+ is a winning recipe. We hope to continue bringing Plant+ to schools around the country and spread sustainable seeds for a better future for people and the planet. With Plant+ by Finer Diner, the sky is the limit!

Since 2010, WWF has supported Sodexo with improving its sustainable food offer and purchasing practices. The partnership pairs WWF's technical expertise and thought leadership on sustainability with Sodexo's global market to protect and conserve the Earth's resources by reducing the impact of Sodexo's operations on the environment.

WWF's partnership with Sodexo presents an opportunity to make a positive impact on the health of the planet as well as the health of Sodexo's consumers – and to drive larger changes in the food system.

By combining WWF's Livewell principles for a sustainable diet with Sodexo's own commitments under its Better Tomorrow 2025 ethos, we're working together to create tasty, low-carbon meals that meet people's nutritional needs.

1 Future 50 Foods, 2019.

2 <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/flight-climate-change-by-preventing-food-waste>

3 The Lancet, Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems, Feb 2019.

4 Planet-Based Diets National Impacts calculator for United Kingdom.

5 <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/wwf-and-knorr-launch-future-50-foods>.

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