



CONTRACT CATERER *Ranking*

ProVeg UK Contract Caterer Ranking

Here is the ProVeg Contract Caterer Ranking for 2024. Caterers are ranked on their promotion of plant-based foods, the quality of plant-based dishes, and also transparency and communication about these topics.

Profiles on each caterer can be found below the ranking.

Here is the top 25 ranking of school contract caterers we scored in England.

- 1 *Dolce*
- 2 *Sodexo*
- 3 *Caterlink*
- 4 *AiP (Sodexo)*
- 5 *Nourish*
- 6 *Thomas Franks*
- 7 *Holroyd Howe (WSH)*
- 8 *ISS*
- 9 *Innovate (Impact Food Group)*
- 10 *Aramark*
- 11 *Harrison*
- 12 *Olive*
- 13 *Edwards & Ward*
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- 15 *Wilson Vale (Aramark)*
- 16 *Radish (Churchill)*
- 17 *Chartwells (Compass)*
- 18 *Bartlett Mitchell*
- 19 *Edwards & Blake (Elior)*
- 20 *Taylor Shaw (Elior)*
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- 22 *Pabulum (CH&CO)*
- 23 *Independent Catering*
- 24 *ABM Catering*

1

Dolce

Dolce Schools Catering currently holds a School Plates Silver Award for their work with ProVeg UK, promoting more sustainable options within menus, as well as improving and increasing the number of plant based and vegetarian dishes available for those that would like them.

The Dolce menu we reviewed offers varied, well-described vegetarian and plant-based options as part of the main menu without a box or heading separating them from the other options, which is an evidence-based way to increase uptake.

- There are two plant-rich days on the menu, called “Tasty Thursday” and “Mega Monday,” and the vegetarian option is at the top of the menu more than half the time.
- There is a VE option nearly every day and plant-based options are available in all meal categories (mains, sides, and desserts) nearly every day.
- Dolce has been using plant-based cheeses and egg-free desserts, reducing the number of less sustainable options available as well as promoting plant-based and vegetarian dishes where possible.

Dolce states: “With increased interest in supply chain sustainability and an ever growing shift towards a plant based diet, we have been working hard to ensure that our menus keep up.”

Most recently, menus have the plant-based options at the top more often than not each week. These are usually the first dishes that parents and pupils see and choose, when ordering their meals. They have also reduced the amount of beef in menus and introduced more plant-based proteins. These include plant-based cheeses, pulses and beans, sausages, and mince. This helps them to improve their work on sustainability, while producing food that children recognise, choose to order, and most importantly, eat.

2

Sodexo

Sodexo holds a School Plates Bronze Award for implementing the World Resources Institute advice on improving uptake of vegetarian and plant-based options on the menu, and carbon labelling that has been introduced and displayed for children to see.

- Vegetarian and plant-based options on the menu are well described and fully labelled throughout this menu.
- There is a variation of taste and texture between the plant-based or vegetarian dishes and their meat-based counterparts on a daily basis.
- Vegetarian or plant-based options feature at the top of the menu on a daily basis, which has been proven to improve uptake of these options by the World Resources Institute, and plant-based meals are highlighted as planet-friendly in the menu key.

The World Wildlife Fund UK (WWF) and Sodexo UK&I have collaborated on previous 'Finer Diner' campaigns focused on showcasing sustainable meals and establishing the links between food and environmental sustainability.

Across 2023 - 2024, the WWF and Sodexo UK&I, commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) on a third iteration of Finer Diner. This project built on previous campaigns by applying the latest behavioural insights to develop, trial and scale solutions to promote sustainable and healthy meal choices within school dining environments

The project was undertaken in twelve schools and increased the proportion of sustainable and healthy dishes by introducing eight new, low-carbon 'Future Food' menu items. Six of these new meal items are vegetarian/vegan, while two contained chicken but were made of 2/3 plant-based ingredients. These solutions significantly increased uptake of sustainable and healthy meal choices in schools by 9.4 percent, a 30.4% increase.

3

Caterlink

Caterlink holds Silver School Plates Awards for both the Islington and Camden menus.

- The language and labelling on the Islington menu is already well-presented, with varied and well-described vegetarian and plant-based options on the menu.
- There is a weekly plant-rich day named Planet-Friendly Day.
- In addition, every day features a V or VE dish at the top of the menu with many plant-based options.

Caterlink has numerous sustainability initiatives to lower the carbon footprint generated from their menus and to promote and encourage eating a variety of plant-based foods. Caterlink menus have consistently implemented Planet Friendly Days where no meat dishes are offered and over the past few years, they have also increased the number of plant-based options on their standard menus. In 2016, 40% of their vegetarian options were vegan, this has increased to 70% in 2024.

With their 'Added Plant Protein' project - every week, at least one of the meat options is an added plant protein dish. These are meat dishes where 50% of the protein content comes from plant-based proteins, such as lentils,

chickpeas, or beans. Each Added Plant Protein dish produces 48% less greenhouse gas emissions as well as health benefits, such as higher fibre, lower saturated fat and increased exposure to plant-based proteins.

Since 2016, they have reduced the carbon footprint of their menus by 32%, 12% of this being in the last 12 months. In the past year alone, they've saved the same amount of carbon as 1500 homes using electricity for a year.

4

AiP (Sodexo)

The AiP menu has plant-based and vegetarian choices presented first on the menu on a daily basis (a proven method to increase uptake of these dishes).

- A high proportion of dishes on this menu stood out with clear descriptions.
- There is V or VE labelling.
- Plant-based options are highlighted in the key as planet-friendly options.
- The vegetarian options are incorporated into the AiP Foodsmart menu without a box or heading separating them from the other options, which is a great way to increase uptake.

AiP states that it has been working to promote plant-based options through its work with parent company Sodexo. The World Wildlife Fund UK (WWF) and Sodexo UK&I have collaborated on previous 'Finer Diner' campaigns focused on showcasing sustainable meals and establishing the links between food and environmental sustainability.

Across 2023 - 2024, the WWF and Sodexo UK&I, commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) on a third iteration of Finer Diner. This project built on previous campaigns by applying the latest behavioural insights to develop, trial and scale solutions to promote sustainable and healthy meal choice within school dining environments.

The project was undertaken in twelve schools. Increased proportion of sustainable and healthy dishes by introducing eight new, low-carbon 'Future Food' menu items. Six of these new meal items are vegetarian/vegan, while two contained chicken but were made of $\frac{2}{3}$ plant-based ingredients. These solutions significantly increased uptake of sustainable and healthy meal choices in schools by 9.4 percentage points, a 30.4% increase.

5

Nourish

- The Nourish menu is rich in plant-based and vegetarian options, and there is a weekly vegetarian day in place with lots of clear descriptions for the vegetarian and vegan options across the four week menu.
- The menu flows from one choice to another without boxes or category names according to the type of dish - a proven method for increasing the uptake of vegetarian and plant-based dishes.
- A high number of dishes on this menu are labelled V or VG, and roughly a third of the menu is offered as plant-based.
- Many days have a full range of plant-based options across all the meal components, including desserts.

Nourish have worked with school gardening clubs, donating seeds and using the produce at lunchtime to teach the children the 'farm to fork' experience. They also run several themed days in their primary schools, including World Environment Day, and Vegan Day.

Many cooks got involved in the national Eat Them to Defeat Them campaign to encourage children to eat more veg, and one of their schools won the silver prize.

6

Thomas Franks

- The Thomas Franks menu we reviewed stood out with lots of well-described vegetarian dishes.
- Plant-based dishes feature at the top of the menu on a daily basis. This will help to increase uptake of these options according to evidence from the World Resources Institute.
- There is a daily plant-based main meal on the menu.

Thomas Franks runs a "Plant 30" programme in schools and Universities, encouraging the consumption of a wide variety of fruit and vegetables for gut health. This includes a plate-up challenge where students are encouraged to design a plant-based meal which is then added to the menu.

This education is supported with other brochures for schools and parents on plant-based eating and rainbow foods. They host plant-based popups throughout the school year with suppliers like Eat Curious and Tofoo.

Their "SustainABITES" programme has a focus on education around sustainable diets and plant-based eating, with challenges to engage pupils with the food they eat, and reminders for pupils to eat their plants. Seasonal fruit and vegetable recipes each month, and a vegan recipe of the month, are featured for all of their chefs to use in schools.

7

Holroyd Howe (WSH)

- "Green Monday" is a positive name for the weekly meat-free day, and the "One Change a Week" poster encourages the uptake of more planet-friendly options, including plant-based food.
- Soup is offered as the first option on the varied and interesting menu, and the use of main course 1 and main course 2 is a more successful way of displaying the different dishes, according to evidence from the World Resources Institute, as they are not separated according to dish type.
- There are many well-described vegetarian dishes on the menu.

Holroyd Howe is working towards the provision and promotion of plant-based food through its work with ProVeg UK, and also through the "Future Proof Food" programme, "Our Sustainable World, and "Food Waste Refresh"; their sustainability work also includes the "Waste Knot" programme.

Carbon labelling on menus is used, and they offer a 30 plants activity to encourage a wider intake of gut healthy fruit and vegetables. Also, through "Future 50" Plants and the "Boost it!" programmes dishes are enriched with healthier, more sustainable ingredients.

Educational outreach includes “Edible Gardens” which is a pre-prep activity to encourage a better connection with the food we eat.

8

ISS

- The ISS menu we reviewed placed the generally well-described vegetarian and plant-based options at the top of the menu, which has been proven to increase uptake of these dishes, and there are lots of plant-based main meal options throughout the three-week menu.
- There is a weekly plant-rich day.
- 38% of the main meal options are plant-based.
- The V and VE options are incorporated into the menu without a box or heading separating them from the other options; a proven method to increase uptake.
- They have also removed labels such as ‘Meat Free’, replacing them with a ‘Plates for our Planet’ badge.

ISS has a number of excellent initiatives promoting plant-based food, including its “Power Plant” food service, the Cool Food Pledge, “Roots for the Future”, ‘Boosted Recipes’ featuring ruminant meat recipes that are boosted with pulses and lentils across all main menus, ‘A Special Menu’: a popular menu which promotes dishes that are either plant-based or vegetarian, ‘Waste-Less’ Tasters’ the ‘Foodie Futures campaign’ and “Green Fingers” engaging 4,000 pupils in schools nationwide in gardening and plant-based food activities. ISS has also sponsored a number of schools for VegPower’s ‘Eat Them To Defeat Them’ and ‘Love To Grow Tomatoes’ national campaigns.

ISS is working with ProVeg to receive their School Plates Award certification that will further recognise all the actions they take to offer healthier and more sustainable menu options to our pupils.

9

Innovate (Impact Food Group)

- The menu we reviewed has some well-described vegetarian options available.
- The plant-based and vegetarian options are always first on the menu.
- The dishes, sides and desserts are fully labelled on this menu and also features a planet-friendly day in Week 3.

IFG is currently working to promote plant-based options by giving out free plant-based tasters for National School Meals Week. They are also hosting a “Tasting Zone”, similar to the above, with a pop up which visits schools regularly and is used by their chefs to encourage children to try plant-based dishes.

Carbon Labelling is currently being developed for implementation and IFG hopes to have carbon labelled menus available in 2025. There is also a Social Impact/Impact+ Fund for every school they partner with to spend on social value initiatives including school gardens and resources to help set up sustainable food systems in schools.

IFG supports schools with their Sustainability Activities and Fruit and Veg Promotion in Assemblies, and plans include New Menu Launch Packs – to accompany their new January menus they are creating social media/web assets for schools which will include some plant-based assets which encourage children and families to introduce more plant-based to their diets.

As part of their Plant-Powered Event in January, IFG will be promoting plant-based throughout the month to shine a spotlight on plant-based foods through featured dishes and tasters. They are also developing a student Nutrition & Wellbeing Programme which will have resources dedicated to promoting the health and planet benefits to plant-based meals, and creating some recipe and nutrition videos to go out to schools (for use on their websites and social channels) promoting plant-based dishes on their menus with recipes and guidance on how to enjoy them at home with families.

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Aramark

As part of Aramark's efforts to create climate-healthy menus, many of their main dishes are now vegan or vegetarian. They've also created hundreds of new plant-based recipes, and reduced red meat in recipes.

- Weekly plant-rich day in place.
- Vegetarian options at the top of the menu.
- Well-described dishes like "Oumph A Lumpa Leek Pie" and "Allotment Frittata".
- Benefits of plant-based food listed on the website.

The core non-meat/vegetarian option offered is now the first item shown on the menu, they have a meat free day, and have introduced more non-meat options with reduced meat content in dishes like Chicken and Sweetcorn Sausages (reducing meat content) as an example. More vegan mince is used in the creation of their dishes, and trimmings from vegetables used in puddings. These efforts build on a commitment to advancing sustainable sourcing practices and they are proud of the 'industry-leading work' that has been completed, in the ongoing work underway, and the opportunities ahead.

11

Harrison

- The menu we reviewed featured a good number of well-described vegetarian options which have been incorporated into the main menu without a box or heading.
- Vegetarian and plant-based options are at the top of the menu on a daily basis, which has been shown to increase the uptake of these dishes according to evidence from the World Resources Institute.
- There is a weekly plant-rich day in place.

Harrison is working toward better provision and promotion of plant-based options by including articles about gut-friendly foods on the news section of their website, and plant-based recipes are included alongside their meat-based counterparts.

Their plant-based eco packaging is certified compostable in under 12 weeks and unlike most foodservice packaging, it can be recycled together with food waste, making recycling easier. Last year Harrison saved 49

tonnes of carbon by using Vegware packaging across the business.

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Olive

- There are some good vegetarian options on the menu, including a Jamaican Sweet Potato, Chickpea & Coconut Curry.
- There are two meat-free days per week with identifiable plant-based dishes on the menu.
- The vegetarian option is offered as a plant-based dish, which is a great way of introducing the plant-based dishes and is also more inclusive.
- Over half of the menu features these plant-based dishes as options.

Olive states that they are working to reduce its CO2 emissions in other ways with 16% CO2 emissions reduction forecast as Olive switches to plant-based cleaning products, and 100% targeted reduction of food waste to landfill by 2025.

13

Edwards & Ward

- There are a number of well-described plant-based options on this menu.
- A weekly meat-free day is in place on the menu we reviewed.
- The vegetarian and plant-based options are incorporated into the menu without a box or heading separating them from the other options.

Edwards & Ward uses vegetarian gelatine which makes these dishes appropriate for a wider number of pupils.

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Lexington Independents

- There are many plant-based options on the menu we reviewed.
- They offer a weekly plant-rich (meat-free) day.

Lexington Independents work to promote plant-based, sustainable dishes. This includes the meat-free menus developed and showcased by chef teams for World Vegetarian Day on the 1st October, highlighting the health and environmental benefits of a vegetarian diet.

Following on from this, they celebrated World Smoothie Day with students pedaling their way to creating nutritious fruit smoothies.

In response to a letter from a student enquiring about Lexington's efforts to promote sustainability, they presented a sustainability and nutrition assembly, which highlighted the mindful decisions they make in their kitchens and supply chains to ensure their food is sustainably sourced, driving meaningful changes to help protect the planet.

Finally, the Hungry Caterpillar project is part of the healthy eating education outreach programmes that Lexington offers to schools.

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Wilson Vale (Aramark)

- Well-described dishes.
- Avoids terms like vegan, meat-free, and fish-free in all the dish descriptions.
- Lunch options are presented as part of a continuous menu.

Wilson Vale state that their plant-forward menu options meet consumer tastes and also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, minimise demand for water and land resources, and preserve natural habitats. As part of their efforts to create climate-healthy menus, many of their main dishes are now vegan or vegetarian. They have also created hundreds of new plant-based recipes, and reduced red meat in recipes.

"These efforts build on a long-standing commitment to advancing sustainable sourcing practices and we are proud of the industry-leading work that has been completed, in the ongoing work underway, and the opportunities ahead."

16

Radish (Churchill)

We would have loved to hear more from Radish, but they did not engage with us to provide further information for the current ranking. They appear not to have any publicly available information on their website regarding the benefits of plant-based foods for sustainability and health. We have scored three of the menus that we could find online and used the highest scoring menu as representative of their best work in this area. We have provided clear recommendations for improving their ranking score, and we look forward to extending our full range of free support to them when they are ready.

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Chartwells (Compass)

We would have loved to hear more from Chartwells, but they did not engage with us to provide further information for the current ranking. They appear not to have any publicly available information on their

website regarding the benefits of plant-based foods for sustainability and health. We have scored three of the menus that we could find online and used the highest scoring menu as representative of their best work in this area. We have provided clear recommendations for improving their ranking score, and we look forward to extending our full range of free support to them when they are ready.

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Bartlett Mitchell

Bartlett Mitchell are a large organisation but only cover one school. We felt it important to include them as they are a key player in the catering industry. Although we did have a conversation about the ranking with BM, they did not consult further with us regarding the ranking, the reason given being that the majority of their business is with business and industry. Barlett Mitchell are in the top 25 contract caterers with the highest annual turnover in England, and we felt this made BM a key player in a position to influence others in this area.

Barlett Mitchell are also the first to achieve the Planet Mark certification, and the first to be named the Sustainable Restaurant Association's 'Sustainable Caterer of the Year' three years in succession.

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Edwards & Blake (Elior)

We would have loved to hear more from Edwards & Blake, but they did not engage with us to provide further information for the current ranking. They appear not to have any publicly available information on their website regarding the benefits of plant-based foods for sustainability and health. We have scored three of the menus that we could find online and used the highest scoring menu as representative of their best work in this area. We have provided clear recommendations for improving their ranking score, and we look forward to extending our full range of free support to them when they are ready.

20

Taylor Shaw (Elior)

We would have loved to hear more from Taylor Shaw, but they did not engage with us to provide further information for the current ranking. They appear not to have any publicly available information on their website regarding the benefits of plant-based foods for sustainability and health. We have scored three of the menus that we could find online and used the highest scoring menu as representative of their best work in

this area. We have provided clear recommendations for improving their ranking score, and we look forward to extending our full range of free support to them when they are ready.

21

Aspens

We would have loved to hear more from Aspens, but they did not engage with us to provide further information for the current ranking. They appear not to have any publicly available information on their website regarding the benefits of plant-based foods for sustainability and health. We have scored three of the menus that we could find online and used the highest scoring menu as representative of their best work in this area. We have provided clear recommendations for improving their ranking score, and we look forward to extending our full range of free support to them when they are ready.

22

Pabulum (CH&CO)

Pabulum has been recently taken over by CH&CO, which is now owned by Compass.

We would have loved to hear more from Pabulum, but they did not engage with us to provide further information for the current ranking. They appear not to have any publicly available information on their website regarding the benefits of plant-based foods for sustainability and health. We have scored three of the menus that we could find online and used the highest scoring menu as representative of their best work in this area. We have provided clear recommendations for improving their ranking score, and we look forward to extending our full range of free support to them when they are ready.

23

Independent Catering

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24

ABM Catering

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Atalian (OCS)

We would have loved to hear more from Atalian, but they did not engage with us to provide further information for the current ranking. They appear not to have any publicly available information on their website regarding the benefits of plant-based foods for sustainability and health. We have scored three of the menus that we could find online and used the highest scoring menu as representative of their best work in this area. We have provided clear recommendations for improving their ranking score, and we look forward to extending our full range of free support to them when they are ready.

Thank you for reading our Contract Caterer Ranking for schools. We hope it is helpful for schools to be able to choose a caterer that aligns with their sustainability goals, and to celebrate those leading the way in plant-powered, healthy, and sustainable menus.

For more information on the ranking, such as methodology, please email us at info.uk@proveg.org.

Please also get back in touch if you are a caterer looking to understand how to improve your score for our 2025 ranking later this year.

