

Restaurants run out of vegan chefs as Britons ditch meat and dairy

New courses in upmarket plant-based cooking launched to meet growing demand.

Jackfruit burgers, soya kebabs – it's easier than ever to find appetising plant-based dishes in the UK. But as the number of people embracing a vegan diet grows, restaurants are scrambling to recruit enough chefs.

- 5 Now a new vegan cookery school which opened in London last week has launched a fast-track course to train more people in the art of plant-based cooking.

Chantal Di Donato, co-founder of the Vegan Chef Institute, said the scheme was in response to restaurateurs who have to train their own staff. "There's a lot of really good chefs in the industry, but it's really hard to find enough of them because it's so new," she said.

"A lot of the food on offer was uninspired. But vegan food can be more than just a salad or a roasted cauliflower – that's why we think this is important," said Di Donato.

- 15 Jamie Taylor, head chef at Acorn, an award-winning vegan restaurant in Bath, has found recruiting accomplished staff so problematic he's launched an apprenticeship scheme in order to teach people on the job and promote from within their own ranks.

Interest in upmarket vegan cooking is also coming from unlikely sources. Gauthier in Soho, a Michelin-starred French restaurant, is six months into a two-year plan to become completely plant-based. The driving force behind the move is owner Alexis Gauthier, a classically trained chef of 25 years, who stopped consuming animal products himself two years ago.

Gauthier believes chefs are "the most powerful people within the veganism movement. At the end of the day, you can't convince someone to turn vegan with all the goodwill on Earth by selling them tofu and a green salad. That's just not possible," he said.

- 25 One in eight Britons are now vegan or vegetarian, according to a report released last week by Waitrose.

By Amy Walker, adapted from *The Observer*, November 3rd, 2018