

The background of the entire image shows a group of diverse people sitting around a table in a bright, modern dining area. They are engaged in conversation and eating. The table is set with various dishes, including what appears to be a salad, a pasta dish, and bread. Large windows in the background let in natural light, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere.

PROMOTING
**HEALTHIER
LIVES**
EVERY DAY

▫ How the science of nutrition shapes our food

FOREWORD

I've always found the science of food fascinating.

It combines hard evidence on how our bodies respond to what we eat with a deep understanding of the motivation behind our choices.

My team brings this science to life at Sodexo. Working hand in hand with our suppliers, culinary experts and sustainability leads, we help to delight our guests, nourish them, keep them safe and protect the planet too.

We advise on the latest scientific evidence and regulations, including allergen management, and support the development of safe processes and strong standards. We also engage and empower our guests, reviewing more than 7,000 recipes each year and helping people to choose healthier meals and snacks more often.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Our passion for food goes to the heart of our purpose: creating a better day for everyone. That's why the science of nutrition underpins everything we do. It guides our chefs, shapes our menus and empowers guests to make healthier choices. In this document, we share how our approach, our processes and our safety-first culture promote the wellbeing of people and planet, maintaining our status as a global leader in delicious, nutritious and sustainable food.

Our research shows that consumers want food that's nutritious and sustainable, provided it's also affordable and tasty. It also shows that they value convenience and choice; the ability to decide what's right for their bodies and their values.

To improve their health and wellbeing we have to meet them where they are, keep things easy and gently nudge them in the right direction. This document explains the approach we take to keeping healthy, nutritious, sustainable and delicious food at the forefront for everyone.

Wan Mak, Head of Nutrition and Dietetics
Sodexo UK & Ireland
March, 2025



With more than 30 years of experience, Wan is an award-winning registered dietitian and nutritionist.

In addition to her role at Sodexo UK&I, she chairs the Nutrition Expert group at UK Hospitality and judges a number of cross-sector events that support healthy innovations in the food industry.

She has a first-class honours degree in food science and nutrition, a post-graduate degree in Dietetics and a Masters in Business.

Wan Mak

FOR THE

LOVE OF FOOD

Our research shows that **35%** of consumers associate sustainable eating with better nutrition¹

Sodexo is the #1 largest employer of dietitians worldwide, with **5,402** experts

44% of Modern Recipe's lunch dishes incorporate Future 50 ingredients which are nutritious, tasty and have a low environmental impact

91% of Modern Recipe lunch dishes use healthier cooking methods like poaching, grilling or steaming

80% of future health may be determined by what's on your plate²

Our 'Veganuary' campaign at our Modern Recipe sites saw a **73%** uptake in vegan and vegetarian dishes

Our Modern Recipe menus are **50%** plant-forward and **50%** plant-based

We reviewed **300** product lines to create our new Smart Choice snacking brand

We analysed more than **2.5 million** orders in the last 12 months, tracking reductions in guest consumption of sugar, salt and fat

We secured a **Top 5** place in the 2025 ProVeg UK School Contract Caterer rankings

45% of dementia cases could potentially be prevented or delayed by targeting modifiable risk factors such as diet

96% of our Kitchen Works recipes contain low/medium levels of sugar, and **94%** low/medium levels of salt

¹Sodexo, Sustainable Food Barometer, 2024

²Sodexo, The Vibrant Mind: A Guide to Neuroprotective Nutrition, 2025

Serving delicious, nutritious and sustainable dishes across the UK and Ireland.

STARTING WITH THE EVIDENCE

Following the science and generating deep insight.

Our team of registered nutritionists and registered dietitians have a wealth of expertise, enabling them to analyse data on health impacts, interpret legal requirements and investigate consumption trends.

Understanding nutritional priorities

Too much of one thing or too little of another can lead to poor health outcomes. Although our own data suggests that guests are choosing healthier options, national indicators reveal some significant issues.

In England, for example, rates of obesity in reception-age children rose to 9.6% in 2023-2024, compared to 9.2% the year before.³

In Ireland, although rates are lower, as many as 7% of school children in disadvantaged areas are living with obesity.⁴

In every sector, we shape our food offer to support balanced diets and promote public health. We consider portion sizes, levels of salt and sugar, ingredient quality, nutrient density and healthier cooking methods. We think about what our bodies need at different times of the year, like extra Vitamin D in the winter, and what can help protect us as we age.

And as the largest food service provider to the armed forces in the UK, we understand that active military personnel often need something more.



We also consider the impact of food systems on climate change, tracking performance against our target for 70% of the main meals on our menus to be low carbon by 2030.⁵

*Our dietitians are licensed by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), enabling them to work in clinical settings, and our nutritionists are registered with the Association for Nutrition. Both are trained in the science of healthy eating and work closely together as one team.

Gathering consumer insight

Across the UK and Ireland, Sodexo serves more than one million meals a day. This gives us rich insight into consumption patterns and buying preference, enabling us to create nutritious recipes and menus that align perfectly to people's needs.

We also commission independent research, revealing future trends that will influence behaviour and create opportunities or challenges for our Nutrition and Dietetics team.

Considering future food trends

-  **Flexibility** - Hybrid working and all-day eating means guests are doing 'lunch hours' less.
-  **Personalisation** - food that matches each individual's lifestyle, health and mood
-  **Sustainability** - protecting the planet is a given, it's about ingredient provenance too
-  **Digital** - the more data we collect, the more insight we can share with clients and guests



Strong focus on allergens

Our Nutrition and Dietetics team works closely with their Food Safety and Supply Chain colleagues, supporting ever-tighter controls on provenance and ensuring clear allergen labels to protect each individual guest, including on prepacked goods for direct sale (PPDS). We also create recipes that avoid specific ingredients, for example, working directly with parents so that school-age children can enjoy lunch with their friends.

Analysing compliance and performance

Our Nutrition and Dietetics team plays a key role in data verification, ensuring that every product meet our standards around nutrition and allergens. This supports accurate analysis of recipes and menus too, enabling us to track performance, innovate safely and play a significant role in shaping the future of food services.

³GOV.UK Obesity Profile Statistics, November 2024


⁴Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative, Ireland, June 2024


⁵A meal generating 0.9 kg CO2e or less, a definition agreed with WWF

Nutritious, tasty and planet-conscious food: consumers want it all.

Our 2024 Sustainable Food Barometer shows that UK consumers want nutritious, sustainable meals that protect the planet without compromising on taste or affordability. Importantly, they see sustainable food as healthier; 35% associated it with better nutrition.

Consumers felt the same two things would help them eat more sustainably:

 **Inspiration** in the form of recipe ideas, preparation tips and cooking advice.

 **Information** on the nature and composition of sustainable products and dishes.

2024 Sustainable Food Barometer

We're helping with both, from inspiring children through education to using carbon labelling to nudge consumers towards sustainable choices. And we stay focused on the science, so that consumers can trust the information we share about the benefits of sustainable food to their bodies and the planet.

Our information sources

- Academic journals
- Published research
- Government guidance
- Industry networks



TAKING A WHOLE BODY APPROACH

Considering physical and mental health for each individual.

Thinking holistically about good health

UK employees take an average of 7.8 days of sick leave each year - the highest it's been in a decade - and mental ill health is now the top cause of long-term absence.⁶ Armed with the science of nutrition and latest consumer insight, we therefore tailor our approach to promote wellbeing in the broadest sense.

We take care to design and deliver food services that promote social interaction as well as physical health, because how and where we eat matters too. One study found that those who eat socially are happier in themselves and have more friends that can provide support when needed.⁷

We know that how and where we eat matters, and that connections made over food and in relaxing spaces can support wellbeing too.

We also know that the gut plays a crucial role in the absorption of key nutrients. Ongoing research into the microbiome suggests a clear link between the gut and long-term wellbeing, so our Nutrition and Dietetics experts advise our food brands to incorporate high-fibre ingredients – like wholegrains, fruit and vegetables – that can support mental wellness by promoting gut health.



⁶Health and Wellbeing at Work, CIPD, 2023

⁷Breaking Bread: The Functions of Social Eating, Dunbar et al, 2017

Sodexo + the Global Brain Health Initiative by Social Impact Partners

The world is facing a growing brain health crisis. If nothing changes, the number of people with neurodegenerative diseases will nearly double to more than 150 million by 2050.

In our report, *The Vibrant Mind: A Guide to Neuroprotective Nutrition*, we examine the nutrients that affect our mental and thinking processes and present practical, science-based recommendations. The result is a new neuroprotective diet for lifelong brain health.



Key findings

- Diet and lifestyle factors may account for up to 80% of health outcomes.
- 45% of dementia cases could potentially be prevented or delayed by targeting modifiable risk factors.
- Emerging research demonstrates that nutrient delivery is critical to maintaining cognitive health, such as memory, attention, and language skills.
- The brain-gut axis plays a crucial role in cognitive health, with microbiome composition significantly influencing brain function and neurodegeneration.
- Chronic diseases affecting brain health, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity, are largely influenced by dietary habits.

Brain-healthy recommendations

Through comprehensive analysis of leading brain-healthy dietary patterns, we reveal consistent themes in neuroprotective nutrition:

- High consumption of green leafy vegetables, berries and whole grains.
- Regular intake of fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids.
- Emphasis on plant-based proteins and healthy unsaturated fats.
- Limited consumption of processed and ultra-processed foods, sodium and added sugars.



Next steps

Through upcoming clinical trials, we will validate the optimal diet for neuroprotection, considering genetic, metabolic and other lifestyle factors. By implementing these dietary guidelines, we can potentially improve quality of life, reduce healthcare costs and address one of the most pressing health challenges of our time.

The Vibrant Mind: A Guide to Neuroprotective Nutrition

DELIGHTING EACH GUEST WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH

Our guests are unique, so we shape our food services to match. From supporting recovery in hospitals to keeping children fuelled for learning, we meet tight government standards yet never stop innovating.

Dining in Defence

To keep UK service personnel ready for anything, we follow Ministry of Defence guidance for the Military Performance Plate. Our menus balance proteins, starches and fibre-rich dishes in different proportions to match individual activity levels. We also encourage healthier choices through clear labelling. It goes without saying, but it tastes great too.



Feeding young minds

Following the strict UK government School Food Standards, we support healthy development while nurturing a love of food. By introducing plant-based alternatives, incorporating vegetables into desserts and explaining what matters in assemblies and classrooms, we turn healthy and sustainable food into exciting adventures.

Fun-filled, plant-based and packed full of goodness

Launched by WWF and Sodexo, Plant+ by Finer Diner promotes plant-based eating in UK and Ireland secondary schools. Initially trialled in 15 schools, a series of challenges, tasting days and other educational activities raised awareness of the climate benefits and increased the take-up of plant-based dishes.

In 2024, we won a ProVeg School Plates award for serving some of the healthiest and most climate-friendly school meals in the UK. And in 2025, we secured a top five place in the ProVeg School Contract Caterer rankings.

Complementing public health programmes

We work in partnership with others to support public health campaigns. For example, we continue to reformulate recipes to tackle obesity in young people, having reduced the amount of sugar per 100g of product by at least 10% year on year to support the Childhood Obesity Plan.



Meeting standards for school lunches, such as:

Every day

One or more portions of fruit & vegetables, starchy carbohydrates, proteins and food with milk or dairy

3 days a week

A portion of meat, poultry or non-dairy protein

Each week

A portion of wholegrain varieties of starchy carbohydrates, and at least 3 different fruits and 3 different vegetables

Every 3 weeks

At least one portion of oily fish

Aiding recovery

Working closely with NHS dietitians, we provide delicious and well-balanced food that meets the diverse needs of all patients. Like our 'Mini Meals Extra' range for young people with reduced appetites, or our innovative finger foods that benefit people with dementia. We also include plant-based recipes to promote sustainability and ensure that our menus meet cultural and religious needs too.

Each one of our hospital meals meets the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services, follows the Eatwell Guide and complies with the British Dietetic Association Nutrition and Hydration Digest.

Meeting hospital food standards

- Reductions in salt, sugar and saturated fat
- Increased availability of fruit, vegetables and fibre-rich foods
- Controlled availability and portion sizes of soft drinks, confectionery & savoury snacks
- Best practice calorie and allergen labelling and menu analysis
- Adequate hydration to support nutritional care

Advancing nutrition education for healthcare professionals

We understand the critical role nutrition plays in patient recovery and overall health and wellbeing. That's why Sodexo has joined forces with Culinary Medicine UK, a non-profit organisation, to further enhance patient care with a dedicated online platform offering NHS staff access to valuable nutrition education modules.

This industry-leading initiative offers hospital clinical staff the opportunity to enhance their understanding of clinical nutrition through practical, evidence-based learning through five modules which have been developed blending nutrition, health, and culinary expertise, covering critical topics.



Fuelling business and industry

We shape our food offer to match the needs of each client, supporting high performance in offices, in factories and offshore.

Our Modern Recipe brand caters to the health-conscious consumer that's looking for all-day convenience and food that matches their goals, from high fibre to low fat and a low carbon footprint. Health and wellbeing take centre-stage here; explore more on [page 12](#).

Kitchen Works powers offices and factories everywhere, serving firm favourites, adventurous flavours and Better Choice balanced options, making healthier food available everyday for everyone. Discover what makes a Better Choice on [page 13](#).



EMPOWERING MENU CREATIVITY

Considering physical and mental wellbeing for each individual.

Our Nutrition and Dietetics experts advise our food brands at every step of the menu development cycle. Working hand in hand with creative development chefs, they share the latest research, review recipes and cooking methods for nutrition and allergens and consider menus as a whole.

Our experts also help to tailor recipes for specific campaigns, like nutrition for sports or women's health. Their collaboration with the culinary team for International Women's Day led to a soy glazed chicken, edamame & radish poke bowl. Served with wholegrain rice, a complex carbohydrate that helps to increase fibre intake, it features a lean protein source, two of the five a day and essential vitamins and minerals.

HOW WE WORK

01

Considering the trends
what's on the horizon?

02

Reviewing guest insight
what's working well?

03

Meeting the guidance
on healthy eating for each sector.

04

Refreshing training
reinforcing procedures around safety and health.

05

Engaging our guests
drop-in events and appealing marketing campaigns

06

Co-creating menus
that promote wellbeing, maximise flavour and promote sustainable eating.

07

Thinking about behaviours
making salt available (but not on the table).

08

Keeping things clear
with simple labelling on allergens, calories and carbon

09

Collaborating with our supply chain
clear guidance that encourages reformulation

modern recipe

Meeting the needs of the health-conscious consumer.

Modern Recipe is our premium food brand that serves clients in business and industry. Designed for the health-conscious workforce, it promotes the wellbeing of individuals, communities and the planet by using the best seasonal ingredients, taking a plant-forward⁸ approach and developing fibre-rich recipes that promote a healthy gut. We know that how and where we eat matters too, and that connections made over food and in relaxing spaces can support wellbeing too.

[Find out more about Modern Recipe](#)



Nutrient diversity



We collaborate with Knorr Professional and WWF through the Future 50 ingredients initiative, embedding sustainable vegetables, grains and pulses in our dishes and crafting menus that are 50% vegetarian and 50% plant-forward.

Guest engagement



Our Nutrition and Dietetics experts run regular healthy eating events, including seminars and one-to-one clinics, plus pop-up restaurants that showcase nutritious, healthy dishes.

Clever campaigns



Our campaigns nudge guests in the right direction, like "Eat Well, Feel Great, Repeat" which promotes functional ingredients like wholegrains and other high fibre foods, including fruit and vegetables.

Great results



Through campaigns that promote the benefits of plant-based eating, we saw a 73% increase in the uptake of vegan and vegetarian dishes in January 2024, and in February 2024, an increase of 50%.

⁸Where two thirds of any dish comprise plant-based ingredients.

KITCHEN WORKS.

Making balanced choices part of the mainstream.

Our Kitchen Works 'Better Choice' range ensures that consumers can be confident they're choosing a complete and balanced meal.

Aligned to government guidelines and the traffic light labelling system, our Nutrition and Dietetics team swap ingredients and reduce others to support guests' health and wellbeing. For example, they might increase the amount of fibre through adding wholegrains, pulses, fruit and vegetables, or suggest leaner cuts of meat and other ingredients that are lower in fat or saturated fat. Now, 24% of complete main meals at breakfast and lunch (excluding pizzas and individually sold burgers) contain 10g of fibre per portion, which is one third of the daily recommended intake.

[Find out more about Kitchen Works](#)

Attributes	Recipes per 100g nutrition
Low/Medium fat	90%
Low/Medium salt	94%
Low/Medium sugar	96%

What makes a Better Choice?

A complete meal with carbohydrate source that also meets at least two of these claims:

- Source of Protein / High Protein
- Source of Fibre / High Fibre
- Low Fat
- Low Sugar
- Low Salt
- Wholegrains
- 1 or 2 of 5 a day
- Fish Portion



And that comes in below these calorie thresholds:

- Main Meal <600kcal
- Breakfast <350kcal
- Food to go <400kcal
- Smoothies < 200kcal

Our Kitchen Works 'Better Choice' range is available every day, making it easier for guests to choose a healthier option.

PROMOTING HEALTHY SNACKING

Making healthy options easy to spot.

Good nutrition is fundamental to wellbeing, yet retail packaged goods (RPG) often display claims about healthier cooking methods or ingredients that obscure high levels of salt, fat or sugar in the products.

Our Nutrition and Dietetics team worked with our RPG suppliers to review government guidance, separate the claims from the facts on more than 300 product lines, and create a new brand that makes it easier to choose healthier snacks and drinks.

Introducing 'Smart Choice'

This clear brand identity helps guests to identify healthier options at a glance, whether at point of sale or using our app. Users buying through click-and-collect can filter for Smart Choice snacks and drinks too.

Our Nutrition and Dietetics team also worked with our buyers to explain the new approach and ensure that suppliers were aware of the thinking that informed it.

Launched in 2025 to help nudge consumers towards healthier snacks, this approach has been warmly welcomed by guests and site managers. We'll continue to track its take-up in stores and on the app and to refine our strategy to make the healthier choice an easier choice.



Smart Choice explained

Snacks

- 200 calories or fewer
- 'Green' and 'Amber' ratings only (unless the 'Red' arises from high levels of a natural nutrient, e.g. the fat in nuts)
- Minimum weights per portion for fruit and vegetables
- Crisps and savoury extruded snacks must not be deep fried and weigh no more than 35g

Drinks

- No added sugar or caffeinated drinks
- 300 calories or fewer for milk-based beverages
- Fruit juice must be 150ml-200ml to contribute 1 of 5 a day

ENGAGING

OUR GUESTS

Empowering better choices
for life.

The power of information

Good nutrition strategies must take into account that people value choice above all else. That's why education plays a key role in how we support our guests, and we work hard to inform, engage and promote healthy habits wherever we can.

Making learning fun

We hold assemblies on the science of nutrition and raise awareness of the connection between food waste and climate change, aiming to encourage healthier choices inside and outside the gates.

Focusing on positive appeal

Supported by research into consumer behaviour, we guide people towards a balanced diet without lecturing them on the facts. We know that marketing materials that promote the attributes of a healthier option, for example 'rich in wholegrains' works better than language that emphasises exclusion, like 'cutting down'.

Being clear on labels

Whether it's allergen labelling, calorie counts or carbon emissions, we ensure that vital information is clearly visible at our sites and on our app. With the addition of our Smart Choice brand for healthier snacks and drinks, we're making it easier for guests to make quick decisions and take charge of their wellbeing.



LOOKING AHEAD

Working for better health and wellbeing.



Sustaining an evidence-based approach

Obesity remains a major concern in most advanced economies and puts enormous pressure on people's wellbeing, not to mention health services. We are continuing to reduce levels of sugar and fat in our menus and to promote balanced eating, and our data suggests that guests are actively choosing healthier options.

Seeking clarity on UPFs

Recently, the debate around nutrition has shifted to ultra-processed foods (UPFs). This term describes foods that use ingredients you would not find at home, such as artificial preservatives or emulsifiers, or foods that go through a high number of processes.

However, a lack of clarity is hampering efforts to tackle the biggest health risks. A pre-packaged cake containing high levels of fat and sugar attracts the same description as foods that can form part of a healthy diet, like baked beans on wholemeal toast.

We know from our work on our snacking brand Smart Choice that consumers respond well to clear information. We would welcome the opportunity to work with government and industry to agree a workable definition that informs the right action.

The power of choice

Informed choice remains vital to healthier eating patterns. Through clear labelling, behavioural nudges and seamless buying experiences, we will continue to promote better nutrition in ways that meet evolving consumer demand and support health and wellbeing for everyone.



SERVING **FOOD** WITH **IMPACT**



At Sodexo, we care deeply about food. We care about flavour, about provenance and about how what we eat – and who we eat with – can positively impact body and mind. We care about the planet too, paying close attention to the ingredients we source and the way we use them to minimise our carbon footprint.

Our passion and our creativity are elevated by it all.

From a development chef's 'lightbulb moment' to when a guest enjoys a perfectly presented dish, our culinary, nutrition and sustainability teams are working hand in hand.

Together, we look at the latest trends and at recipe ideas. We consider sustainable sourcing, allergen controls and the all-important taste test.

And we make sure that the nutritional content – and the information we produce to promote it – is absolutely rooted in the evidence.

For us, food is art. And as we push the boundaries of flavour and deliver flawless service, we never forget that it's a science too.

Matt Hay
Head of Culinary, Sodexo UK & Ireland
March, 2025

Get the latest news on
uk.sodexo.com

1 Southampton Row
London
WC1B 5HA

