



# OUR FOOD CULTURE



CHARITY NUMBER: 1176690

# WELCOME TO THE MADE IN HACKNEY FAMILY!

You are most likely reading this as you are joining us as a new teacher or chef. Thank you for bringing your culinary talents to our kitchen.

**Made In Hackney is a community of plant-based cooks. We appreciate your culinary contribution, the foodways, culinary heritage and skills you bring to the table.**

Food has the power to celebrate and bring together diverse communities, support health and wellbeing, nourish and comfort us, and make a positive impact on the climate crisis. This is what food at Made In Hackney is all about.

We write this document not to be overly prescriptive, but to ensure our chefs and cooks are grounded in the same philosophy of evolving people's diets to one that is **good for the health of people and the planet**. A diet that centres and celebrates plants.

Due to the nature of the world we are living in food politics and food related health advice is constantly evolving, so we hope we can go on a learning journey together and enjoy the **ongoing conversation**.

Thankyou for the food.

With love,  
Your MIH Family  
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# A 100% PLANT-BASED WHOLEFOOD KITCHEN

We centre the power of plants in all we do at our cookery school which means in practice that all our food is vegan.

Vegan means no animal products or animal product derivatives therefore no meat, fish, eggs, dairy or honey are used in any of our classes, meals or events. Instead **we celebrate and centre fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, grains, herbs and spices – and the skills needed to get the most out of these delicious ingredients.**

We aim to equip people with the skills, knowledge and inspiration to cook and eat more nutritionally balanced, tasty, 100% plant-based meals and to normalise eating like this on a regular basis.



# THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS OF EATING A MORE WHOLEFOOD PLANT-CENTRED DIET



**Increasing your consumption of plant-based foods prepared using healthy cooking methods can contribute positively to your overall health and well-being**

Wholefood plant-based meals usually have a lower environmental impact than animal product derived meals – they are generally less carbon intensive, use less land, less water and regenerative practices can be used to improve soils.

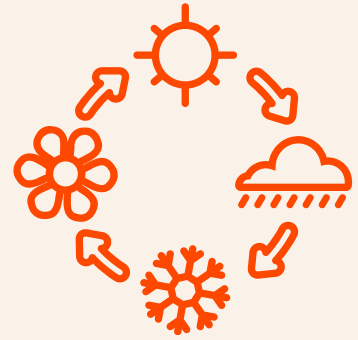
**Vegan meals are more culturally inclusive and meet the needs of a wide variety of religious and cultural groups.**

Vegan meals cooked communally are safer from a food hygiene perspective, especially when cooking with children.

**Staple plant-based ingredients such as legumes are an excellent source of protein and are generally cheaper than animal product derived protein.**

Vegan meals are kind as they do not use any animal products. If most people had a close look inside the industrialised farming system and how animals are reared, treated and slaughtered within it, most would agree it is far from kind.

# ADVICE FOR OUR TEACHERS



- 1.** If using produce that is widely grown in the UK, please find UK grown sources and only use it when in season. For example we request that you don't use imported fresh strawberries or other berries in December, but other seasonal fruit like apples or pears instead. Or alternatively use dried, canned or frozen fruit.
- 2.** Do use imported international ingredients – yams, plantain, okra, mangos etc – when integral to the class theme e.g. if you are teaching a Caribbean, West African or Indian class for example.
- 3.** Imported fruits – bananas, mangos, pineapple, lemons, oranges etc – are staples in the UK despite being imported. It is fine to use them in classes but do try to centre seasonal British grown fruit as much as practical.

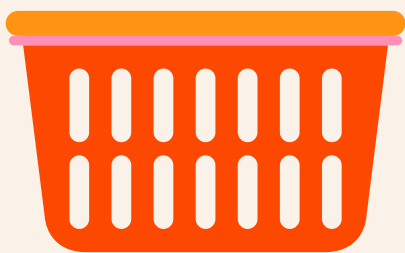
## LOCAL, SEASONAL, ORGANIC?

Our food policy for many years was based on four pillars - local, seasonal, organic and plant-based. We have now revised this policy to centre only plant-based.

Although these three pillars have many environmental benefits, **this approach has become increasingly cost prohibitive** for many of our community members. It is also **not inclusive of essential cultural ingredients used in the cuisines of diverse communities**, which as an anti-racist organisation, was not an inclusive approach.

We also now use **food surplus** donations for community meals which often means not having a choice about whether the ingredients are local, seasonal and organic.

We therefore ask our teachers and chefs to **be mindful of ingredient sourcing** – our preference always being local, seasonal and organic - but with no need to follow this in such a strict way as we previously requested.



# SOURCING

## **SURPLUS, PAY WHAT YOU CAN & COMMUNITY PANTRIES**

As the cost of living crisis has spiralled, people are looking for alternative ways to access cheaper fresh produce - and we should be able to help with this. MIH partner Streetbox, is a local low cost fruit and veg box scheme that specialises in surplus produce and also has a pay-what-you-can shop. There are also community food pantries and cooperatives all over London.

**Before teaching in an external venue for MIH, find out about local community food initiatives, fresh produce markets and budget independent shops you can recommend as opposed to relying on big supermarkets.**

We're not 'against' big supermarkets per se as many people have to rely on them, particularly more budget conscious one's like Lidl (excellent organic staples) - but independents and community led initiatives that offer an alternative, juster approach to the food system is always our preference.



## **WE HEART LOCAL ORGANIC FRUIT & VEG BAG SCHEMES**

For many years we used a fruit and veg bag sourced from Growing Communities, a fantastic Hackney based cooperative. All the produce in these bags are organic, locally grown and seasonal – except a few non-local items in the fruit bags.

**Growing Communities** takes Healthy Start vouchers, offers a Pensioners discount and runs a market on a Saturday. They have a veg bag pick-up point at Liberty Hall, our HQ. Although we don't use these bags in all of our classes anymore, please promote this scheme to class participants and similar ones in other areas of London or the UK depending on where you are cooking.



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

## 9-A-DAY

The UK's 5-A-Day recommendation to eat 5 portions of fruits and veggies a day was based on the existing population's baseline, rather than nutritional best practice. For many years Scotland recommended 3 a day because the population's baseline was so low (they now recommend 5 a day), but in Greece they recommend 9 a day. But with rising food prices and living costs, this has become challenging for many households.

## WHY IS LOCAL NOT ALWAYS BEST

Food ethics can be complicated. Tomatoes grown locally in the UK but out of season and in a hot house, most likely have a higher carbon footprint than tomatoes grown in Spain in season and are then shipped over. If produce is locally grown in season e.g. no unnatural high inputs are needed to make it grow, it usually has a lower carbon footprint.



## SCRUBBING & PEELING

If using non-organic produce, it's important to scrub and clean them to remove pesticide residue. A vegetable scrubber and peeler can be helpful tools. The Environmental Working Group releases The Clean 15 list of items with the least pesticide residue.

### LANGUAGE ALERT

**Food surplus** instead of **food waste**, please. Being offered 'waste' isn't a dignified approach, whereas saving food for the sake of the environment and utilising surplus is.

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY WHOLEFOODS?

Wholefoods means **minimally processed plant foods in their natural, unrefined state**, or, ingredients that haven't had other filler ingredients – E numbers, preservatives, extra sugars and oil - added to them and so tend to be nutritionally more beneficial.

This means **we don't use pre-made ingredients in our cookery classes such as sauces, vegan cheese, vegan fake meat and bread** – but teach students how to make these items from scratch e.g. a homemade burger patty, fermented nut or seed cheese or homemade bread. We have run fundraising classes with vegan cheese and meat brands with cleanish labels, but these are the exception rather than the rule!

When using items such as vegetable stock and sauces such as soya sauce or Tamari check you are using brands with low salt, sugar and no E numbers – such as products made by Kallo, Marigold or Clearspring.

**Before using a product in a MIH class, study the ingredients label. If you're not sure whether we would support using this in a class, let's discuss.**



*We do sometimes use manufactured vegan cheese and vegan meat products in community meals (not feasts though) to provide comfort and variety as many people who receive the meals are not vegan or veggie so appreciate these alternatives.*



## WHOLEGRAIN

When possible and practical, especially in our community classes, instead of white rice, white flour and white sugar, **use nutritionally better options** such as brown rice, wholemeal or spelt flour. Introducing people to new, healthier ingredients is part of the MIH journey – we want to widen people's culinary horizons and increase their fibre intake.

# HEALTH IS OUR WEALTH

## HEALTHY COOKERY TECHNIQUES

Regardless of how many plants you use in your recipes, if you slather them in oil and sugar and deep fry them the recipe still isn't going to be healthy. Delicious yes, but healthy no. In our cookery classes we focus on healthy cookery techniques such as steaming, sauté, oven baking, dehydrating, raw/massaging and blending.



## AUTHENTICITY VS HEALTH

To make dishes authentically, we understand this often involves sometimes using less healthy cookery techniques and ingredients. For example traditional samosas would always be deep fried. But our Indian specialist cookery teacher developed a baked one that people can replicate at home and still tastes delicious.

**Can you adapt your recipes so they are still delicious but healthier?**

# COMMUNITY COOKERY CLASSES VS MASTERCLASSES



In our community cooking sessions, we prioritise health, well-being, and the nutritional value of the food we prepare. This involves being mindful of the recipes we select for the class. While maintaining the nutritious aspect, in our specialised masterclasses we place a stronger emphasis on authenticity, especially when there's no suitable substitute to achieve the same flavour profile.

We never do deep frying in a community cookery class for health reasons, but also would never have all students deep frying in a masterclass for safety reasons - our venue is too small to have 6 pans of blazing oil on the go. If a masterclass teacher feels they absolutely must deep fry something - this should be a demonstration and not the whole class doing it. But please talk to the MIH staff member that has booked you about this first.

## OH, EXCEPT THAT ONE TIME...

Ha! **There are always exceptions.** When we ran a class at Leiths Cookery School with chef Sami Tamimi he insisted falafels had to be deep fried. As Leiths is a much larger kitchen with many professional chefs supporting, on this occasion everyone did deep fry. Likewise in a Trinidadian Carnival online class the deep frying of the pholourie was deemed essential to the experience, and as everyone was cooking in their own spaces – we did it! No doubt some deep frying will happen again, but they're not a regular part of a MIH class.





## THE OIL QUANDARY

Made In Hackney dishes should always be low in oil unless you're using oil to preserve something in.

There is much debate about which oil is best to use for what. **We use Extra Virgin Olive Oil for salads and roasting and a good quality sunflower or rapeseed oil for light frying.** Avocado oil and sesame oil have nice flavour profiles but are a bit pricey. We used to recommend coconut oil but as health professionals are now more united on this, we don't recommend it due to its high volume of saturated fat so we now request you only use this in moderation for baking or if a recipe absolutely requires it.

## SALT OF THE EARTH

Dishes should be so flavoursome that they retrain people's palates to not crave as much salt. **Season food with spices, herbs, apple cider, balsamic vinegar or citrus - and a pinch of good quality rock salt if necessary.** Acid (vinegar / citrus) increases the perception of saltiness and helps us to crave less salt. Never put salt on the table to add after cooking. Marmite is a good addition to a dish in moderation as it has salt but also B12. Good quality tamari, soya sauces and low sodium stock cubes have nutritional benefits as well as salt. People with high blood pressure and other conditions are referred to our classes by health professionals – we need to support them by being very salt aware!

## SOMETHING SWEET

We love a good dessert. However we focus on one's that are low in sugar with nutritional benefits by being packed with fruits, veggies, seeds, nuts and even legumes. Chocolate brownies are of course delicious – but in a MIH class try making them using sweet potato and black beans. Despite its scary name xylitol is a good sugar alternative as is stevia as they don't have the same impact on blood sugar levels. Fancy pastes and syrups – molasses, date, carob, mixed fruit, maple – are all delicious with different nutritional profiles but can be pricey so are not always suitable to use in our community cookery classes. **Avoid using white sugar and golden syrup. A MIH dessert should be delicious, nourishing and as much as possible support the myriad of health conditions of the participants that come to our classes.**

Please don't add sugar to any savoury dishes unless integral for the science - such as when making kombucha.



# THE VIBE

**In a Made In Hackney cookery class the vibe is relaxed and collaborative.** Get comfortable with asking participants to share their knowledge and cooking practices, you don't need to know everything – it's a two way exchange and some extremely knowledgeable people show up to our classes – so utilise them! That said...



- ☒ Have a lesson plan with key learning outcomes for each session
- ☒ Any tips and tricks that need sharing or come up when talking to a smaller group, get the whole class's attention and share with everyone.
- ☒ Get comfortable with politely (with a smile) interrupting the class (who hopefully will be merrily chatting to each other) to share knowledge. We have a little service bell you can ring to do this which is quite fun.
- ☒ Some teachers have music on when the class arrives and need warming up – this is a nice touch. No tunes with naughty lyrics that could offend though please!

## TOXIC DIET CULTURE FREE ZONE

Because we promote wholefood plant-based food at MIH don't get that twisted with toxic diet culture. **We don't talk about dieting or counting Kcal in our classes unless vital for a specific health condition.** Count colours not Kcal to encourage a wide variety of nourishing and satisfying plants on plates.

We never talk about 'guilt-free' food (egh) or imply any food should induce guilt. A little bit of what you fancy should be enjoyed. We never use 'light' or diet products in our classes as these are often full of artificial sweeteners or just a con. A can of light coconut milk just has water added. Buy a standard one and add water yourself if you want a lighter coconut milk and get double the amount!

# PAPA DON'T PREACH



A MIH class is a preaching/lecturing free zone.

**Our classes celebrate food and dishes approached with curiosity, joy and celebration.**

Please do not lecture people on the benefits of veganism or plant-based eating, but drop in little pearls of wisdom as you go along to spark interest. People should leave the classes feeling inspired to eat more plants – and not feeling angry, depressed or anxious about what they currently eat.

## IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

No? Please don't pretend to be one.

**Only give specific health advice if you are a qualified and insured dietician, doctor, nutritionist or naturopath.**

Of course, share general information – this is high in fibre which is good for X or Y, but please don't answer questions in relation to specific illnesses unless you're qualified to do so. Much health advice IS shared amongst community members and this is vital, but you must quantify any statements with, "As I'm not a nutritionist or Doctor you would need to do your research," as otherwise we could get in a legal tangle!

# SUPPLEMENTS



It is essential our teachers know that the recommendation for anyone following a vegan diet is to take daily B12 and D3 supplements.

**B12 is found in the soil so meat eaters get it via animals.** Plant-eaters don't tend to get it anymore as our fruits and vegetables are so clean. Food sources of B12 are marmite and enriched engevita flakes aka nutritional yeast.

**D3 is recommended for all people living in the UK,** particularly people with darker skins who need more sun exposure to convert to the required levels of D3 than lighter skins.

Other recommendations include supplementing DHA & EPA oil (omega oils from algae) and taking a vegan multivitamin. If people feel tired after transitioning to a vegan diet it's worth having your iron levels tested.

**To increase iron absorption you can squeeze vitamin C containing citrus fruits onto folate/iron rich dark leafy greens. Brilliant hey!**

# FOOD POLITICS

Certain plant-based ingredients can be problematic, and we encourage conversation and information sharing about this. However, do remember ingredients are often demonised from quite a westernised angle – and it is the colonised, capitalist system of food that is the issue – rather than the ingredient itself. Let's look at some examples.

**Palm oil** has received a lot of negative press as mass farming of palms has destroyed the homes of orangutans and great swathes of the Amazon rainforest. But palm oil made from palms grown in small holdings in West Africa is a completely different story. Yet many people have developed the opinion – all palm oil = bad, with no nuance or wider understanding that this simply isn't the case.



**Quinoa** consumption boom being cited as a cause of hunger amongst Bolivian communities who could no longer afford to eat this staple grain. Quinoa can be sourced from all over the world and is even grown in the UK by a company called Hodmedod.

**Almond milk** was reported to be extremely environmentally unsustainable due to the mass almond farms in California that were consuming the water at an alarming rate and causing droughts. Are all almonds and almond milk "bad"? Almonds are grown in many parts of the world other than California.



Other ingredients surrounded by controversy include **avocados** (their popularity has triggered the avocado wars with rival mafia's competing to control the trade), **soya** (virgin rainforest cut down to grow soya) and **coconuts** (reports of chained up monkeys being used to harvest them). We could go on...

**Try not to label an ingredient good or bad** just because you read a compelling story about it. Do your research, look at your sourcing of it carefully, and the wider story behind it and go from there. Talk to a community that uses this ingredient widely in their cuisine – get a fuller picture.

# MILK IT

Plant-milks have really boomed. Ten years ago people were outraged about not having cow milk in their tea but now millions of people choose oat, hemp, soya, rice or coconut as their go to milk. We recommend people choose non-sweetened varieties and to mix it up a bit for nutritional variety.



## DAIRY IS SCARY

Some ideas of what to say if a participant asks you what's wrong with dairy.

**The dairy and meat industry uses a lot of resources (water, fuel, feed, land) and is a very polluting industry – generating more pollution than every car, plane, van and train on earth!**

## NO NEED TO CONSUME DAIRY TO GET CALCIUM

This can be found in tahini (sesame seeds), dried fruits and legumes. You need vitamin D to absorb calcium so get some sun or ensure to take a D3 supplement – most people in the UK need to take this unless they work outdoors. Interestingly in 2017 Canada removed 'dairy' as an essential food group from their national eat well guidelines.

People are increasingly becoming less comfortable with the realities of industrial and even small-scale dairy farming. Our classes aren't the place to go into this but you can recommend people watch short clips such as Dairy is Scary online if they want to know more. But so you know as a teacher the main issues are:

- Calves are removed from their mothers 1-2 days after birth, much to the distress of mother and child, and then either shot dead, put in a crate for veal, or kept separated to become a dairy cow.
- Dairy cows are kept in this horrendous cycle of pregnancy, child removal and constant milking (leading to mastitis and other nasties) until exhausted at approximately 4-5 years old.
- When they stop producing milk in large enough quantities to be deemed profitable they are then slaughtered and turned into dog food. That's gratitude for you. Heffers would naturally live to 20 years old if not made to endure this endless process of milk production for humans.

## SHOULD THE WORLD GO VEGAN?

Let's remember that the dairy and meat industry relates to communities and cultures that rely on the modern industrial food system. Indigenous, nomadic, and rural or coastal communities traditionally include animal foods in their diets and we're not suggesting that groups like the Inuits or the Masai should switch to a vegan lifestyle.



## GREEN WARRIORS

When teaching and cheffing at MIH put your best eco-warrior foot forward. **Try to source ingredients not in plastic wrap, bring ingredients in cloth tote bags not carrier bags, buy legumes in glass jars not tins – if you can find them, avoid using cling film unless crucial. Use produce wisely – keep stalks for stock or fermenting, peels for zesting and teach our participants how to use every aspect of fresh produce.**

Rinse out all packaging to be properly recycled, put cooked food waste in the cooked food waste bin and all raw food peelings in our compost bin at Liberty Hall. When cooked food or peelings end up in the MIH landfill bin it explodes after 30 seconds. Seriously.

If working in an external venue ask them in advance about their recycling, cooked food waste and composting facilities and prepare accordingly e.g. if you must take the composting away with you, never dash it all into the landfill during one of our classes.

# WHAT ABOUT GLUTEN?



**We are not a gluten-free kitchen but we accommodate people on a gluten-free or reduced gluten diet** – so you need to have gluten free recipes up your cheffy sleeve!

Research suggests when eaten excessively (which many of us do) poor quality gluten in heavily processed breads and pastas is not good for our gut health and can cause inflammation. Fermented or sprouted wheat e.g. sourdough or sprouted bread is better for our health as it's easier to digest.

Gluten sensitivity rather than celiac disease is on the rise as people are noticing symptoms such as bloating and skin complaints improving when they remove gluten. It may be useful to point out to people that gluten-free products are not necessarily healthier, depending on the rest of the ingredients and quality.

**Celiac disease is very serious so if someone in the class has this illness absolutely nothing with gluten should be used in the class. However, they do need to be informed that our small kitchen handles allergens with no space to store allergen free equipment and we therefore cannot guarantee no cross contamination has occurred.**

Gluten intolerance is easier to manage as people tend to know themselves what foods contain gluten or not. Just be careful not to mix utensils or pans.

## NO BOOZE PLEASE

**To accommodate different cultures, religions and people in recovery MIH is an alcohol-free kitchen** so sorry no tipples of rum in a community class dish or meal. Be mindful ingredients like vanilla essence can be triggers for people in recovery. Corporate team building classes are a different story, they often want booze or they won't come!





## NOW YOU MENTION COMPOSTING...

It's the cycle of life, man – learn to love it. **We know you're not all food growers but please get to grips with the composting food cycle** and the ideal compost recipe e.g. 50% greens (nitrogen) and 50% carbon (browns).

See our handout for further details. **Show participants how to compost and teach them how to do it at home or to use the council bin or communal bin if on an estate/shared building.**

During the class don't forget to add browns (carbon) in the form of paper towels, paper veg bags, tea bags etc to the compost bowl in class and afterwards in the bin outside. As you add it to the composter please also add some brown leaves from the garden to add the carbon.

You cannot put cooked food waste into a home composter (nor the one at MIH) as this attracts rodents to your compost bin. **All cooked food waste must be put into a council collection food waste bin as they heat this to very high temperatures to turn it into safe soil.**



# THE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT



MIH cookery classes are most importantly FUN and full of JOY.

**Our classes focus on what people can eat as opposed to what they can't. We do not judge people on their current eating habits or make them feel bad about them – we inspire them to eat better by creating wonderful, positive, fun, supportive sessions with good food at the centre.**

We also do not lecture or preach to anyone about veganism, no matter how much we want too – we let the food do the talking! Recipes should be seasoned with lots of laughs, jokes, joy, love and smiles. None of us are the perfect model of ethical, sustainable, healthy eating, we're all on this journey together. Let's make it a joyful one.

# Made In Hackney Eatwell Guide

The MIH Eatwell Guide is an adapted version of the Public Health England Eatwell Guide.

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy	Fat	Saturates	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	3.0g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
13%	4%	LOW	HIGH	MED
		7%	38%	15%

of an adult's reference intake  
Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

Choose foods lower  
in fat, salt and sugars



Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.

Calcium



Iron



Per day



2000kcal

2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS