

Edinburgh Napier University



Case study

“Meat Free Monday has a bigger influence than just promoting vegetarianism at the University. What it does is get students and staff thinking about their eating habits and allows for debate, discussion, and reflection on the way we eat and impact the environment.”

Ankit Duggal, Heloisa Fyfe and Nikhil Reddem, Edinburgh Napier Students' Association Officers

University background

Home to over 19,500 students from more than 140 countries, Edinburgh Napier University comprises of six specialist schools – Business, Applied Sciences, Arts & Creative Industries, Computing, Engineering & the Built Environment and Health & Social Care – spread across three campuses. Each school is an institution in its own right with world-class facilities, academics, researchers and international links.

Environmental sustainability

With a serious commitment to environmental sustainability, Edinburgh Napier University actively seeks ways to reduce its carbon footprint. Between the academic years of 2006/2007 and 2019/2020, the university achieved a carbon reduction of 65% through decreasing its gas, water and electricity consumption. It decided to reduce the amount of meat used in cooked lunches primarily to raise awareness of the impact of animal agriculture but also to give vegetarian/vegan students more options and encourage non-vegetarian/vegan students to try something new.



Since starting Meat Free Monday, Edinburgh Napier University has more than doubled the number of vegetarian and vegan dishes sold on Mondays

“Meat Free Monday is such a great way to promote more plant-based diets and show our students and staff how easy it can be to reduce individual meat consumption. Great for our planet and our health!”

Indre Maleckaite, Petra Čerešňíková, Juki Inaba and Emilia Heiskanen, Edinburgh Napier Sustainable Society Student Committee Members



Meat Free Monday launch

Edinburgh Napier University trialled Meat Free Monday during December 2018 without any promotion. The aim was to get a feel of how such an initiative would be received if implemented. The feedback was positive and so the university officially launched Meat Free Monday in January 2019. The launch was accompanied by a campaign which engaged and interacted with students so that they became part of the conversation. Key to this was a competition where students suggested vegetarian or vegan dishes they wanted to see on the menu. With almost 100 replies and comments across Facebook and Twitter, the winning dish was Gnocchi with Tomato and Basil, which remains on the menu to this day. Throughout the January launch period, the campaign was promoted on Mondays on social media and on posters and digital screens around the campuses. As Meat Free Monday came to be more established, promotion was more focused at the start of the academic year and around key dates in the calendar such as Climate Week and Veganuary.

Lunchtime provision

Open to staff, students and visitors from 7.30am-2.45pm, the university has catering outlets serving cooked food across all its three campuses – Craiglockhart, Merchiston, and Sighthill. While staff and students are able to buy sandwiches that may include cold cuts of meat, the hot lunch options on Mondays are exclusively meat free. As well as the competition-winning gnocchi, dishes include vegetable frittatas, cauliflower wings and falafel with flatbread. The soup option is always vegan and there is also a range of vegetarian and vegan salads, sandwiches and wraps.

Meat Free Monday impact

The initial reaction to the introduction of Meat Free Monday was mixed, with about a 50/50 split of positive and negative comments on social media posts. However, the overall engagement from staff and students, and the fact that around 50 different vegetarian/vegan items were suggested for inclusion on the menu, encouraged the university to stand behind the campaign and continue promoting its benefits.

Between January 2019 and January 2020, 8,629 Meat Free Monday vegetarian meals were sold across all three campuses. The year before, when outlets sold both meat and vegetarian options on Mondays, only 3,711 vegetarian dishes were sold. The university is proud that, thanks to Meat Free Monday, they have more than doubled the number of vegetarian dishes sold on Mondays. The initiative has also had a positive impact on vegetarian meals sold generally. Between January 2019 and January 2020, a total of 21,610 meat free meals were sold compared to 18,252 the previous year – an increase of 18%.

With the campaign going strong and such encouraging results, in 2020 all Meat Free Monday hot meals were vegan for the month of January, and the university also held a Vegan Food Festival which received positive feedback from students and staff.

"I think Meat Free Monday is a great initiative that shows everyone that a change into a more sustainable and environmental lifestyle doesn't have to happen overnight and can be made in small steps and by reducing. It doesn't feel like a big change to one person, but all students in the university who participate in this can be compared to small streams which eventually join into a big river that drives the change for the better."

Juki Inaba, Student Treasurer of Edinburgh Napier Sustainable Society



"We constantly review our menus and engage with everyone to ensure we are offering a good, varied and healthy balance. We have a dedicated catering inbox where we ask both students and staff to email us with suggestions and improvements. Our chefs share recipes, top tips about reducing waste and we recently introduced a plant-based menu to our daily hospitality, which has been well received. Meat Free Mondays are here to stay at Edinburgh Napier University."

Lorna Padden, Edinburgh Napier Hospitality and Events Manager

Two years on

Meat Free Monday has become a permanent feature of Edinburgh Napier catering and there are also now more vegetarian and vegan options available throughout the week. On the previous 6-week menu cycle, 51% of cooked meals were vegetarian or vegan. With the new 4-week menu cycle, 60% of cooked meals are vegetarian or vegan. And the desire for even more vegetarian and vegan options is something that staff and students are vocal about – in the university's 2019 catering survey, 14% of responses to the question "What could we improve on?" referred to adding more vegetarian and vegan options.

Sadly Covid-19 has affected campus life with catering outlets having to close in 2020/2021, but the university hopes that, in the new academic year, everything will be up and running as normal with Meat Free Monday back in full swing.

University contact details

Edinburgh Napier University, Sighthill Campus, Sighthill Court, Edinburgh, EH11 4BN
Telephone 0333 900 6040
Website www.napier.ac.uk
Facebook Edinburgh Napier University
Twitter @EdinburghNapier



Monday menus

Meat Free Monday

Edinburgh Napier UNIVERSITY Catering

Roasted Vegetable Frittata (V / GF) £2.50
with courgettes, peppers and onion

Gnocchi (V) £2.95
in a tomato, spinach and basil sauce

Meal Deal £3.00
Vegetable Frittata and chips

Sides
Chips (side) £1.00
Chips (portion) £1.60
Sweetcorn and peppers 60p
Garlic Bread £1.00



Meat Free Monday

Edinburgh Napier UNIVERSITY Catering

Aubergine and Bean Casserole (V / GF) £2.75
Cannelloni, kidney and borlotti beans with aubergine, red lentils, spices and tomatoes

Potato, Mushroom and Leek Bake (V / GF) £2.75

Meal Deal £3.15
Aubergine Casserole with potatoes

Sides
Garlic New Potatoes 75p
Carrots 60p
Side Salad 60p



Meat Free Monday

Edinburgh Napier UNIVERSITY Catering

Stuffed Peppers with Quinoa (V / GF) £2.95
with onion, sundried tomato, mixed beans, coriander and basil

Cauliflower Wings (V) £2.95
spiced and coated in panko breadcrumbs

Meal Deal £3.25
Stuffed Peppers and Green Beans

Sides
Boiled New Potatoes 65p
Green Beans 60p
Mixed Salad 60p



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