

Vegan express 1

From Earth to Plate: Vegan Cuisine for a Sustainable Future

Intercollegiate Competitions & Workshop on Vegan Cuisine

6th & 7th August, 2026 • SJHMCT Palai Campus

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Why Vegan Express?

Indian culinary traditions have long embraced plant-based cooking, rooted in philosophy, sustainability, health, and respect for nature. Vegan cuisine reflects this ancient wisdom through the use of grains, pulses, vegetables, fruits, herbs, and spices to create balanced, ethical, and environmentally harmonious meals.

With a growing global emphasis on sustainability and wellness, vegan cuisine has gained renewed relevance. In this context, SJHMCT, Palai presents VEGAN EXPRESS – Vegan Cuisine Edition, celebrating India's rich plant-based heritage while encouraging sustainable, innovative, and culturally rooted culinary practices.

What We Aim to Stir

To promote India's traditional and regional vegan culinary heritage with a strong focus on sustainability

To encourage zero-waste kitchen practices, efficient ingredient utilisation, and responsible disposal

To inspire creative and innovative vegan dishes that balance tradition, nutrition, and environmental responsibility

To educate students, chefs, and food enthusiasts on ethical food choices and eco-friendly kitchen operations

The Heart of the Plate

This edition of VEGAN EXPRESS focuses on India's plant-based culinary heritage, with special emphasis on sustainability and zero-waste kitchen practices. All workshops, competitions, and activities will strictly align with this central theme.

Proposed Schedule

Event Date:

6th & 7th August, 2026

Duration:

Two days of immersive bootcamp sessions and competitions

Venue:

St. Joseph's Institute of Hotel Management & Catering Technology (SJHMCT) Palai, Choondacherry, Pala, Kerala





Vegan Culinary Bootcamp & Challenges

6th August ▼

Culinary Bootcamp

09:30 - 11:00 am

Inauguration @ St. Francis Hall

Bootcamp @ Multipurpose Kitchen or St. Francis Hall

11:15 - 12:00 pm

Session 1: Introduction to Vegan Cuisine –

12:15 - 01:00 pm

Session 2: Zero Waste Kitchen:

The Future of the Modern Food Industry

01:30 - 02:15 pm

Session 3: Innovation Meets Sustainability
in the Kitchen

02:30 - 03:15 pm

Session 4: The Importance of New-Age Cuisine:
Shaping the Future of Food

03:30 - 04:15 pm

Session 5: Healthy Eating in the Modern World:
Balancing Nutrition and Lifestyle

7th August ▼

1) Culinary Challenge

Vegan Menu Challenge

09:30 - 12:30 @ Multipurpose Kitchen

Participating: Team of two contestants

Challenge Requirements:

- Each team shall conceptualize and present a four-course 100% vegan menu.
- Menu must be rooted in tradition with one innovative dish and the menu needs to be submitted prior to the event in the prescribed format.
- Emphasis on seasonal, local, plant based ingredients.
- The presentation kit needs to be brought by the contestants.
- Ingredients will be provided by the organisers.
- The use of external, pre-cooked, pre-prepared ingredients are strictly prohibited during the competition.
- The total time allotted for menu preparation, plating, and station cleaning is 3 hours.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Authenticity • Creativity • Taste
- Presentation • Sustainability

For details, contact: ▼

Chef Sreejith O V

+91 98458 57110

2) Zero-Waste Cooking Challenge

09:30 - 11:30 @ Advanced Training Kitchen

Challenge Requirements:

- Orientation on zero-waste kitchen principles.
- A limited ingredient basket will be provided.
- Maximum utilisation with minimal or zero waste.
- Waste audit conducted during the competition.
- Two dishes (one should be a main course) with accompaniments need to be prepared.
- Only the ingredients provided by the organizers may be used; the use of any additional or external ingredients is strictly prohibited.
- The total time allotted for preparation, plating, and station cleaning is 2 hours.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Creativity • Taste • Waste Management
- Sustainability • Innovation • Contact

For details, contact: ▼

Chef Anil Jose Vettom

+91 97465 84458

3) Vegan Bakery & Confectionery Challenge

09:30 - 12:30 @ Bakery Kitchen

Challenge Requirements:

- Plant based substitution focus.
- Preparation of a bakery basket which includes artisan breads, viennoiserie and confectionary products (3 to 5 products).
- Mandatory substitution of animal based ingredients with plant based alternatives.
- Focus on functional vegan substitutes such as plant milk, nut butters, seed gels and fruit purees.
- The presentation kit needs to be brought by the contestants.
- No prepared ingredients or doughs can be used.
- The total time allotted for preparation, plating, and station cleaning is 3 hours.

Evaluation Criteria

- Taste • Texture • Filling or Topping • Presentation
- Effectiveness of Substitution • Sustainability • Zero Waste Execution

For details contact: ▼

Chef Sarath Sivanadan

+91 90372 89628



Valedictory Session

02:30 pm - 04:00 pm

@ St. Francis Hall

Before You Tie Your Apron

All dishes prepared and presented must be strictly 100% vegan, with no use of any animal-derived ingredients.

The competition is open to students currently enrolled in hospitality institutions, participating in teams of two members.

A maximum of two teams per event may participate from each institution, with an overall participation limit of six teams.

Registration fees for a team is Rs. 1,250/- with accommodation and Rs. 750/- without accommodation.

Participants must complete registration and payment through the provided Google Form before the deadline and carry a valid College ID along with an authorization letter from their institution.

There will not be any spot registration.

Limited accommodation is available on campus and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. For others, assistance will be provided in identifying nearby accommodation options.

The reporting time is 08:45 AM, and all participants must report at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start time. Late reporting may result in disqualification.

Once confirmed, registrations cannot be transferred or substituted without prior approval from the organizing committee.

Contestants must be present on both event days to remain eligible for participation and evaluation.

Proper chef uniform is compulsory, including chef coat, apron, chef cap/hair restraint, and closed shoes.

Basic equipment and utensils will be provided at the venue.

Participants must maintain professional conduct and discipline throughout the event.

The use of mobile phones, smart devices, or any external communication is prohibited during the event.

Participants are responsible for the safe handling of their tools and equipment and must maintain a clean, hygienic, and organized workstation at all times.

The organizing committee will not be responsible for any loss or damage of personal belongings.

All recipes submitted as part of the competition shall become the intellectual property of the institution, and all associated rights shall be exclusively reserved by the institute.

The judges' decisions shall be final and binding, with no objections entertained after declaration of results.

The organizing committee reserves the right to amend

rules, reschedule, or cancel the event if necessary.

Got Questions Cooking?

Need assistance with the event? Our culinary team is just a call away.

Chef Sujith Mathew George:
+91 82898 62878

Chef Anil Jose Vettom:
+91 97465 84458

Register & Rise to the Challenge

Registration Fee

With Accommodation
Rs. 1,250/- per team (2 members)

Without Accommodation
Rs. 750/- per team (2 members)



Accommodation is subject to availability and will be allotted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Last Date for Registration
30 July 2026

Steering Committee, Resource Persons & Grand Jury

The Steering Committee brings together experienced culinary and hospitality professionals who guide Vegan Express in promoting sustainability, ethical cooking, and innovation in plant-based cuisine.



Chef Sheetharam Prasad
Vice President- IFCA
Corporate Chef- GRT Hotels

Chef Sheetharam Prasaad is the Corporate Executive Chef of GRT Hotels & Resorts and has been associated with the group since 2000. With over 25 years of culinary experience, he began his career at Taj Connemara and has built a distinguished reputation through his expertise in diverse cuisines, culinary innovation, food promotions, live demonstrations, competitions, and hospitality leadership. A highly respected professional in the culinary fraternity, Chef Sheetharam serves as the General Secretary of the South Indian Culinary Association (SICA), Vice President of the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA), and is a member of the World Association of Chefs' Societies (WACS).

He is also a WACS Certified Executive Chef and an internationally certified culinary judge. His achievements include gold, silver, and championship honours in several national and international culinary competitions, representing India on global platforms. Throughout his career, he has had the privilege of serving distinguished dignitaries, including the Prime Minister of India, the President of India, international heads of state, and other eminent personalities.



Chef Suresh Baabu Executive Chef, Marriott Kochi

Chef Suresh Baabu is an accomplished culinary professional currently serving as Executive Chef at Kochi Marriott, with extensive international experience across India, the Maldives, Qatar, and the UAE. He has led high-performing kitchen teams at renowned brands including Marriott International, W Maldives, Just Vegan (Dubai's first plant-based restaurant chain), Rixos The Palm, DUKES Dubai, Anantara, One&Only Resorts, Jumeirah Group, and Radisson. Known for his expertise in plant-based cuisine, large-scale buffet operations, and pre-opening projects, he has driven concept development, financial performance, and operational excellence across luxury hospitality properties. His career reflects strong leadership in culinary innovation, brand standards implementation, and team development within premium global environments.



Chef Raj Sethia A mentor, Judge and Culinary Icon

Chef Raj Sethia began his culinary journey in 1992, training in the renowned kitchens of Holiday Inn and Le Meridien, Bangalore, and later at Mocha Café, Mumbai, before rising to lead the Gangotree Group. Known for pushing culinary boundaries, he introduced innovative concepts like Teppanyaki Chatpatti at major food festivals, showcasing versatility across desserts, salads, and chaats prepared on Teppanyaki grills. Since 1999, he has redefined the culinary landscape through unique food festivals, reinventing classics like pasta and pizza with his signature style. His excellence earned him Honorary Membership of the Saudi Arabia Chefs Association. He is an active member of leading global culinary bodies, including Chaine Des Rôtisseurs (Paris), Federation of Hotels & Restaurants Association of India, Royal Rajasthan Chefs Society (Honorary Member), Saudi Arabia Chefs Table Association (Honorary Member), World Association of Master Chefs (Australia), World Association of Chefs Societies, South India Chefs Association, Indian Culinary Forum, and Indian Federation of Culinary Associations. He also serves as President – South India for the World Association of Master Chefs (Australia).

Chef Raj Sethia's accolades include the IFCA Most Innovative Chef Award (2022), IFCA Friendship Award (2019), and recognitions from Le Cordon Bleu (Australia) and Chaine Des Rôtisseurs (France). Beyond the kitchen, he is a respected judge at national platforms such as the National Culinary Challenge by Better Kitchen, World of Hospitality, and the South India Culinary Challenge (Chennai), with recognition across Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana. As Director – Projects at Gift Your Organ Foundation, he leads initiatives, events, PR, and collaborations to promote organ donation awareness—an innovator, mentor, and humanitarian.



Ms. Archana Pai
Chef & Mentor - Zero waste Kitchen

Archana Pai began her professional journey as a celebrity manager before transitioning into the culinary space, driven by her deep-rooted passion for traditional Konkani cuisine. Over the years, she honed her skills as a home chef, specialising in authentic coastal flavours from the Konkan region, particularly Mangaluru and Goa. Her culinary approach is grounded in traditional practices, emphasising sustainable cooking methods and the use of every part of locally sourced ingredients. Expanding beyond home kitchens, she has curated and presented Konkani food experiences in collaboration with hospitality brands, bringing regional flavours to wider audiences.



Chef George K. George
Consultant Chef & Executive Committee, SICA

Senior Chef George K. George is an accomplished hospitality professional and Consultant Chef, currently serving on the Executive Committee of SICA. He brings extensive experience in catering, food and beverage operations, and overall hospitality management, supported by a DHMCT from IHM Chennai with a specialization in production, along with a Post Diploma from OCLD. Over a distinguished career spanning decades, he served with The Oberoi Group for more

than 16 years, contributing significantly to luxury hospitality standards in India. His tenure includes key leadership roles as Executive Chef at The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata, and The Trident, Cochin, where he led large culinary teams and managed high-end dining operations. Known for his strong operational expertise and production-focused approach, he has consistently delivered excellence in premium hospitality environments. Since October 2008, he has been serving as Director at Infra Hotels and Resorts near Nedumbassery Airport, Kochi, guiding strategic growth and operational development.

Stirring Up the Future

Vegan Express is where ideas simmer, creativity blooms, and sustainability takes centre stage. Over two exciting days, participants will learn, compete, experiment, and discover how plant-based cuisine can be innovative, flavourful, and future-ready. Whether crafting a vegan masterpiece, tackling a zero-waste challenge, or exchanging ideas with fellow food enthusiasts, every moment offers an opportunity to learn and grow. Put on your apron, bring your best ideas to the table, and join us in shaping the future of food, one delicious dish at a time.

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