

# Food News

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**Welcome to Food News.** In this month's issue we take a look at how the world of apps that we live in today can help to improve food choices for ourselves and our families. We will also discuss our increasing love for avocados and how this is having an impact on the environment.

As always, we will take a look at what foods are currently in season and discuss a hot debate about weight-inclusive language and why the British Dietetic Association (BDA) launched guidelines to support its members with the do's and don't's.



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## Warwickshire Food Forum

**Food News** is produced by the education & choice sub-group of Warwickshire Food forum.

The forum is a multi-agency partnership aiming to improve food choices for people in Warwickshire.

The focus is on making food affordable, sustainable and providing information to help people make healthy choices. The group will also ensure that there is Warwickshire wide help for people who have difficulty affording food.

## Special Feature

# NHS Food Scanner App

Twenty-twenty three! Love it or loath it the world is becoming more digital with every year that we spin into. There are apps for everything; ordering your food at the table in restaurants, buying cinema tickets, turning your heating on before you even get home... you name it, there'll probably be an app for it.



**But what about an app for suggesting healthier food swaps?** Yep, last year the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched the NHS Food Scanner app as part of the NHS Better Health Campaign to support people to make healthier food choices. The primary objective is to improve the diets of children and families, following the rise in obesity amongst children since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as found in the data from the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP). Last year data showed that one in four (27.7%) children of reception school age (4-5 years) are living with overweight or obesity; whilst four in ten (40.9%) by Year 6 (ages 10 to 11). We already know that living with overweight or obesity can have negative impacts on our long term health, but in addition to this children living with overweight or obesity are more likely to have days off school and to be bullied, affecting their education and well-being too.

**How does it work?** The NHS Food Scanner app is designed to simply scan the barcodes of foods to show families how much sugar, saturated fat, and salt is in everyday food and drinks, then suggests healthier swaps, by encouraging users to choose “Good Choice” products—and it’s free!

With so much information available to consumers, it is not always easy to know what foods to reach for. For example, you may not consider yoghurts as being full of sugar but some (such as some split pot yoghurts) can contain as much as 6 cubes of sugar per yoghurt. The NHS Food Scanner app will provide healthier alternatives and save you and your child cubes of sugar, teaspoons of salt and dollops of fat! Just look out for the “Good Choice” badge on the packaging for a quick and easy way to decide what to buy.



The app is also a great way to get your children involved in making their own, healthier food choices too. Children generally enjoy rewards charts and using the app to encourage them to choose foods with the “Good Choice” badge - perhaps even making your own rewards chart at home for each good swap they make - can be extra positive-reinforcement and encouragement.

**Who is it for?** Whilst this app was launched with children and families in mind; supporting parents to make healthier choices for their children, it can be used by anyone, not just parents and children. These healthier food swaps apply to all of us. However, if the app is not for you but you are interested in making healthy food choices, familiarise yourself with food labels and traffic light labelling to make your own informed choices - opting for products that have more greens, and cut down on ones with reds and ambers. Healthier food swaps can also be found on the Better Health website under ‘Food Facts’ then ‘Healthier Food Swaps’.



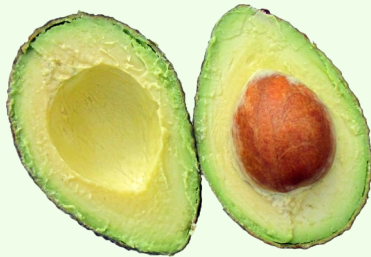
## The Environmental Cost of Our Love for Avocados

Guacamole, avocado toast, super-green smoothies with avocado, poke bowls and even avocado cake; the popularity of avocados has grown enormously in the last 10 years, and is a firm favourite amongst people following plant-based diets.

Avocados originate from South America but are often also cultivated in tropical and Mediterranean climates. Currently, 57 countries produce avocados, with nearly 350,000 hectares designated for avocado growing, yielding nearly 2.6 million tons per year of fruit. Mexico is the leader in avocado production, providing 36.8% of the world supply. Avocados grow on trees measuring 10-12m tall with a relatively long life cycle for a commercial crop; they can produce fruit year round for 20-25 years. At its peak growing age (~15 years), each tree can produce 80-100kg of fruit per year.



### The Nutritional Value (the good)



In the UK, a portion is defined as half an avocado (approximately 68g), but often portions used in cafes and homes are bigger than this. They are a nutrient-dense and energy-dense food (114kcal per half an avocado), and therefore despite being nutritious they used to be discouraged in diets because of their high fat contents and fear of them contributing to weight gain. However, some research has shown this may actually not be the case and avocados may in fact support weight loss just the same as low-fat fruits and vegetables. In addition, avocados are associated with several reported health benefits, namely with cardio-protective properties.

Avocados contain higher levels of insoluble (70%) and soluble (30%) fibre than other fruits, are phytochemical-dense and also a rich source of micronutrients, particularly the minerals potassium, phosphorous, magnesium, calcium, sodium, iron and zinc, and vitamin E, vitamin C and B vitamins.

In addition to this, their fat content is mostly monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA), in particular oleic and palmitoleic acids, which have demonstrated effects on decreasing low-density lipoprotein (aka bad-cholesterol) levels and increasing high-density lipoprotein (aka good-cholesterol) levels in the body. This profile suggests a protective factor against chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease and is supported by relevant scientific literature with one study observing the consumption of 0.5-1.5 avocados per day in men, demonstrated a reduction in serum cholesterol by 9-43% in half of the observed subjects whilst the remaining experienced a neutral effect and none showed an increase in total cholesterol or an increase in weight. More studies with higher statistical power are required to confirm if regular consumption of avocados is cardio-protective though.

Nonetheless, replacing saturated fat with MUFA, increasing fibre intake, having plant sterols (which are high in avocados) and sufficient micronutrients in the diet is known to improve health and therefore does make the avocado quite a nutritional gem.

# The Environmental Cost of our Love for Avocados

## The impact on the environment (the ugly)

Avocados can not be grown in the UK, they need high temperatures and dry weather; two characteristics the UK is not well-known for. As a result, they must be grown abroad, processed and shipped to their destination. As with banana and palm oil, avocado production requires additional water supply in order for the trees to remain commercially viable crops. In total, 6.96km<sup>3</sup>, or 2.82 million Olympic sized swimming pools, are used for avocado production on average each year and every avocado produced requires 320 litres of water to be grown—that's a lot of water!



In addition to the water use, increased popularity and demand of avocados also increases the land space required for growing them. In Mexico, the biggest producer, around 160 kilo hectares are dedicated to avocado production, with some states having 80% of their land dedicated to avocado plantations. The increased need for land ultimately results in natural local habitats, such as indigenous forest, being destroyed and fuels illegal deforestation for nonregulated avocado production.

The loss of land for local farming reduces the quantity of local products and crops being produced, impacting the local people through food instability, despite the industry providing additional employment.

These large areas being used for single crop growing (monoculture farming) also has a negative impact on the ecosystems, not only through reduced variety of plant life being present on the land but also as the industrial-sized farms emit high levels of agrochemicals into the soil and water supply, reducing soil fertility and damaging even more local plant and insect life. The monoculture approach also leaves the farmers and industry vulnerable to disease and crop failure, resulting in high financial risk.

And it doesn't end there. After harvesting, avocados also require further processing. They undergo a process known as 'hot water treatment' to prevent insect infestation and to control the rate of decay of the fruits. The water temperature needs to be up to 55C for 90 minutes. The fruit also requires treatment with pesticides due to them being imported. Once grown and processed, the fruit then needs to be shipped quickly to prevent spoilage, usually via air freight as it's quicker, which leads to increased carbon emissions. The total journey for an avocado grown in Mexico to the UK is 5,555 miles. A two-pack of small avocados has been estimated to have a total CO2 footprint of 846.6g, which is twice the CO2 produced for an entire kilogram of bananas.

## The Solution

Sadly, if you love avocados but also love the planet, the only simple solution is to cut back on avocado consumption to reduce the demand for ecological benefits. These fruits used to be considered a luxury food item and perhaps that is what they should return to being in order to protect the environment and encourage more sustainable production - eaten more as an occasional treat as opposed to every day. Keep an eye out for local, seasonal fruit and vegetables and use our monthly guide so you what is in season and available from local suppliers with little carbon footprint.

## What's in Season?

Here is a list of what fruit and veg are in season in April

Fruit	Vegetables
Rhubarb	Artichoke, Beetroot, Cabbage, Carrots, Chicory, New Potatoes, Kale, Morel Mushrooms, Parsnips, Radishes, Rocket, Sorrel, Spinach, Spring Greens, Spring Onions, Watercress

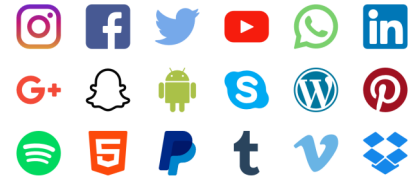
**Cooking in season** You'll notice these ingredients are more abundant in supermarkets and market stalls this month, so here is a tasty seasonal recipe to try.

### Spinach Mac 'n' Cheese (serves 2) - fewer calories and more veg!

#### Ingredients:

- 1 red onion
  - 85g wholewheat penne
  - 1/2 tbsp rapeseed oil
  - 2 leeks, washed and sliced,
  - 50g spelt flour,
  - 2tsp English mustard powder
  - 200ml semi-skimmed milk
  - 80g baby spinach
  - 50g extra mature cheddar, finely grated
  - 2 tomatoes, quartered if large.
1. Cook the pasta following pack instructions. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a medium non-stick pan. Add the leeks, stir well, then cover and cook for about 6 mins or until softened.
  2. Put the flour and mustard powder in a small bowl and gradually whisk in the milk. Pour into the pan with the leeks and stir with a wooden spoon until thickened. Continue stirring over a low heat while the pasta cooks. It will seem thick but will be diluted later.
  3. Drain the pasta, reserving the cooking water, then stir the paste into the sauce. Add the spinach and 1-1 1/2 ladlefuls of the water to make a spoonable sauce, then stir over the heat until the spinach has wilted. Stir in most of the cheese and taste for seasoning.
  4. Heat the grill. Tip the pasta mixture into a casserole dish, arrange the tomatoes over the top and scatter over the remaining cheese. Grill for 5-10 mins or until bubbling and golden.





# What's in the media?

## Inclusive language and terminology about people living with obesity.

Over the past month you may have read the article headlines in newspapers or news websites 'Don't use phrases like 'pig out', 'eating like a horse' or 'wolfing down your dinner'', as reported by the MailOnline, or heard the discussions on news programmes. This important debate within the general media highlights the need for people to be aware of inclusive language with regards to people living with obesity and overweight.



The British Dietetic Association (BDA) launched guidelines in 2021 to support it's members with how they communicate about people living with obesity to avoid stigmatising and causing upset. The intended use for the guidelines are regarding communication as an organisation but the BDA highlights they are still relevant to discussions between individuals, but acknowledges that individual conversations may include language which each person finds acceptable. We should all be striving to be inclusive, non-stigmatising and empathetic, therefore the spotlight being on this debate is a positive one, despite some criticism.

**The approach is around person-centred language, respecting self-definition and avoiding any language that could be seen as combative, stigmatising, dehumanising and supporting common stereotypes.**

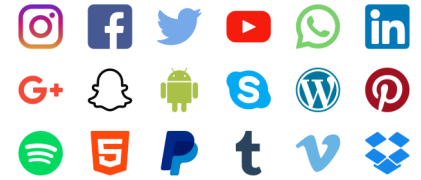
**Eliminating weight stigma - guidelines for BDA communications**

Weight-based stigma and discrimination towards people living with obesity can lead people to avoid seeking medical care, which can ultimately increase health risks. In 2018, an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Obesity report indicated that only "26% of people with obesity reported being treated with dignity and respect by healthcare professionals when seeking advice or treatment for their obesity", and "42% of people with obesity did not feel

comfortable talking to their GP about their obesity".

As a result, the BDA wants to do all it can to avoid and end weight stigma and therefore launched guidelines to ensure that the published materials and communications support this goal. However, sometimes people living with obesity may wish to 'reclaim' terms for themselves and in fact use some of the language which is being advised against themselves; the BDA is not opposing against this within their own conversations.

As stated the BDA's 'eliminating weight stigma communications guidelines' aim to support organisations to produce publications and communications that are inclusive and non-offensive for the majority of people of living with higher weight.



## What's in the media?

### Inclusive language and terminology about people living with obesity.

#### The recommendations

Firstly, as with all conditions, the person should be referred to first to ensure person-centred language is being used. Therefore to say “a person with obesity” or “an individual with a higher weight” (if obesity does not need to be explicitly mentioned) rather than “an obese person” which puts the person second to the condition.



Phrases such as “pigging-out” can be dehumanising, whilst stereotyping individuals as lacking will-power or being lazy can be incorrect and offensive.

Similarly, images that represent people with higher weights as being lazy, unhappy or eating very poor diets are regularly used within the media which adds to the stereotyping that all people living with overweight or obesity choose this way of living. Obesity is a long-term, progressive, relapsing condition with genetic, biological and social causes and it is wrong to assume that having a higher weight is due purely due to over eating or being inactive.

In addition, images often focus on a person’s midriff rather than the whole person, which can add to the dehumanising effect. Include faces in images to increase recognition that we support the person.



Combative language such as “fighting obesity” is advised against and instead using more empathetic terms such as “supporting people with obesity”. This prevents the appearance that society being against people living in a larger body.

**As with all debates, there will always be differing opinions but the BDA’s belief is in inclusive communication which is supportive and empathetic to prevent people feeling that they need to avoid seeking care for fear of discrimination about their weight.**



## Warwickshire eating and drinking for health group.

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If you have an interest in food , hydration and health, and would like to join the Warwickshire Food Forum, please contact the editor.

If you would like more information about any of the articles in this newsletter, please contact the editor who will pass this on to the author of the article.

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## References, further reading and resources

### **NHS Food Scanner App**

[www.bda.uk.com/resource/scan-swipe-and-swap-nhs-food-scanner-app-at-hand-for-healthier-choices.html](http://www.bda.uk.com/resource/scan-swipe-and-swap-nhs-food-scanner-app-at-hand-for-healthier-choices.html)

[www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/nhs-food-scanner-app/](http://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/nhs-food-scanner-app/)

[www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/healthier-food-swaps/](http://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/healthier-food-swaps/)

[www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-launched-to-help-parents-improve-childrens-diet](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-campaign-launched-to-help-parents-improve-childrens-diet)

### **The environmental cost of our love for avocado's.**

[bda.uk.com/resource/avocados-icon-or-enemy.html](http://bda.uk.com/resource/avocados-icon-or-enemy.html)

### **What's in season**

[www.bda.uk.com/food-health/your-health/sustainable-diets/seasonal-fruit-and-veg-a-hand-guide.html](http://www.bda.uk.com/food-health/your-health/sustainable-diets/seasonal-fruit-and-veg-a-hand-guide.html)

[www.bcgoodfood.com/recipes/spinach-mac-n-cheese](http://www.bcgoodfood.com/recipes/spinach-mac-n-cheese)

### **What's in the media**

[www.bda.uk.com/resource/weight-stigma-the-conversation-begins.html](http://www.bda.uk.com/resource/weight-stigma-the-conversation-begins.html)

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