

Christmas 2025

**BALANCEDTRAY**

**EDITION** Christmas 2025  
From your school's caterer **Taylor Shaw**



**BALANCEDTRAY**  
More than just lunch

**Fuel Your Body!**  
Nutrition and immunity  
advice for winter



**Chef's Corner**  
From our kitchens  
to yours



**What's in Season**  
Highlighting Seasonal  
produce





# Merry Christmas

The holiday season is a magical time filled with laughter, lights, and love!

Many people feel happy as they share food, gifts, and fun with family and friends.

But some people find the holidays hard, and that's okay too.

That's why it's so important to be kind and think about others during this time of year.

## So, what can you do?

Reach out to as many people as you can to ensure that no one feels lonely this Christmas.

You could help your family or teachers with small acts of kindness or even make cards or decorations to share.

***Every little bit of kindness makes a big difference.***



# Nutrition & Immunity

## Fuel Your Body's Defences This Winter

**A**s the colder months roll in, it's common to feel a little run down or worry about catching the latest bug going around.

While no single food can boost immunity, a balanced and varied diet plays a key role in supporting your immune system — your body's natural defence network.

Think of your immune system as a team of specialised cells, tissues, and organs working together to protect you from harmful bacteria and viruses.

To keep this system functioning effectively, it needs a wide range of nutrients — most of which can be found in everyday foods.

### What Does an Immune-Supportive Diet Look Like?

- Eat the Rainbow** — Colourful fruits and vegetables are packed with antioxidants and phytonutrients
- Choose Wholegrains** — Oats, brown rice, and wholemeal bread provide fibre and B vitamins
- Include Nuts & Seeds** — Great sources of healthy fats, vitamin E, and zinc
- Dairy or Fortified Alternatives** — Important for calcium and vitamin D

- Get Enough Protein** — From meat, fish, eggs, pulses, and tofu to support immune cell production and repair

*Mix it up, keep it colourful, and your immune system will thank you!*

### Key Nutrients That Help Your Immune System Work Smarter

While nutrition alone can't prevent serious infections, it does help your body respond more effectively.

Here are five nutrients that play a vital role in immune function — and where to find them:

#### VITAMIN C

Supports immune cell function and acts as an antioxidant.

**Sources:** Broccoli, kiwi, citrus fruits, peppers, kale, strawberries

#### VITAMIN E

Protects cells from oxidative stress and supports immune responses.

**Sources:** Sunflower seeds, almonds, avocados, spinach, butternut squash

#### ZINC

Essential for immune cell development and wound healing.

**Sources:** Red meat, shellfish, legumes (chickpeas, lentils, beans), nuts, eggs, oats

#### B VITAMINS (B6, B9, B12)

Help regulate immune responses and support energy metabolism.

**Sources:** Fish, meat, eggs, dairy, chickpeas

#### OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Help control inflammation and support immune cell function.

**Sources:** Oily fish, flaxseeds, walnuts, chia seeds, plant oils

### In summary:

A diverse and nutrient-rich diet, combined with healthy lifestyle habits, provides your immune system with the tools it needs to function effectively — helping you stay well, focused, and energised throughout the year.

# From our kitchen to yours



**This edition features recipes from our development chef Nik, with over 30 years in the culinary industry, Nik's passion for food and sharing his expertise is truly inspiring!**

**H**e's a key part of our team, working closely with our onsite chefs to provide training and support, ensuring the delicious meals you enjoy are always top-notch.

In this edition, Nik's recipe is a festive homemade plait, with crispy roast potatoes and homemade slaw. The perfect dish to have with family and friends.

*It's an easy dish to prepare with the children and can be for 5 or 50 guests!*

Do you have a dish you'd love to see featured? Let us know, and we'll happily consider including the recipe and expert advice in a future edition! [Send your recipe request to business.support@elior.co.uk](mailto:business.support@elior.co.uk)

## Festive Slaw - serves 10

### Ingredients

Pumpkin	150g	2. Peel the pumpkin using a sharp knife then grate
Red Cabbage	400g	3. Peel and finely slice the red onions
White Cabbage	400g	4. Place all the ingredients into a large bowl and mix
Red Onion	200g	5. Place in a suitable serving bowl and leave in the fridge until required
Celery Salt	5g	6. If you don't have white wine vinegar this can be omitted. If you do choose to make without you will need to remove the celery salt and sugar too
Caster Sugar	20g	
White Wine Vinegar	75ml	
Mayonnaise	200g	

### Method

1. Remove the outer leaves and core from the cabbages and finely slice with a sharp knife



### Top Tip

Keep the pumpkin peelings for a tasty snack. Simply toss in a little oil and salt then roast in the oven at 180°C for 12 mins or air fryer 200°C for 10mins.



### Ingredients

Pork Mince	250g
Pork Sausagemeat	1kg
Sage & Onion Stuffing Mix	35g
Fresh Leeks	200g
Ground Black Pepper	2g
Coarse Grain Mustard	100ml
Puff Pastry Sheet	1 sheet
Free Range Egg	1 egg
Dried Mixed Herbs	2g
Fresh Cranberries	100

- Remove the ends and outer leaves of the leeks, and then cut into 1cm pieces
- Add 10ml of oil to a shallow pan, lightly cook the leeks until slightly coloured
- When the leeks are cooked, add the cranberries & remove from heat
- In a large bowl add the sausage meat, minced pork, herbs, leeks, cranberries, mustard, stuffing mix and black pepper and mix until well combined
- Lay out the puff pastry sheets and cut in half lengthways
- Once combined, split the sausage meat mix into equal sizes and roll them to the same length as the pastry sheet

### If making sausage rolls

- Place the sausage onto the pastry sheet ensuring you leave room to seal the pastry on the side (approx 2 cms)
- Beat the egg to form an egg wash

### Don't eat pork?

Simply swap out the pork for the same quantity of poultry or plant-based mince.

### Festive Sausage Plait - serves 10

Recipe can also be used as delicious individual sausage rolls

### Method

Place your puff pastry on the worktop until you are able to unroll without it splitting (if necessary, defrost the puff pastry overnight in the fridge)

- Egg wash the edge of the pastry sheet, then roll the pastry over the meat and press down with a fork to seal

Place onto a baking tray lined with parchment and brush with egg wash, sprinkle over the mixed herbs & bake for approx. 30 minutes or until the sausage meat reaches a minimum core temperature of 75°C in a pre-heated oven set at 180°C.

### If making a large plait

- Place the sausage meat in the middle of the pastry sheet. Then, cut diagonal slits in the pastry, approximately 1 cm away from the meat, and 1cm apart extending to the edge of the pastry
- Place one strip of pastry onto the sausage meat, then take a strip from the other side and place it over your first piece. Continue this braiding process until the end

Place onto a baking tray lined with parchment and brush with egg wash, sprinkle over the mixed herbs & bake for approx. 40 minutes – checking after 30mins or until the sausage meat reaches a minimum core temperature of 75°C in a pre-heated oven set at 165°C.

### Allergies?

There are some great gluten and dairy free pastry sheet options available.

If necessary, you can simply omit the egg wash.

**Ingredients**

Maris Piper Potatoes	2kg
Vegetable Oil	100ml
Butter	50g
Salt	3g
Cracked Black Pepper	1g
Fresh Rosemary	5g
Fresh Thyme	5g

**Method**

- Wash and peel the potatoes
- Bring to the boil from cold water. Pre-heat the oven to 180c
- When boiled, drain well in a colander and gently shake to fluff the edges

**Festive Roast Potatoes - serves 10**

- Put the oil and butter in a suitable roasting tray, and place in the pre-heated oven
- Wash, pat dry and remove the green leaves from the rosemary and thyme. Once clean and dry finely chop
- Add the drained potatoes to the hot oiled tray (be mindful not to splash hot oil). Turn the potatoes so they are coated in oil, sprinkle with the salt and pepper and place in the oven
- After approx. 45 minutes, turn the potatoes. Then put back in the oven for another 45 minutes or until the potatoes are lovely and crisp on the outside and soft on the inside
- Remove from the oven and place the potatoes into your serving dish adding the chopped herbs as you go. Finally add a sprinkle of the chopped herbs over the top.
- Serve and enjoy

**Top Tip**

Keep the potato peelings for a tasty snack. Simply toss in a little oil and paprika (or any spice) then roast in the oven at 180°C for 12 mins or air fryer 200°C for 10mins or until cooked and crispy!



We do hope you and your family enjoy cooking and eating the recipes.



## What's in season?

Did you know that eating what's in season is not only good for the planet, but also for your taste buds and your wallet?

Seasonal fruits and veggies, like juicy berries in summer or crunchy root vegetables in winter, haven't travelled far to get to your plate, meaning fewer food miles and a smaller environmental impact.

Plus, they often cost less because they're plentiful, and they taste amazing because they're picked at peak ripeness.

Why not check out your local greengrocer or farmer's market to see what delicious seasonal goodies they have on offer?

You might discover some exciting new ingredients to experiment with in your kitchen!

### In season right now...

*Apples, Beetroot, Brussels Sprouts, Carrots, Celeriac, Celery, Chestnuts, Chicory, Cranberries, Jerusalem Artichokes, Kale, Leeks, Mushrooms, Onions, Parsnips, Pears, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Quince, Red Cabbage, Salsify, Savoy Cabbage, Swede, Swiss Chard, Turnips, Watercress, Winter Squash, White Cabbage.*



# Seasonal fruits and vegetables

## Why Not Try Homemade Kale Chips This December?

With kale in abundance this winter, it's the perfect time to make a super-healthy, crunchy snack that satisfies a crisp craving.

### What You'll Need:

1 bunch of curly kale (ensure it's fresh!)

1 tbsp oil

Pinch of salt (or try sprinkling over your favourite spice, like smoked paprika or peri peri)

### Dietitian's tip

Kale is rich in vitamins A, C, and K, plus iron and calcium, which support the immune system, bone health, and may help reduce tiredness.

Use your hands to gently massage the oil into the leaves until every piece is lightly coated.

3. **Bake to perfection:** Spread the kale in a **single layer** on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake in a preheated oven at a low temperature (around 150°C) for about 15–20 minutes, rotating the tray halfway through.

4. **Cool and crisp:** The chips are done when they are crispy but still vibrantly green (avoid letting them turn brown, which can make them taste bitter). Let them cool completely on the tray—they will get even crispier as they cool!

### Simple Steps:

1. **Prep the kale:** Wash the kale thoroughly. This is the most important step: the leaves **must be completely dry** before you add oil, or they will steam instead of crisp! Spin them in a salad spinner or pat them dry with a clean tea towel. Tear the leaves into chip-sized pieces, discarding the tough centre stems.

2. **Season and massage:** Place the dry kale in a large bowl. Drizzle with a small amount of oil and a pinch of salt.



# Crafting Christmas

With Christmas just around the corner, here are a few crafty gift ideas for you to enjoy with friends and family.

## Salt Dough Decorations

### YOU WILL NEED:

250g Flour  
125g Table Salt  
175ml Warm Water  
Cookie Cutters  
Straw or Toothpick  
Baking Sheet  
Glitter  
Paint  
Ribbon or String

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Mix the flour and salt
- Add warm water
- Mix together to create a soft pliable dough, add more water if needed
- Knead for a couple of minutes then roll out to desired thickness
- Cut out shapes either free hand or with a cookie cutter
- Use the straw / toothpick to create a hole in the top (big enough for your ribbon / string)
- Place on a lined baking sheet
- Bake in the oven at the lowest setting for 3 hours or until hard
- Remove from the oven and cool
- Decorate and thread the ribbon through the hole



## Hot Chocolate Spoons

### YOU WILL NEED:

- 540g chocolate of choice
- 50g of toppings examples include marshmallows, candy canes, peppermint leaves, cereals (coco puffs or similar) & sugar strands
- Plastic wrap & string
- Spoons or lollipop sticks
- Ice cube tray or cupcake cases

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Melt your chocolate
2. Pour into moulds you need approx. 45 grams of chocolate in each
3. Place a spoon into each mould and place somewhere cool to set
4. Once set remove from mould and gift wrap making sure to add 5 grams of your chosen topping

To enhance your gift even further you can add sweets or edible glitter to your finished chocolate spoons.



## Melting Snowman Biscuits

### YOU WILL NEED:

Biscuits – Rich Tea or similar  
90g Icing Sugar  
14ml Water  
Food Dye  
Marshmallows  
Piping or a Ziplock bag

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sift the icing sugar into a bowl and add a tiny amount of the warm water then stir. Keep adding tiny drops of the water gradually and stirring in between until the icing becomes thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.
2. Place a teaspoon full of the white icing on the biscuits and then place the marshmallow on top.
3. Split your remaining icing into different bowls and colour with your chosen food dye.
4. Put the icing into bags and cut a tiny whole in the corner and let the decorating commence



# Gingerbread

## YOU WILL NEED:

125g Dairy Free Spread  
380g Gluten Free Plain Flour  
120g Brown Sugar  
100g Golden Syrup  
2 Tsp Ground Ginger  
5g Baking Soda

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Pre heat oven to 160°C
- Combine the dairy free spread, sugar, golden syrup, ground ginger and baking soda in a bowl
- Mix well
- Slowly sift in the gluten free flour
- Mix until just combined
- Take out of the bowl and knead on a lightly floured surface
- Roll out the dough to 5mm thick



# Festive Shortbread

## YOU WILL NEED:

50g dairy free spread  
130g granulated sugar  
500g gluten free plain flour

## Water icing

80g icing sugar  
15ml water

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Beat the dairy free spread and sugar until smooth and creamy
- Add the flour and mix to form a smooth dough



## Free from the top 14 allergens

- Cut out with your shaped cutter or cut into desired shape
- Add any markings with a skewer before baking e.g. button holes
- Place on a lined baking tray and bake in batches for around 8 minutes.
- Cool on a wire rack and decorate if desired

If you would like to create a gingerbread house there is a template included at the end. In the example picture we used a selection of sweets and dairy free butter icing to decorate and hold the structure together.

To make a free from butter icing use a 2:1 ratio of icing sugar and dairy free spread and mix well.



## COMPETITION TIME



## Crafty Christmas

We want to encourage everyone to get crafty this Christmas and enjoy the art of creating! We are offering everyone the chance to win £30 of highstreet vouchers.

Simply create a unique and heartfelt gift for a loved one this festive season (or any special occasion).

This project involves designing and crafting a personalised keepsake that can be cherished for years to come.

To enter; simply send us a photo of your gift along with up to 250 words describing your gift, what it was for and who you gave it to.

**Rules:** The gift must be handmade and your entry received by the 15th January. The handmade item, could be; anything edible, a painting, a bauble, a greetings card the list is endless!

Send your photograph and description to **UKMarketing@Taylorshaw.com** or hand in your photo with a copy of the description to a member of the school catering team.

Please provide your name, year group, school name, and school postcode when you submit your entry. Good luck!