



Food as Driver

Culinary Institute by Vejle Erhverv is Vejle's food beacon, creating a space for healthy and sensory meals as the foundation for a good quality of life. We motivate and inspire the entire local food-related industry.

Food is the key to the solution

Culinary Institute has developed the "Food Driver" model. It demonstrates how and why food is a key solution to major societal challenges such as climate change, health, and well-being, and it highlights concrete actions — both ongoing efforts and suggestions for new initiatives. The goal is to develop and implement sustainable and resilient actions.

Bold and curious engagement and motivation

"Food as Driver" is about being bold, embracing wild ideas, and approaching solutions with curiosity. Since food is fundamental to everyone, a wide range of target groups is included in the solutions. Local food producers and culinary professionals are motivated, inspired, and engaged together. Young talents are developed, and new collaborations in innovation, AI technology, and education drive gastronomy into the future.

Innovation and imagination must create new initiatives that encourage greener food habits. This is achieved through communities that build relationships, social bonds, and a strong sense of food citizenship.

Cross-sectoral inclusive efforts

The initiatives always work across Culinary Institute's extensive network of food businesses, cafes, restaurants, gastronomes, food start-ups, and key figures in Denmark's food sector. This breadth ensures both effective and inclusive efforts.

The Guiding Star

Culinary Institute has five principles that all initiatives are tested against:

- Food
- Business
- Pioneers
- Improvements
- UN Sustainable Development Goals

These principles serve as the guiding star, ensuring that all efforts are relevant, sustainable, and prepared for the future.



How we use Food as Driver to strengthen the food industry and partnerships

In Vejle Municipality, 20% of the workforce is employed in food-related industries. Therefore, strong efforts are made to motivate and inspire the existing industry and to ensure growth across the local food sector—from production companies and restaurants to hotels, cafés, and start-ups.

The Culinary Institute is the driving force behind *The Flavourful Univers* – a partnership shaping the future of meals. It unites public actors, private food-related businesses, knowledge institutions, civil society, and passionate frontrunners to drive product development, taste-driven knowledge-sharing, and new collaborations.

Additionally, the Culinary Institute uses events, activities, and projects to highlight Vejle's diverse food businesses and establish the municipality as a key player on Denmark's gastronomic map. To ensure a thriving food sector in the future, the focus is also on developing culinary talent, inspiring careers in the food industry.

Below are examples of concrete initiatives that strengthen food-related businesses.



START-UP
PHASE

The Flavourful Universe - Partnership for the Future of Meals

A proactive pentahelix food partnership uniting municipalities, businesses, knowledge institutions, civil society, and passionate frontrunners to strengthen the food sector. The partnership offers taste-driven knowledge-sharing and targeted product development while focusing on optimizing local value chains and leveraging AI to reduce food waste. It facilitates the exchange of new products, techniques, and insights, expanding participants' perspectives on food. The Culinary Institute by Vejle Erhverv serves as a key facilitator, helping to establish and drive the partnership forward.

ONGOING

Participation in food networks

Culinary Institute by Vejle Erhverv actively collaborates with or engages in food-related networks—locally, nationally, and internationally. These include Madværket, Fødevareklubben, Food & Bio Cluster, Council for Healthy Food, Potato Council, Danish Food Forum, MLDK, World Chefs, and Nordic Chefs. Through these networks, we promote innovation, sustainability, and knowledge sharing within the food sector. Our participation strengthens collaboration with other stakeholders, keeps us updated on the latest trends, and allows us to support political decision-making processes.

ONGOING

Collaboration and development with food companies Culinary Institute by Vejle Erhverv actively engages in building close collaborations with food companies. We focus on strengthening innovation through partnerships that involve both product development and optimization of production facilities. This has led to a strong dialogue with Multivac, who value the relationship so highly that they have chosen to locate their innovation center in Vejle.

ONGOING

Vejle Food Festival

Vejle Food Festival highlights local food producers and restaurants as a key element in strengthening Vejle's profile as a food city. Additionally, the festival attracts visitors to the city and firmly places Vejle on Denmark's gastronomic map once and for all.



ONGOING

GastroCrowd

GastroCrowd is a network that brings together gastronomic enthusiasts and professionals with a shared passion for food. The network is for chefs, kitchen staff in institutions and canteens, as well as other food enthusiasts who wish to gain new knowledge and expand their horizons within gastronomy.

GastroCrowd is a community of food enthusiasts focused on cultivating knowledge about flavor, technique, and innovation. Our members represent various corners of the food world, creating an inspiring atmosphere where ideas can flourish.



ONGOING

Culinary talent development

Talent-developing activities, such as the Kartoffelprisen competition and Gastronomisk Undergrund, help to place Vejle on the gastronomic map, draw attention to the city's culinary scene, and shine a spotlight on local food producers.



ONGOING

Culinary competitions

Culinary Institute by Vejle Erhverv are involved in various culinary competitions – in some cases like the Potato Award by itself and in other cases in collaboration with Horesta, the trade association for the hotel, restaurant, and tourism industry. Participation not only supports talent development but also promotes innovation and quality in gastronomy. Through the Institute's involvement in these competitions, Vejle's position as a strong and relevant gastronomic municipality is reinforced.

How we use Food as Driver to reduce CO2 emission

Food consumption accounts for 17% of Denmark's total Co2e emissions (Concito). These emissions can be reduced by shifting to more plant-rich meals. Plant-rich food habits, in line with the Official Dietary Guidelines, are not only better for the climate but also promote better health.

However, both professionals and private individuals need to develop more skills and knowledge to create and adopt plant-rich meals effectively.

The following are specific initiatives that help lower CO2 emissions from food without sacrificing taste, as taste is key to successfully transitioning to more climate-friendly eating habits.



ONGOING

GastroDays: Hands-on, competence-building workshops

To ensure that the municipality's food professionals are equipped to prepare flavorful, plant-rich meals with low CO2 emissions, competence-building programs are offered. The focus is on how to make plant-rich meals taste fantastic. In addition to kitchen skills, the courses provide new knowledge and opportunities for participants to exchange experiences.

The Culinary Institute by Vejle Erhverv has developed several programs for food professionals, which can be further refined. For lasting change, all institutions with kitchens should participate in a program, with sessions repeated every few years.



ONGOING

Motivation for more climate-friendly eating habits As part of various events around the city, the Culinary Institute participates with activities that communicate messages about issues like food waste and healthy eating. The goal is to encourage participants to reflect on how they can adopt more climate-friendly eating habits in a fun and informal way. See the film on [page 16](#) for more.

Gastronomic consulting

In addition to hands-on, competence-building workshops for food professionals, a program could be developed where each kitchen, together with a gastronomic consultant, sets annual goals for reducing CO2 emissions and food waste without compromising on taste or quality. These goals will help Vejle Municipality meet its climate targets for 2030. New workshop programs will be created, tailored to the specific goals and anticipated challenges.

Plant-rich food procurement

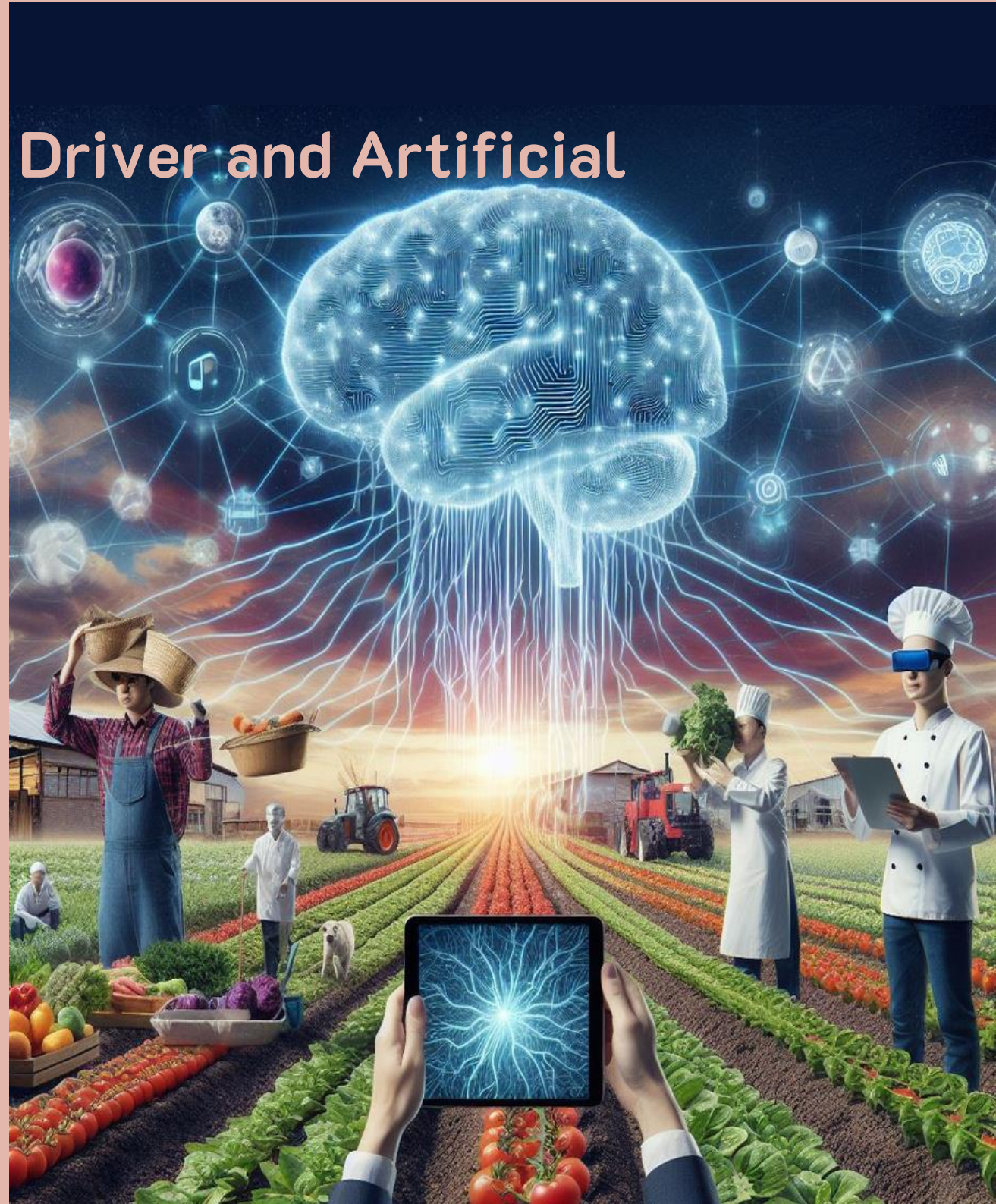
The municipality's procurement agreements could be structured to promote plant-rich purchases. In addition to indicating the carbon footprint of individual products, kitchens could be encouraged to make more plant-rich purchases. One possible incentive could be a climate discount on the most climate-friendly ingredients. A cost-free incentive could be a competition to become the "most plant-rich kitchen of the month."

How we use Food as Driver and Artificial Intelligence

... or how we use AI to develop the food industry.

AI is advancing rapidly, offering many opportunities to work with large data sets, machine learning, virtual assistants, and monitoring systems. Some parts of agriculture are already utilizing precision farming, and certain companies are using AI for tasks such as flavor development and reducing waste in production. However, the use of AI in the food industry remains limited.

Here are some suggestions for how we can explore the potential applications of AI and propose concrete projects that could strengthen the food sector.



GastroCrowd: AI network for the local food industry
As part of the GastroCrowd network, [see page 4](#), the local food industry will gather to be introduced to the latest knowledge and opportunities for using artificial intelligence in the food sector.

Experts will be invited, and companies already utilizing AI in their daily operations will share their experiences.

The goal is to equip local food-related businesses to use AI to optimize their production and improve the quality of their work. One potential aspect could be reducing food waste, as described on [page 10](#).

Gastronomic AI Assistant for greener professional kitchens

The goal is to develop an AI assistant to support food professionals in creating meal plans that consider food waste, the Official Dietary Guidelines, and CO2 emissions. This assistant will have a deep understanding of flavor composition in plant-rich meals, seasonal ingredients, and can use this knowledge to help professionals make decisions that balance climate considerations and individualized nutrition needs. Additionally, the assistant will be able to scale meals accurately for large quantities, accounting for factors such as waste, adjusted amounts of spices and salt—features that are unprecedented in existing recipe collections for professional kitchens.



How we use Food as Driver to Prevent Food Waste

Food waste remains one of the major challenges in reducing CO2 emissions, and its reduction is highlighted as an action point in Vejle Municipality's Climate Plan. Measured by weight, the majority of food waste in Denmark occurs in the food industry, but household food waste is also significant.

Although food waste is lowest in the service sector, there is still potential to reduce it, particularly in public kitchens. Here, the opportunity exists to implement guidelines and provide staff with training and guidance on minimizing waste.



GastroCrowd: Local food waste network

A GastroCrowd network can collaborate to reduce food waste, bringing together municipal actors, businesses, and knowledge institutions, with the potential to include initiatives in partnership with civil society. The network will work together towards more sustainable solutions to the food waste problem across various sectors—such as businesses, public institutions, and private households. Additionally, the focus on food waste can be integrated with the AI initiatives mentioned on [page 8](#).



GastroDays: Hands-on food waste workshops

In addition to the guidelines that public institutions are required to follow, food professionals are offered workshops with practical, easy-to-implement content for their kitchens. These workshops will focus on using ingredients that are often discarded and, more importantly, on developing a new perspective on how much of these ingredients can be utilized in the kitchen to create delicious meals.

Guidelines for municipal kitchens

To support municipal kitchens in reducing food waste, concrete guidelines are being developed. The creation of these guidelines involves input from food professionals to ensure they are both ambitious and tailored to different types of kitchens, making them achievable and measurable.



Inspiration Videos: Zero food waste, full flavor
Food waste in private households is significantly higher than in professional kitchens. Therefore, it's a great idea to have chefs and other food professionals share their best tips for reducing food waste. Online videos, like the Culinary Institute's "food waste advent calendar," can demonstrate various ways to use every part of ingredients in home kitchens with a light, humorous tone—avoiding any preaching.



How we use Food as Driver in our work with children and youth

Food plays a central role in the formation and development of children and youth. It requires a significant effort in green food education if we are to ensure that current and future generations prepare food that considers both health and climate, engage in food-related careers, and carry on food traditions.

It starts as early as in daycares, where the environment and the adults' competencies should foster joy and courage around food.

School-based food education alone is rarely sufficient to develop children and youth's cooking skills. It requires supplementary initiatives in collaboration with chefs, food companies, food entrepreneurs, and others in the culinary world.

Here are suggestions for how we can support food education and foster interest in food among children and youth.



Collective effort for food-enthusiastic children
To create food-enthusiastic children who enjoy the plant-rich meals prepared daily by food professionals in daycare centers, it is crucial that the pedagogical staff and management also promote joy and confidence around food. Through interdisciplinary workshops or staff meetings, the focus is placed on a shared understanding and support for more plant-rich meals, involving all professional groups. Relevant topics include health and climate aspects of plant-rich food, tasting, user experience, and overcoming barriers.

ONGOING

Food competitions
Competitions for schools, such as the Hotdog World Championship and Kartoffelspiren, strengthen students' learning, engagement, and culinary skills.



More food education in schools
School-based food education alone is rarely sufficient to develop children and youth's cooking skills. Annual "food interventions" throughout primary school equip children to adopt healthy and climate-friendly eating habits for the future. This could include multi-year interdisciplinary programs focused on food, educational visits to food companies, and cooking courses at the Culinary Institute by Vejle Erhverv.

ONGOING

Team Gastro Talent
The Culinary Institute by Vejle Erhverv offers a food talent program for students in grades 7-10 who wish to improve their culinary skills. The program focuses on taste and sensory experience, kitchen techniques, and local ingredients. Most importantly, the talents gain insight into the food industry, which can inspire a future in the culinary field.



How we use Food as Driver to promote better health and well-being

Healthy eating habits are crucial for maintaining good health, sustaining normal weight, and preventing diseases. In contrast, unhealthy eating habits can contribute to the development of several diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and cancer. This can reduce an individual's quality of life and lead to an increased need for treatment and care. For elderly citizens, good eating habits can also help prevent unintentional weight loss.

Therefore, it is important to promote eating in alignment with the Official Dietary Guidelines. This effort can be achieved by ensuring that public meals produced largely adhere to these guidelines. At the same time, citizen-focused culinary activities can inspire healthier eating habits by using great taste as a driving force.



De officielle Kostråd

Godt for sundhed & klima



GastroDays: Hands-on competency workshops

To ensure that the municipality's food professionals are equipped to prepare flavorful meals that meet dietary guidelines tailored to specific target groups, competency-building workshops are offered. The goal is to teach participants how to make nutritionally balanced food taste fantastic. In addition to kitchen techniques, the workshops emphasize new knowledge and experience-sharing among participants. For lasting changes, all institutions with kitchens should go through a program that is repeated at regular intervals.

The Culinary Institute by Vejle Erhverv has developed several programs for food professionals, which can be further developed.



Gastronomic consulting for healthy meals

In addition to practice-oriented competency workshops for food professionals, a program is being developed where each kitchen works with a gastronomic consultant to set guidelines for meals that meet the nutritional needs of diners without compromising on taste or quality.

The gastronomic consulting for healthy meals can be combined with the consulting on climate-friendly meals described on [page 6](#).



Motivation for healthier eating habits

As part of various events around the city, the Culinary Institute participates with activities that convey messages about health and other topics. The goal is to encourage participants to consider how they can adopt healthier and more plant-rich eating habits in a fun and informal way. See also the video on [page 16](#).

How do we use Food as Driver to foster community and motivation

Food has a unique ability to bring people together. The social interaction and sharing of meals can help reduce loneliness and increase the sense of belonging to a group or community. When we gather around a meal, we are not only sharing food but also stories, experiences, and emotions.

Events centered around food also provide a great space to share knowledge and inspiration through experiences that can motivate participants to adopt new eating habits.





ONGOING

Denmark Eats Together - Tartlet Feast

As part of Denmark Eats Together, associations and citizens in Vejle gathered to enjoy tartlets and celebrate the communal meal. These types of events demonstrate strong support for local communal dining, where neighbors and strangers come together. Conversations around the dinner table help foster understanding across cultural, social, and generational divides.



Cooking classes for organizers

Volunteers and municipal employees involved in planning events where food is served are offered a course that equips them to make the right choices and gain a deeper understanding of taste, meal settings, and local ingredients.

Discover local flavors

Communal dining events in collaboration with local food producers, where participants prepare and enjoy meals made with fresh local ingredients. This collaboration supports the local business community and promotes food production in the area. These communal dining events not only strengthen the local community but also increase awareness of local food producers.



ONGOING

Culinary experiences for the whole family

As part of various events around the city, the Culinary Institute participates with activities that convey messages about topics such as food waste and health. The goal is to encourage participants to think about how they can adopt more climate-friendly eating habits in a fun and informal way.





Co-funded by
the European Union



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