

# Plant-Based Plates Toolkit



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## WHY PLANT-BASED?

What we put on our plate matters. Food production accounts for nearly a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions, of those emissions more than half come from animal products. By opting for more plant-based foods (containing no animal products), we can help reduce our environmental footprint, protect animal welfare (both domestic and wildlife), and enjoy a healthier diet.

### PROTECTING THE PLANET

Animal agriculture is an incredibly resource-intensive industry – in fact, the sector is a leading contributor to climate change and is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than all forms of transport combined. Nearly one-third of global water consumption is related to the production of animal products.

Plant-based foods typically have a much smaller environmental footprint and a growing body of research shows that reducing our overconsumption of animal-based foods in favour of more sustainable plant-based foods is a powerful way to tackle climate change. Research suggests that shifting Western diets toward plant-based eating patterns has the potential to reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions by up to 70 percent and land use by 80 percent.

### IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH

Canada's new Food Guide recommends shifting consumption to more plant-based foods, including encouraging Canadians to choose plant-based proteins more often. The guide points out that plant-based foods offer health benefits, including a lowered risk of cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. It also acknowledges that many of the well-studied healthy eating patterns from areas of the world where people statistically live the longest include mostly plant-based foods.

### PROTECTING ANIMAL WELFARE

Canadians eat more than double the global average of meat and this over-consumption of animal products has resulted in the rise of intensive animal farming, commonly referred to as "factory farming".

Meanwhile, the loss of wild areas for livestock grazing and growing crops to feed farmed animals is a leading cause of wildlife extinction.

A growing number of Canadians are incorporating more plant-based meals into their diet in order to help spare animals from factory farms and protect wildlife and wild areas.

## THE POPULARITY OF PLANT-BASED

More and more Canadians are embracing a plant-based diet, as demonstrated by a 2018 national survey conducted by Dalhousie University which found British Columbia is leading the way. The survey found that nearly 40 per cent of British Columbians 35 and under say they follow a vegan or vegetarian diet. But a plant-based diet is not new, with many cultures around the world having long-standing plant-forward traditions. For example, tofu, soy milk and seitan originated in China; many Middle Eastern dishes, like hummus, baba ganoush, tabbouleh and falafel are plant-based by nature; and vegetarianism has long influenced Indian cuisine. Meanwhile, recent [research](#) has identified “Blue Zones” around the world where people have the longest life expectancy - Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece, and Loma Linda, California. These longevity hotspots share lifestyle habits, including a 95-100% plant-based diet.

In North America, a growing number of schools, hospitals, food service providers, businesses and municipalities are recognizing and acting on the collective impact of our food choices, and as a result are embracing the plant-based movement.

At least 16 U.S. cities and counties have included meat-reduction efforts in their climate change mitigation strategies. For example, Santa Monica, California’s climate action plan commits the municipality to reducing meat and dairy purchases by 15% and Portland, Oregon’s climate action plan commits to increasing institutional purchases of healthy, climate-friendly food at public meetings, events, and in government facilities.

In the U.S., Chartwells and Morrison Health Care committed to shifting 20% of menu offerings to plant-based by 2020; the University of Guelph in Ontario is working to replace 20% of meat protein with plant based proteins; Western University in Ontario is aiming for 55% of menu options to be based on plant proteins; and Amaga Food, a North Vancouver food service provider for several secondary schools, has also committed to transitioning 20% of daily menu offerings to plant-based. To date, 16 secondary and post-secondary schools throughout Metro Vancouver have also worked to increase their plant-based offerings through initiatives like Meatless Monday.



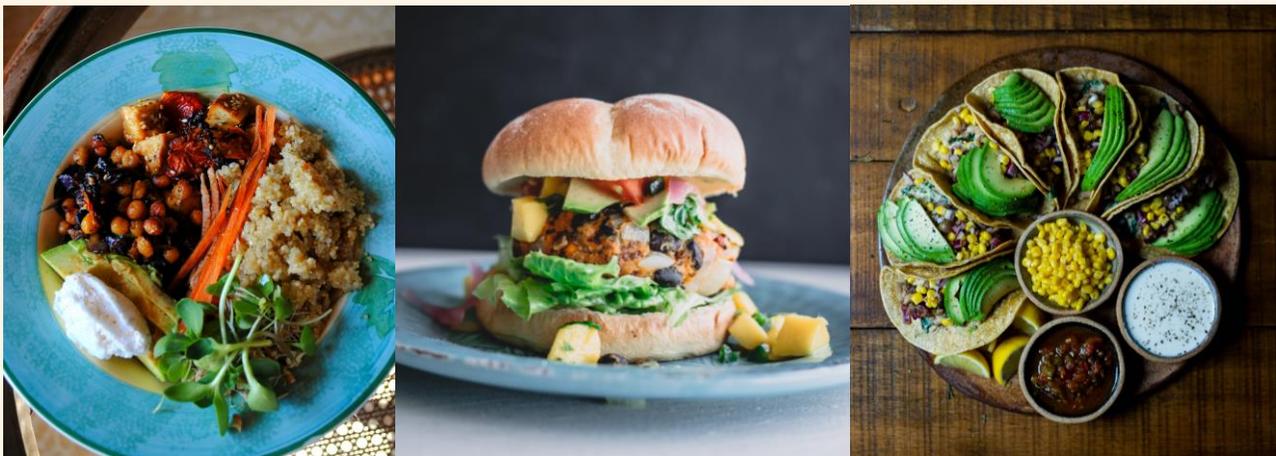
Vancouver students speaking to media about their school’s Meatless Monday campaign

## MENU PLANNING TIPS

Increasing your operation's offering of plant-based menu items makes good business sense – it leads to more inclusive menus (more people can enjoy a plant-based dish than a vegetarian or meat-based dish) and can complement corporate social responsibility goals by reflecting a commitment to protecting animal welfare, the planet and public health.

### TIPS FOR FEATURING PLANT-BASED DISHES

- Start by examining your current menu – are there any options that can easily be modified to make the dish(es) fully plant-based (containing no animal products)?
- The key to an enticing plant-based dish is flavour and familiarity:
  - Many of us are already consuming plant-based meals! Think pasta primavera, black bean burritos, stir fries, chili and coconut milk curry. Global cuisines from Indian, to Chinese, to Mexican, to Middle Eastern, to Italian and many others feature flavour-packed plant-based dishes. Draw inspiration from different food traditions to help ensure variety and diversity is reflected in your menus.
- Tap into current food trends:
  - Eg. “The Bowl” – a grain, legume, vegetables and a flavourful sauce. That’s all you need to make a filling and delicious dish, and the options are endless as you can mix and match ingredients. (eg. Thai soba noodle bowl with peanut sauce, Mexican sweet potato bowl with a cashew lime cream, Crispy chickpea bowl with lemon tahini dressing, sushi bowl, falafel bowl, etc.)
- Explore how cooking techniques that are often applied to meat-based dishes can be utilized in making a plant-based dish. For example, marinating, searing, grilling, BBQ and smoking.



## MARKETING STRATEGIES

- Consider placement in the cafeteria line (make plant-based options easier to choose by putting them front and center).
- Make the default option plant-based whenever possible in order to make it easier for people to choose plant-based meals, as opposed to the opposite where they need to know how to modify options to make them plant-based.
- Similarly, make “grab-and-go” options plant-based – this helps to make the plant-based choice the convenient choice, and also showcases what a finished plant-based dish can look like.
- Offer a promotion or incentive on plant-based menu items when possible – a slight discount, punch card for a free item, draw for a gift card, etc.
- Consider offering a sampling of new plant-based items. This is a great way to gain client feedback and help promote new items. (Contact VHS for help!)
- Make plant-based foods a part of your institution’s animal welfare/sustainability/health goals and share this with staff to help reinforce the social benefits of your effort to offer more plant-based foods. Helping staff understand the “why” will help to create more internal support. (Contact VHS for a staff presentation!)
- Names and description of dishes are important:
  - [Research](#) suggests against labeling dishes as “vegetarian” or “vegan”, because it suggests those dishes are only for those who identify as veg or vegan. Instead, consider using a symbol (like a leaf) to indicate a dish is suitable for vegans or include the allergen information (dairy-free, egg-free, etc.)
  - Highlight the origin of a dish – Think Chicago-style pizza or Texas BBQ. Leveraging a food's origin can help create positive associations with the food. In this case, origin can also mean the environment in which the food is grown. For example, instead of "Low Fat Vegetarian Black Bean Soup" choose "Cuban Black Bean Soup", or instead of “Meat-Free Breakfast” choose “Field Grown Breakfast”.
  - Flavour-based naming – highlight what a dish will taste like to increase the sensory appeal of plant-based dishes. Eg. “Smoky Soul Chili”, “Fiery Jerk Jackfruit”.
  - Use positive and indulgent descriptors:
    - Studies show that positive terms and narratives like “fresh”, “seasonal”, “farm to table”, “slow-roasted” are better received than language like “reduced calorie”, “lighter choice”.
    - Use indulgent terms like “creamy”, “warming”, “crunchy”, “smooth” and “sticky”.
  - Don’t hide plant-based dishes in a separate section on your menu – make them a part of your regular menu. (eg. Plant-based “Beyond Burgers” are sold in grocery stores next to beef burgers and plant-based milks are sold next to dairy milk).

## RESOURCES

The Vancouver Humane Society offers free resources and support in improving public access to climate-friendly, healthy and humane plant-based options on menus.

### PRESENTATIONS

We offer free educational presentations that discuss the benefits of plant-based eating. We've presented in schools, hospitals, workplaces, at public events, council meetings and more!

### OUTREACH & SAMPLING SUPPORT

We can help institutions test or launch new plant-based menu items by offering on-site outreach and sampling support.

### CULINARY SUPPORT

We offer free plant-based recipes and hands-on culinary training for food service staff (based on availability of funds) to help equip them in adding more plant-based options to menus.

### PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

We offer free brochures, buttons, and digital and print signage to help you promote plant-based menu options. We can also help raise awareness of your effort to feature more healthy, humane and climate-friendly menu items through blog post features and media pitches.

Get in touch with VHS Campaign Director, Emily Pickett, for more info

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Plant-based culinary workshop for food service team