

How RIT and HSUS are collaborating to increase plant-based entrees

A case study compiled by the Humane Society of the United States

Setting a plant-based target

In January 2023, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) signed the [Forward Food Pledge](#) with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), committing to serve 50% plant-based entrees in their dining operations by the end of 2025. As a result of their commitment, the HSUS will provide RIT with free culinary trainings, ongoing consultation, recipes, hands-on support, greenhouse gas assessments and virtual training and webinars as needed.



→ [READ MORE](#)

Read more about RIT's plant-based commitment [here](#).

Timeline

December 2022 – Evaluate menus for baseline.

January 2023 – Set target, develop glidepath and create an implementation plan.

May 2023 – Train staff & conduct a carbon footprint report.

October 2023 – Conduct a plant-based menu pilot and collect customer feedback.

December 2023 – Evaluate annual progress and set plans for next year.

Developing a glidepath

In order to develop a glidepath, or a predetermined path to measure annual progress, we conducted a detailed evaluation of 14 dining units. This evaluation found that, prior to the initial plant-based culinary training, plant-based entrees made up 20% of their menus. This meant that a 15% increase during each academic year (2023-4 and 2024-5) would ensure that RIT reaches their target of serving 50% plant-based entrees by the end of 2025.

Training their staff

In May 2023, three HSUS chefs conducted an in-person training with RIT's culinary team, showcasing what can be done with high-protein and high-fiber ingredients such as chickpea flour, soy, tempeh, tofu, lentils, kidney, pinto, and black beans.

HSUS chefs trained RIT chefs on 20 recipes including plant-based meatballs, burgers, stir fry, and fried rice. More than 87 percent of those who tested the menu items said they were "extremely satisfied" with the options. Some of the most popular recipes were:

- Korean lentil sloppy joes
- Tempeh fried rice
- Red bean Swedish meatballs

Chef Herlan Manurung said: "The training was insightful, and the food was delicious." We are excited to incorporate the recipes into our menus moving forward."



The trend is clear; students are asking for plant-based options to save animals, help the environment and improve their own health. The future of the menu is plant-based.



Herlan Manurung, Corporate Executive Chef and Associate Director, RIT Dining

During the October-November 2023 plant-based pilot event, an RIT student wrote to the campus RD: "I tried the plant-based tikka masala dish at Brick City Cafe today and it was absolutely amazing! I am going to have it every day or mostly for lunch this week, since it's only available for this week. Is it possible for that dish to come back frequently?"



Calculating their impact

Dr. Isaac Emery, HSUS' climate scientist, completed a carbon footprint report for RIT in May 2023 and made the following suggestions:

- RIT has an opportunity to reduce its carbon footprint by over 1,400 metric tons each 1.5 years, or approximately 470 metric tons per semester, by transitioning to a more plant-forward dining service.
- Replacing animal products with plant-based foods can substantially improve the carbon footprint of meal service and plant-forward dishes can reduce the GHG emissions of even lower-emitting meat products. Animal to plant protein shifts also have numerous unique co-



benefits, resulting in lower water, pesticide, fertilizer and land use while also providing advantages for human health.

Creating a plant-based future

The HSUS will continue to support RIT in reaching their 50% plant-based goal through their Forward Food initiative by continuing to provide free culinary trainings, hands-on support and recipe assistance. For example, in October 2023, an HSUS chef and specialist visited all 14 of the dining services' locations and met with various team members.

Additionally, the HSUS chef team recently shared 18 newly developed plant-based breakfast recipes with the RIT dining team that will appeal to a culturally diverse student population.



Interested in joining RIT as a sustainability leader in the food service industry?

Show your commitment to sustainability and secure the free resources needed to reach your plant-based targets by joining RIT and over 80 other food service institutions in signing our [Forward Food Pledge](#). In exchange for setting a plant-based target, you will receive access to free resources including recipe & menu assistance, culinary trainings, greenhouse gas assessments, hands-on support and more.

→ [LEARN MORE](#)

Learn more about the Forward Food Pledge and sign the pledge [here](#).