
FORWARD FOOD

CATERING TOOLKIT

PREPARED BY
HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL/CANADA



**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**
CANADA



FRIENDS OF
**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**

2024

Table of Contents

- Introduction.....2
- Defining plant-based.....3
- Why plant-based.....4
- Plant-powered events.....5
- Tips for plant-based menus.....8
- Sample menu.....10
- Additional resources.....11
- Disclaimer.....12



INTRODUCTION

Bringing Food Forward



Thank you for downloading this Forward Food Toolkit. In case you are not already familiar with our work, Forward Food is a non-profit program of Humane Society International/Canada and Friends of HSI/Canada aimed at creating a more sustainable future for the food service industry. We work to put more plants at the centre of the plate, where they belong, benefitting animals, the planet and our health, as well as usually reducing food costs.

This toolkit is one of several free-of-charge resources that we offer to food service professionals. In the following pages, you will find facts, tips and delicious recipes to inspire you to prioritize plants on your menus. We hope it is helpful, and encourage you to reach out if you have any questions or comments. Otherwise, we wish you the best of luck in transitioning your menus to be more plant-forward. It will have a big impact on the health of your guests, the environment and the animals we share it with.

If you have any questions at all, please reach out to our Forward Food team at forwardfoodcanada@hsi.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Makayla Dewit".

Makayla Dewit
Specialist, Forward Food
Humane Society International/Canada
mdewit@hsi.org

Defining Plant-Based

Catering menus can include plant-based options, plant-forward options or a mix of both. These dishes align well with Canada's Food Guide, which recommends that the majority of our plates be filled with plants. All Forward Food recipes are plant-based.

Plant-Based

A food item or dietary pattern consisting entirely of foods derived from plants, including vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds, legumes and fruits. Plant-based items contain no animal products (meat, dairy, honey, eggs, fish, etc.) or ingredients that are processed using animal parts, such as certain sugars, dyes and alcohols. Plant-based items are also vegan, but the term “plant-based” is more inclusive.

Plant-Forward

A food item that puts plants at the centre of the plate, without completely eliminating animal-derived products (meat, dairy, honey, eggs, fish, etc.). An example of this would be meatloaf that is 60% mushrooms, or a bowl with vegetables, grains, seeds and a small amount of animal protein.

4

Recipe by Chef Amy Symington, photo by Joel Barnes



CREAMY CORN CHOWDER
Find the recipe [here](#) or watch recipe video [here](#)

Why Plant-Based?

Sustainability



Animal agriculture is one of the top contributors to global environmental problems, due to its vast use of water, land, and fossil fuels and high greenhouse gas emissions. Meat, dairy and eggs cause nearly 60% of all food related emissions, but supply only 18% of the world's calories. Plant-based foods have a much lower impact on the planet and can reduce food emissions by 85%.

Consumer Demand



Consumers are looking for more plant-based options! In fact, over 40% of Canadian consumers are actively trying to incorporate more plant-based foods into their diets, making them a must-have menu item.

Compassion



As of 2022, 92 billion land animals are raised and killed for food each year globally – or 175,038 animals per minute. Choosing and serving more delicious plant-based items is the most compassionate choice for farmed animals. It also benefits wild animals by protecting biodiversity.

Health



The Canada Food Guide encourages increased consumption of plants because diets rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes and nuts are consistently linked to lower obesity rates, blood cholesterol levels, and blood pressure, which reduces the risk of heart disease, certain cancers, type 2 diabetes, and more. Plus, with dairy, eggs and fish being top allergens, plant-based meals can help ensure your guests' well-being.

To learn more about the many benefits of plant-based foods, watch [this video](#).

Plant-Powered Events

Default veg

A study published in the Journal of Public Health suggests a subtle yet effective strategy to encourage plant-forward options: **make the veg dish the default option at events** while still offering a meat-based choice. In the study, approximately **80% of the event attendees** opted for the vegetarian option when it was the default and guests had to opt out to have the option with meat.

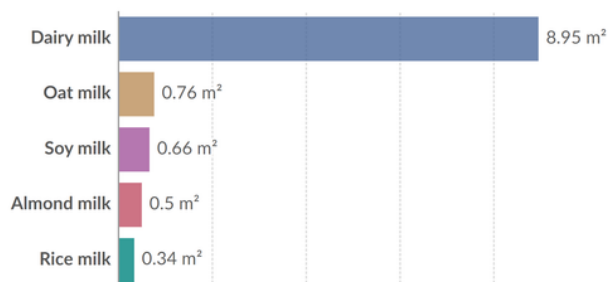
Beyond this, you can embrace the “default veg” concept on your menus. This has grown in popularity within coffee shops, where oat milk is offered as the default milk. Not only does this better accommodate the nearly **70% of the population who are lactose intolerant**, but **plant-based milks are also much more sustainable than dairy milks**.

Environmental footprints of dairy and plant-based milks

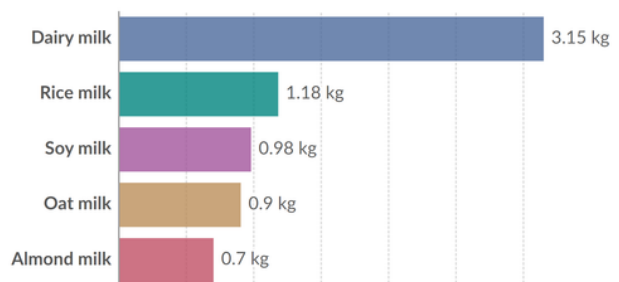


Impacts are measured per liter of milk. These are based on a meta-analysis of food system impact studies across the supply chain which includes land use change, on-farm production, processing, transport, and packaging.

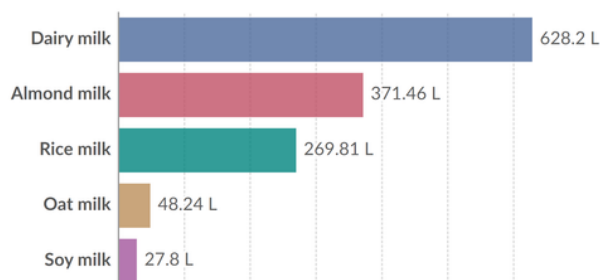
Land use



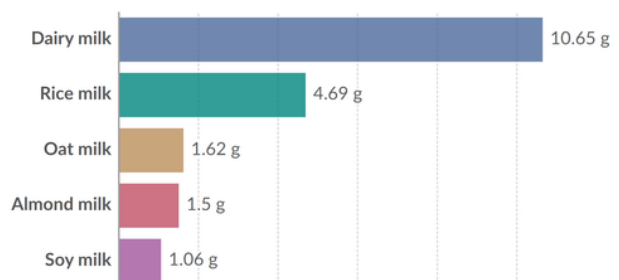
Greenhouse gas emissions



Freshwater use



Eutrophication



Data source: Joseph Poore and Thomas Nemecek (2018).

OurWorldInData.org/environmental-impacts-of-food | CC BY

Plant-Powered Events

Default veg (con't)



You can also make plant-based ingredients the default in select recipes. This shift can contribute to a more sustainable, healthy, inclusive, and compassionate menu. For instance, replacing traditional mayonnaise with egg-free mayo or making all desserts plant-based can go unnoticed by guests but significantly enhance the sustainability and accessibility of your offerings. Check out our [substitution guide](#) for simple ways to make your dishes more plant-based.

Making events more sustainable

A [report from the Centre for Biological Diversity](#) estimated that for events with 500 attendees, serving plant-based meals can save 10 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, equivalent to the emissions from 22,000 miles driven by cars. In addition, the transition to plant-based meals would spare five acres of farmland, prevent seven tonnes of manure pollution, and conserve nearly 100,000 gallons of water.



Photo by Jen Squire



Plant-Powered Events

When the environmental impacts of two different catering menus (one primarily plant-based and one not) were compared, you can see drastic differences in GHGs, habitat loss, pounds of manure produced and water use. In nearly every instance, the plant-based dishes had a significantly lower impact.

Plant-based:

| | GHG (lb CO ₂ e) | Habitat Loss (ft ²) | Manure (lbs) | Water Use (gal) |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Breakfast | | | | |
| Bagel with vegan cream cheese | 0.8 | 14 | 0 | 14 |
| Soy milk | 0.4 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Lunch | | | | |
| Black bean burrito | 1.2 | 11 | 0 | 36 |
| Portobello mushroom and pepper fajitas | 1.4 | 11 | 0 | 30 |
| Roasted veggie sandwich | 1.0 | 13 | 0 | 23 |
| Dinner | | | | |
| Black bean and sweet potato power bowl | 0.6 | 5 | 0.6* | 7 |
| Black bean tacos | 1.7 | 14 | 0 | 39 |
| Creamy garlic pasta with roasted tomatoes | 0.6 | 4 | 0 | 17 |
| Veggie lasagna | 11 | 73 | 36* | 130 |

Containing animal products:

| | GHG (lb CO ₂ e) | Habitat Loss (ft ²) | Manure (lbs) | Water Use (gal) |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Breakfast | | | | |
| Bagel with cream cheese | 1.5 | 14 | 3.9 | 24 |
| Milk | 1.4 | 6 | 3.3 | 9 |
| Lunch | | | | |
| Beef burrito | 15 | 200 | 32 | 120 |
| Beef fajitas | 8.8 | 140 | 15 | 41 |
| Chicken fajitas | 1.6 | 17 | 0.3 | 20 |
| Ham and cheese sandwich | 5.5 | 41 | 14 | 53 |
| Pork burrito | 9 | 92 | 26 | 110 |
| Dinner | | | | |
| Beef lasagna | 28 | 340 | 66 | 180 |
| Chicken alfredo | 6.1 | 45 | 10 | 53 |
| NY strip steak with mashed potatoes and veggies | 37 | 590 | 59 | 270 |

Source: [The Centre for Environmental Diversity, Catering to the Climate](#)

Tips for Plant-Forward Menus

Follow these simple tips to help make your plant-forward menus successful and cost-effective. To learn more, watch [this video](#).

Recipe by Chef Amy Symington, photo by Joel Barnes



BÉCHAMEL PASTA

Find the recipe [here](#) or watch recipe video [here](#)

Cost-effective ingredients:



Opt for recipes that incorporate beans and legumes, not only for their rich protein, iron, and fiber content but for their affordability compared to animal proteins. If you can pass some of those savings onto your guests by making the plant-based option more affordable, they'll be more likely to choose it, creating a win-win situation for both your budget and their dining experience.

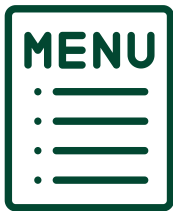
Appetizing descriptions:



Craft names that highlight your dishes' delectable flavours, origins, or key ingredients instead of labelling them as "vegan" or "plant-based". This makes them sound more appealing and addresses the misconception that they may lack flavour or satisfaction. Rather than "vegan tacos," try using descriptive copy like "crispy black bean tacos with tangy rainbow slaw". Use a subtle V or VG symbol if needed.

Tips for Plant-Forward Menus

Normalize them:



Integrate plant-based dishes seamlessly into your general menu, rather than in a separate vegetarian menu. This will demonstrate to your guests that these delicious options are for everyone - not just those who follow a vegetarian or vegan diet. In fact, research out of the London School of Economics found that listing plant-forward dishes in a separate “vegetarian” section of a menu suppressed ordering of those dishes by 56%. To further incentivize your customers to choose your plant-rich items, put them first on menus or at buffets.

Chef’s recommendation:



Elevate the status of your plant-powered dishes by showcasing them as the “Chef’s Recommendation” or the daily special. This personal endorsement adds credibility and encourages diners to explore these options.

Recipe by Chef Amy Symington, *The Long Table Cookbook: Plant-based Recipes for Optimal health*. Photo by Darren Kemper



MOROCCAN QUINOA POWER BOWL
Find the recipe [here](#)

Sample Plant-Based Catering Menu

Looking for some inspiration to make your catering menu more plant-powered? Check out this sample plant-based catering menu, featuring delicious dishes from breakfast to dessert. Find all of these recipes, and more, in our [plant-based recipe packet](#).

BREAKFAST:

- Carrot lox on bagels with cashew cream cheese
- Fried tofu egg and tempeh bacon breakfast sandwich



LUNCH:

- Pulled jackfruit sandwiches with rainbow slaw
- Lentil-walnut tacos with mango avocado salsa



DINNER:

- Shepherd's pie with herbed gravy
- Mango almond tofu curry with brown rice



APPETIZERS:

- Avocado fries
- Crabbyless crab cakes

DESSERT:

- Butterscotch squash coffee cake with maple glaze
- Cinnamon bun cookies

Recipes by Chef Amy Symington, photos by Joel Barnes and Darren Kemper



Additional Resources

Would you benefit from **free, personalized support** in making your operation's food offerings more plant-based?

SIGN THE FORWARD FOOD PLEDGE 

When you sign the Forward Food pledge, you are making a meaningful and achievable commitment to make your food offerings at least 20% more plant-based. For more controlled catering environments, we recommend at least 1:1 ratio of animal-based to plant-based offerings or a default plant-based approach.

By signing the pledge, you can take advantage of our free resources and supports, such as culinary training, recipe and menu development support, guidance on marketing and communications, educational sessions, and greenhouse gas impact assessments.

Additional free resources:

- [Forward Food website](#)
- [Packet of over 200 plant-based recipes](#)
- [Plant-based substitution guide](#)
- [Plant-based sample menu](#)
- [Plant-based vendor list](#)
- [Virtual culinary training](#)



Disclaimer

This report is provided solely as a general source of information and is intended for informational purposes only, and should not be construed or relied upon, under any circumstances, by implication or otherwise, as a recommendation, or financial or other advice. Reference in this report to any specific commercial product or service, or the use of any brand, trade, firm or corporation name is for the information of the public and does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation or approval by Humane Society International/Canada or its affiliates of the product or service, or its producer or provider.

© Humane Society International/Canada

2024



HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL
CANADA



FRIENDS OF
HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL