



Forward Food Case Study: Western University

A look into Western University's success in expanding compassionate, healthy and sustainable plant-based foods on campus



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Photo: Makayla Dewit/for Humane World



About Western University Foodservice

- Western University, located in London, Ontario, self-operates **eight residence dining halls**, more than **20 retail eateries**, which include a combination of in-house concepts and franchises, along with **full-service catering and conference services**.
- They serve a campus community of **46,000 people**, including 42,000 students from more than **126 different countries**.
- Their residence dining halls serve **6,000 students daily** across breakfast, lunch, dinner and late-night snack bars, from September through April.
- They combine a four-week menu cycle with rotating interactive stations and special event menus to provide offerings that meet the varied dietary needs and preferences of students.

Retail and Catering

- During peak academic periods, Western's retail eateries welcome more than **12,000 guests per day**, serving a combination of students, staff and visitors. In the summer, and during break periods, only select locations remain open.
- Their Catering and Conference team provides year-round support for students, departments and faculty across campus and London. They offer upscale dining, coffee services, summer accommodations, weddings and banquets, ensuring a seamless experience. Whenever possible, they prioritize locally sourced products to enhance the quality of their services.
- Across all three operational units, their annual expenditure on food and food-related items exceeds **\$17 million**.



Commitment to Sustainability



- Over the last decade, Western University has strengthened its commitment to supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, which assesses universities across these goals, Western has placed in the top 25 institutions around the world for the last three years.
- This commitment to practicing and promoting sustainability for the good of society has become ingrained in all aspects of campus life and was the catalyst for a re-examination of their menus across all food service operations.

Increasing Plant-Based Offerings

- Expanding plant-based options became a cornerstone of Western's sustainability efforts, while also aligning with the growing demand for more diverse food options.
- Increasing plant-based offerings in their operations has been something Western had to be intentional about. They had to make it part of a process where they identified the gaps and looked for strategies to fill them.
- One of the major opportunity areas was increasing the culinary skills and understanding of their chefs, including their Executive Chef, to focus on plant-based offerings.



Milestones

Forward Food Pledge: In 2023, Western University signed the Forward Food pledge, committing to making their menus more plant-based by 2025.

Menu Transformations: Across all culinary units, Western emphasized training around plant-based cooking techniques and began adding new recipes to their menus. A goal was set to have a 40% plant-based menu in residence dining halls, which was achieved in late 2023. For the 2024-25 academic year, their menus are now 47% plant-based.

Registered Dietitian: In 2023, Western hired its first Registered Dietitian, which further enhanced their ability to make intentional and strategic adjustments to their menus. Having a Registered Dietitian as part of the team to keep them on track has been a key part of their success to this point.



Photo: Western University

Empowering Chefs Through Culinary Training

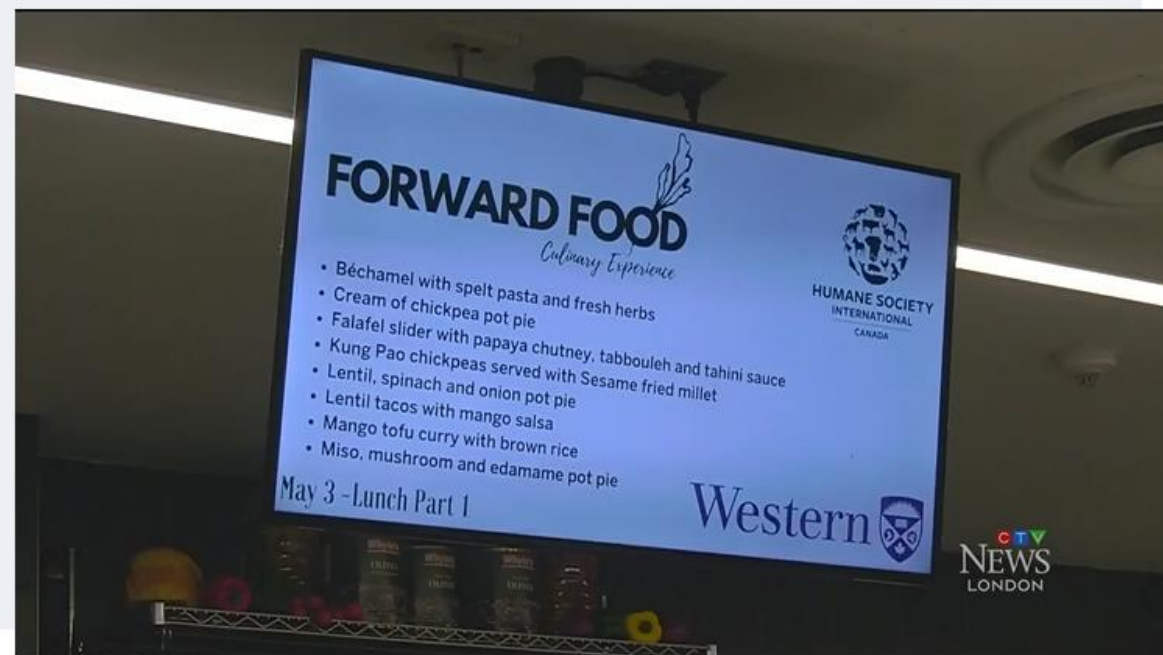
- In May 2023, Western University and Forward Food co-hosted a two-day plant-based culinary training session.
- This training welcomed **24 chefs** from Western University, the University of Guelph, McMaster University, and the University of Windsor. Participants explored how to prepare delicious and nutritious plant-based dishes.
- Guests from the university and local community attended a tasting lunch, where the plant-based dishes were enthusiastically received.
- The event highlighted the benefits of plant-based eating — supporting animal welfare, health and sustainability — while showcasing the versatility and flavour of plant-based ingredients.



Western U plans to make 40 per cent of menu items in residences plant-based by 2024

By Jenn Basa

Published: May 03, 2023 at 2:32PM EDT



Western University plans to have 40 per cent of its menu options be plant-based by next year. CTV London's Jenn Basa reports.

Access the full article [here](#)

London

Chefs from Ontario universities train to cater to student demands for plant-based foods

At Western in London, for instance, 40% of student residence menus will be plant based by January



Michelle Both · CBC News · Posted: May 04, 2023 5:00 AM EDT | Last Updated: May 4, 2023



Manoj Kumar, a chef at Western University's Delaware Hall residence, makes a Moroccan chickpea bowl recipe as part of a two-day plant-based culinary training at the London, Ont., university. (Michelle Both/CBC)

Access the full article [here](#)

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Increasing the plant-based offerings on campus isn't something that has to happen overnight. It is a process that takes time. Setting small, achievable goals and creating a culinary culture that embraces plant-based cooking is a key part of how we have moved forward on this important initiative.

—Kristian Crossen
Executive Chef, Western University





Next Steps for Western University

- While Western is very close to achieving its goal of a **50% plant-based menu** in their dining halls, one of Western's primary goals is to expand the types of plant-based recipes in their four-week menu cycle. Providing an exciting variety of foods is an important part of the student experience for those living in residence halls.
- In the longer term, Western is building a new 800-bed student residence that will be opening in the coming years. This residence will feature a large dining hall that will serve the neighbouring residence buildings, allowing for increased large-scale batch cooking and enhancing the variety of plant-based options available to student diners.

Work with Forward Food

Work with our Forward Food team to expand your plant-based menu offerings.

Get free-of-charge culinary training, recipes, marketing support and more.

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