



Humane
World for
Animals™

Plant-Rich Campus Toolkit

**Thank you for downloading this
Forward Food Toolkit!**

If you are not already familiar with our work, Forward Food is a not-for-profit program of Humane World for Animals, launched in 2017. We are dedicated to building a food system centered on plant-based foods, benefiting animals, the planet, and public health.

This toolkit is one of several free-of-charge resources that we offer to food service professionals. We hope it provides inspiration and supports your efforts to expand plant-based and plant-forward offerings at your operation!

If you have any questions or would like additional support, our team would be pleased to connect. Thank you for being part of our mission and the growing movement to build a better food system.

What's inside this toolkit:

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Part 1: The Case for Plant-Based

About Forward Food

Forward Food provides free-of-charge support and resources to food service operations to help them serve more plant-based meals successfully. We provide training, recipes, marketing support, educational sessions and more to help operations be part of the movement to build a better food system.

In exchange for our support, we ask operations to sign onto the **Forward Food pledge**, a meaningful commitment to purchasing or serving more plant-based foods. You can learn more and sign onto the pledge [here](#).



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*Absolutely recommend this training to anyone interested in incorporating more plant-based meals into their operation. It was **informative**, offered a hugely generous range of **recipes**, and lots of **fun!***

— Testimonial from Forward Food training participant

Our Program in Action



Our Work

Since 2017, over 100 food service operations across Canada have signed the Forward Food pledge, committing to making their menus or food purchasing more plant-based.

These operations include post-secondary institutions, municipal and federal government departments, healthcare institutions, charitable sector food programs, food service management companies, offices and more. Together, these organizations serve over 30 million meals each year!

Check out some of our recent collaborations:

- Forward Food Empowers Ottawa's Charitable Food Sector to Embrace Plant-Rich Menus
- York University commits to increasing plant-based menus in collaboration with Forward Food
- Forward Food program trains chefs working for the Government of Canada

Part 1: The Case for Plant-Based

Defining Plant-Based

Plant-Based:

A food item or dish made entirely from plant-derived ingredients, including vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds, legumes, and fruits, with no animal products (meat, dairy, honey, eggs, fish, etc.), including animal-derived additives such as dyes or pigments, or ingredients tested on animals. Also known as 'vegan'.

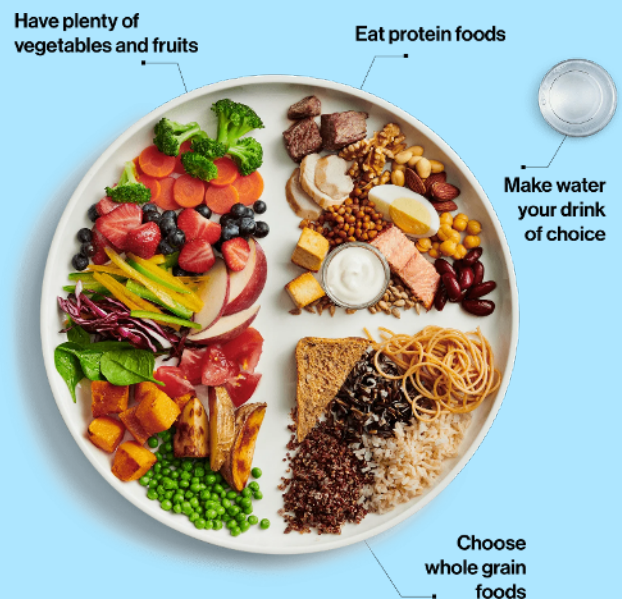
Plant-Forward:

A food item or dish that prioritizes plants without fully eliminating animal-derived products (meat, dairy, eggs, fish, honey, etc.). For example, a meatloaf made with 75% mushrooms and lentils or a plant-based bowl garnished with a small amount of animal protein.



Did you know...

Plant-based and plant-forward dishes align well with Canada's evidence-based Food Guide, which recommends that we eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grains and choose protein foods that come from plants more often.



Source: Health Canada



For more information, visit forwardfood.org/canada

Part 1: The Case for Plant-Based

Benefits of Plant-Based Foods

Health

Eating more plant-based foods – especially whole foods – can lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure and certain cancers.

Environment

Plant-based diets require far less land, water, and energy than animal agriculture, and they reduce emissions, pollution, deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Cost Savings

An Oxford study found that in high-income countries, adopting plant-rich diets reduced food costs by up to one-third while also providing health and environmental benefits.

Inclusivity

Plant-based meals can accommodate various dietary needs, including vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, halal and kosher diets, while also avoiding top allergens (such as eggs and dairy).

Compassion

Every single plant-based meal can spare an animal's life, depending on their size, and reduce the demand for cruel, industrial farming practices that cause unnecessary suffering.



Part 2: Cooking with Plants

Building Meals that Hit the Mark

Plant-based dishes are a natural fit for campus dining. They can be affordable, nutritious for busy students, easy to prepare at scale, low-waste, satisfying, and full of flavour. With cost-effective ingredients like beans, lentils, whole grains, tofu, nuts, and seeds, culinary teams can create craveable meals that meet the growing student demand for healthier, more sustainable options.

On the following pages, you can explore our recipes, instructional videos, and plant-based substitution guide to confidently adapt campus favourites and expand plant-forward offerings across your dining halls, cafés, and retail outlets.



Cook with Chef Amy

Quick, practical plant-forward recipes and tips for campus kitchens.



Butterscotch Squash Cake or Muffins



Easy Tofu Scramble



Explore the Forward Food recipe packet, featuring over 200 plant-based recipes, from breakfast to dessert.



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For more information, visit forwardfood.org/canada

Part 2: Cooking with Plants

Plant-Based Substitution Guide

Eggs

Substitutions for one egg in baking include: ground flax or chia egg (1 tbsp seed + 3 tbsp water), applesauce (¼ cup), silken tofu (¼ cup), baking soda (1 tsp) with vinegar (1 tbsp), or a commercial egg replacer.

For cooking: Try this [tofu scramble](#) or this [chickpea omelet](#).



Cheese

Substitutions can include plant-based cheeses made from nuts, seeds, or coconut oil, or versions made with orange veggies, tapioca or arrowroot starch, nutritional yeast, or miso paste. Commercial cheese replacements can also be used.

Try this plant-based [nacho cheese sauce](#) and this [plant-based mozzarella](#).



Dairy

Substitutions include unsweetened milk alternatives made from soy, oats, coconut, nuts, seeds or rice.

Instead of dairy-based cream, try cashew cream: Blend 1 cup raw unsalted cashews + 1 cup hot water (+ any flavour enhancers like vanilla, lemon zest, or salt depending upon its use) until smooth, about 2 minutes.



Fish

Substitutions include: hearts of palm, banana blossoms, jackfruit, tofu, and chickpeas, especially when paired with nori (seaweed) flakes.

Instead of smoked salmon, try this [carrot lox](#). Try hearts of palm in lieu of crab in this delicious [crabbyless crab cake recipe](#).



Meat

Substitutions include: lentils, mushrooms, tempeh, tofu, quinoa, walnuts, texturized vegetable protein (TVP), seitan, or commercial replacements.

Instead of ground meat, try [this recipe](#) using lentils, tempeh and mushrooms.

For beef chunks, try [this recipe for "beef chunk" tofu](#).



Part 2: Cooking with Plants

Sample Campus Menu

Find all of these recipes and more in the [Forward Food recipe packet](#).

Breakfast

- Vanilla Chai Chia Seed Pudding
- Fried Tofu Egg and Tempeh Bacon Sandwich *(pictured)*
- French Toast Casserole
- Chickpea Omelet
- Spiced Pancakes



Lunch

- Curried Chickpea Salad Sandwiches
- Pulled Jackfruit Sandwiches with Rainbow Slaw *(pictured)*
- Lentil Sloppy Joe's
- Chili Rice Bowl with Tempeh Crumble, Avocado and Cilantro
- Traditional Greek Salad with Tofu Feta



Dinner

- Cream of Chickpea Pot Pie
- Eggplant Parmesan with White Bean Béchamel
- Mushroom Udon Bowl with Crispy Tofu *(pictured)*
- Carrot Osso Bucco with Creamy Polenta
- Mushroom Asparagus Risotto



Soups

- Yam and Coconut Curry Soup with Red Lentils
- Zesty Cauliflower Lentil Soup *(pictured)*
- Cheesy Potato Soup
- Creamy Corn Chowder with Tempeh Chorizo



Desserts and Baked Goods

- Cinnamon Rolls *(pictured)*
- Raspberry Bars
- Tiramisu
- Chocolate Mousse



For more information, visit forwardfood.org/canada

Part 3: Promoting Plant-Rich Options

Increase Plant-Based Sales

Campus dining teams can boost interest and sales of plant-based offerings through thoughtful marketing and staff engagement. This section covers practical strategies for post-secondary settings, including appealing dish names, thoughtful menu placement, eye-catching presentation, and simple training approaches to equip staff with confidence to promote plant-forward choices to students.

Use the Plant-Based Marketing Guide and Template on the following pages to create a tailored action plan for your campus dining operation.

The Power of Defaulting

Making plant-based options the default can dramatically increase uptake of sustainable options while preserving choice. College studies show that participants were 3.5 times more likely to pick a plant-based meal when it was listed first, cutting modeled emissions by up to 42 percent.

Similarly, a UK university café found that automatically offering oat milk tripled its selection and reduced milk-related emissions by 25–34%.

Menu Messaging

Adding simple, inspiring messages to your menus can encourage your guests to choose more sustainable, plant-rich meals.

One study found that adding a note about the environmental impact of a dish, such as “choosing this plant-based meal saves emissions equal to charging your phone for two years”, roughly doubled the frequency at which guest ordered a plant-rich dish.

Relatable messaging makes sustainable choices easy and empowering!



Share about the Benefits of Plants

Download free, printable posters to share about the benefits of eating more plant-based foods.



For more information, visit forwardfood.org/canada

Part 3: Promoting Plant-Rich Options

Plant-Based Marketing Guide

1. Create Grave-Worthy Dishes

- Create thoughtful, colourful dishes that appeal to everyone. Test recipes with omnivores and refine until they are irresistible.
- Ensure the dishes stand out wherever they are presented.
- Example: "Chef Special: Crispy Chipotle Chickpea Tacos".

2. Use Mouth-Watering Descriptions

- Lead with flavour, not restriction. Highlight taste, texture, ingredients, cooking method, and provenance. Remember: this is delicious, satisfying food for everyone.
- Add V or VG symbols to denote that items are vegan for guests who need to know.
- Example: "Slow-roasted sweet potato and coconut curry" instead of "Vegan curry."

3. Make Plant-Based the Norm

- Feature plant-based dishes among other options — not in a separate "vegetarian" or "vegan" section of the menu.
- Give these options prime placement and make them the default where possible.
- Example: Place plant-based items first on menus or buffets, and make non-dairy milk the default in cafés.

4. Incentivize the Better Choice

- Encourage guests to try something new with discounts, loyalty programs, tastings, or limited-time offers.
- Example: "Try our new hearty and comforting three bean chili: \$2 off this week!"

5. Get Staff and Guests Excited

- Use existing channels like social media, digital screens, posters and other signage to showcase new dishes.
- Engage your front-of-house team. Their enthusiasm drives uptake. Download our [Front-of-House Training Guide](#) for practical tips.
- Example: Ask your front-of-house staff to encourage guests to try the daily plant-based feature. Give out free samples if possible.



Part 3: Promoting Plant-Rich Options

Plant-Based Promotional Activities

Try out some of these activities on campus to promote healthy and sustainable foods:

Plant-Based by Default for a Week

- **Activity:** Make a plant-based option the default, with animal-based protein available by request.
- **Example:** Lentil shepherd's pie is the standard lunch offering; meat version available upon request.
- **Goal:** Normalize plant-based meals while maintaining choice.



Run a Taste Test or Sampling Event

- **Activity:** Offer samples of a plant-based dish and gather feedback.
- **Example:** Sample plant-based butter chickpeas with simple promotional signage and a QR code survey.
- **Goal:** Build interest and collect input before adding items to your menu.

Feature a Plant-Based Dish of the Day or Week

- **Activity:** Highlight one plant-based item regularly using strong naming and promotion.
- **Example:** "Loaded Veggie Burrito Bowl" every Wednesday, promoted through signage and frontline staff.
- **Goal:** Increase visibility of plant-based options.



Host a Dinner and Documentary Night

- **Activity:** Serve a plant-based meal followed by a food-focused documentary.
- **Example:** Plant-based dinner with a screening of Forks Over Knives or The Game Changers.
- **Goal:** Create an engaging, educational food experience.

Go All Plant-Based in the Bakery

- **Activity:** Make house-made baked goods fully plant-based.
- **Example:** Muffins and cookies made with plant milk, oil or dairy-free butter, and flax or chia eggs.
- **Goal:** Demonstrate that plant-based baking is delicious and accessible.



Launch a Plant-Based Punch Card

- **Activity:** Reward repeat plant-based purchases with a simple incentive.
- **Example:** After four or nine plant-based meals, receive a free item or treat.
- **Goal:** Encourage repeat plant-based choices.



For more information, visit forwardfood.org/canada

Part 3: Promoting Plant-Rich Options

Plant-Based Marketing Template

Goal

What do you want to achieve? Fill in your answer below.

Example: Get more guests choosing our plant-based entrée of the day.

Actions

Write down three simple actions you can take to promote your dishes, based on the **Plant-Based Marketing Guide**.

Examples:

- Offer small samples of your plant-based dishes during busy meal periods.
- Rename dishes to highlight taste and texture (e.g., Seven Layer Black Bean Burrito or Crunchy Thai Noodle Bowl).
- Use symbols such as V, VG or a leaf icon instead of the word “vegan.”
- Feature your dish of the day on menu boards or digital screens.
- Encourage front-of-house staff to recommend plant-based dishes.
- Ensure that plant-based options are consistently the most affordable.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Forward Food Tip: Keep your marketing focused on promoting your plant-based dishes as delicious and satisfying food for *everyone*, not just vegetarians and vegans.

Part 4: Next Steps

Ready to make a change?

Start with setting a meaningful goal. Sign the Forward Food pledge!

Benefits of setting a goal:

- 1. Creates clarity and focus:** A clear goal turns good intentions into a concrete plan and helps teams understand what they are working toward.
- 2. Sets a measurable target:** Goals make progress visible, whether it is increasing your plant-based offerings, defaulting your meals to plant-based, or reducing animal-based ingredient procurement over time.
- 3. Makes change feel achievable, especially when paired with incremental targets:** A defined goal breaks change into manageable steps, which can help to prevent it from feeling overwhelming or too abstract.
- 4. Builds accountability and momentum:** Having a shared target helps keep plant-based efforts on the radar and encourages follow-through across teams. Monitoring progress towards a shared goal can build excitement.
- 5. Provides something to celebrate:** Reaching a goal creates a clear moment to recognize effort, celebrate success, and build confidence to take the next step. Our team is always happy to share your plant-based wins on our own Forward Food platforms.
- 6. Supports long-term impact:** Achieving even small plant-based goals can lead to lasting improvements in sustainability, food costs, animal welfare and your guests' health over time.



Learn more and sign the pledge

Contact Forward Food for free support:
forwardfoodcanada@humaneworld.org



For more information, visit forwardfood.org/canada