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INFO SHEET: WFPB DIET
EXPLAINED FOR FOOD
SERVICE DIRECTOR/
ADMINISTRATORS

School Lunch

As a food service director/administrator, you may have been approached by a parent, teacher or administrator interested in adding plant-based options to the school lunch menu. The addition of plant-based options to your school lunch menu presents an opportunity to get creative and offer meals that are both satisfying and healthful for students and staff. This Info Sheet outlines what a whole food, plant-based (WFPB) diet is and provides resources for more information, in order to support efforts to add more plant-based options to the school lunch menu.

Whole Food, Plant-Based (WFPB)

- When designing WFPB meals, you have an abundance of choices at your fingertips! You can create delicious, healthy meals from a plethora of ingredients, including vegetables, fruits, whole grains, tubers, roots, nuts and seeds, legumes/beans, and mushrooms. There exists a rainbow of whole foods, herbs and spices that nature has created to satisfy taste buds and fuel the human body.

What's the difference between a WFPB meal and a Vegetarian or Vegan meal? WFPB is the healthiest!

- **Vegan meals:** While vegan meals exclude animal products, they are not necessarily healthy. Vegan meals can include many processed foods and high amounts of oils, sugar, salt and fat.
- **Vegetarian meals:** While vegetarian meals exclude meat and fish, they include eggs and dairy products (such as cow's milk, yogurts and cheeses). They also typically include highly processed foods with high amounts of sugar, salt, oils and other fat.
- **WFPB meals:** In a whole food, plant-based meal, all of the ingredients nourish the body. These meals do not include any animal products, added oils, sweeteners or refined grains. While a WFPB diet (void of added sugar and salt) is the ideal to work towards, in terms of gaining acceptance, eliminating added oils and salt entirely may be a gradual transition that takes place. A primary goal should be removing animal products from the menu.





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Benefits of Offering WFPB Menu Options:

- Reduced costs: You may acquire a majority of your meat and cheese through the USDA food program, but to any extent that you are purchasing the meat/meat alternate of meal, [beans and lentils are cheaper](#).
- Reduced food borne disease risks: Plant foods alone do not naturally have these issues. Cross-contamination with animal products in the kitchen, and contamination prior to arrival are primary sources of food borne disease.
- Many items in WFPB dishes (vegetables, fruits and grains) can be incorporated into the non-vegan parts of the menu: The fruit, vegetable and grain components of the meal naturally lend themselves to the WFPB ideal. The meat/meat alternate component is an area where you can make the meal even healthier, by replacing the meat and the cheese with beans, lentils or tofu.
- Improves the health of your students and faculty: [Plant-based diets are associated with lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancers of the prostate and breast](#).
- It is environmentally friendly: [By including more plant-based menu items you will also be reducing greenhouse gas emissions, ocean pollution, and soil degradation](#).

It is Relatively Simple to Adjust an Existing Meal or Ingredient and Offer it as WFPB. For example:

- Try burritos or tacos with whole grain tortillas, black beans, salsa and corn instead of cheese and chicken. See a USDA-compliant sample recipe, "Sizzling Street Tacos," from Forward Food [here](#).
- Instead of Sloppy Joes try creating "[Beanie Burgers](#)," using a combination of black beans, sweet potatoes, oats, spices and more for the patty. For this recipe please visit the Coalition for Healthy School Food's website: <https://healthyschoolfood.org/wp/recipes/>.
- Ethnic dishes, such as Chana Masala, are easily prepared plant-based. For a sample [recipe of Chana Masala](#) using chickpeas as the main ingredient, visit Forward Food's list of USDA-compliant recipes.
- [Forward Food](#) has several resources to assist with meal planning, such as: USDA-compliant recipes, a list of meatless prepared products and companies which offer food-for-order and cycle menus. Their registered dietitians and coordinators can work with you to assist you in introducing more plant-based items to the school lunch menu. For more information contact Forward Food at: <http://bringfoodforward.org/contact/>.
- Coalition for Healthy School Food (CHSF) is a nonprofit that works to get plant-based entrees added to school menus and educate the school community about the benefits of plant-based eating. On their website you will find a list of plant-based recipes that meet all the criteria for the federal school lunch program. For more recipes and information about what they do visit their website: <http://www.healthyschoolfood.org>, or contact CHSF at: info@healthyschoolfood.org.



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Why it's Important to Avoid Some Foods, and Ideas for Replacing these Items with Plant-based Ingredients:

- **Animal-based foods**, including fish and chicken, which contribute to a diet high in animal protein, have been correlated with [increased obesity, diabetes and heart disease risk](#). Excellent substitutes that are high in protein include: tofu, beans, mushrooms, tempeh, and seitan.
- **Eggs**, a popular breakfast food thought by many to be nutritious, are the [leading source of cholesterol in the American Diet](#), and are associated with an [increased risk of diabetes and heart disease](#). Substitutes for eggs include: egg replacers, 1 tablespoon flax meal + 3 tablespoons hot water (flax egg), 1/3 cup of applesauce, or 1/4 cup pureed banana. To learn more about eggs, view this [video](#) from Nutritionfacts.org.
- **Dairy Products**, such as: cow's milk or goat's milk, and the cheese, yogurt, butter, and cream products produced from them, have been shown to correlate with [increased risk of disease and cancer](#). Moreover, a high percentage of children in the U.S. are lactose intolerant. In the United States, it's estimated that one in four children is lactose intolerant, and [world percentages suggest 65% of the population is lactose intolerant](#). Milk, yogurt, and cream substitutes include: almond, soy, cashew, rice and hemp milks and creamers. Butter substitutes include water or low sodium vegetable broth for sauteeing, mashed bananas or applesauce for baking, and for toast use fruit jams (no added sugar) or nut butters.
- **Refined and Processed Foods**, such as refined flour, sugars, and processed products [correlate with chronic disease, and increase the risk for insulin resistance, colon cancer, vascular disease and weight gain](#). Choose whole-grain products over white, and whole plant foods over their processed fragments. For sweeteners try dates or raisins.
- **Oil** - Despite the incredibly effective marketing effort of producers of olive oil, coconut oil, canola oil and others, ["there is absolute science that oil injures the endothelial cells,"](#) the protective inner layer of our arteries. Injury of the endothelium can be very detrimental, [and is the gateway to heart disease](#). Oil is not necessary for the creation of great-tasting meals; it is possible to create great flavor without oil. As explained by Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, Jr., M.D., ["oil contains no fiber, no minerals and is 100% fat calories. Both the mono unsaturated and saturated fat contained in oils is harmful to the endothelium, the innermost lining of the artery."](#) Visit [Dr. Esselstyn's website](#) for more information on oil. Oil substitutes include: rice vinegar, vegetable broth or water for sauteeing; and mashed bananas, applesauce, tofu, flax seed meal, etc. for oil-free baking. Parchment paper as well as non stick baking sheets, silchef and silpat, are excellent for oil free baking.

Food Companies/Distributors to Consider

- [AmericanBean](#) - A company focused on K-12 food options with products made from various types of beans.
- [Elenis](#) - A company that sells Mediterranean plant-based food products to schools.
- [Dot Foods](#) - A distributor to consider when ordering from plant-based/vegan food companies, as they offer help transporting a smaller quantity to the school which may help make the plant-based meal option more economically feasible.



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Resources

- Please see PPC's *Info Sheet: Initiating Meatless Monday in a Local School* for resources on how to implement a Meatless Monday campaign, including tips from the Humane Society Meatless Monday Toolkit.
- For more information about the Coalition for Healthy School Food (CHSF), please visit their website: <http://www.healthyschoolfood.org>.
- Please refer to the PlantPure Communities "[Resources](#)" [webpage](#) for information on a variety of topics, such as *WFPB Books & Cookbooks* and *Minimal Cooking Ideas*.
- For materials such as continuing education courses, online summits, and education and immersion programs, see PPC's *Nutrition Toolkit* (coming soon!).
- The T. Colin Campbell [Center for Nutrition Studies](#) website offers excellent information about WFPB diets, articles on various health topics, recipes and more.
- Visit Nutritionfacts.org for short (5 min) videos on various topics related to WFPB diets, by Michael Greger, M.D.

Disclaimer: The information shared by PlantPure Communities (PPC) is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. If you are on medication and are changing to a whole food, plant-based diet, you should discuss with your healthcare provider the changes that you are making in your diet and how these changes may require an adjustment in medication dosage. It is important that you work with your doctor to monitor your condition and medication dosage during your change of dietary practices.



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