

# Have A Plant<sup>®</sup>: The Plant-Forward Eating Guide

Insights, Ideas & Inspirations For  
Plant-Passionate Professionals

PRODUCE FOR<sup>®</sup>  
BETTER HEALTH  
FOUNDATION

have a  
**plant**<sup>®</sup>  
fruitsandveggies.org

Developed in partnership with  
California Walnuts





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I think you'll agree, most of us want to make food choices that help us feel healthier and happier, right? Of course, knowing what to eat is hard enough — conflicting health messages and maddening diet noise make it harder on consumers every day. But finding a meaningful *why* behind our food choices, and knowing how to make those positive changes, are equally important parts of the equation.

Global health experts agree: eating more plants — vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, seeds, soy and whole grains — is the single most important action people can take to enjoy happier, healthier lives — yet people continue to not eat enough plants each day. As the President and CEO of the Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH), I'm committed to leading changes to reverse this behavior trend.

PBH, in partnership with its members — including California Walnuts, has conducted significant research to better understand consumer behaviors, barriers and opportunities to improve eating habits. Throughout our research, one thing became increasingly clear: we must take a different dietary guidance approach to better address how Americans FEEL about healthy eating and, most importantly, improve how we inspire what they can DO each day to enjoy more plant foods.





PBH and [California Walnuts](#) have teamed up to share these insights with you – and, most importantly, give you NEW resources and tools that can help you motivate more Americans to enjoy more plants, more often. As you review this guide, I hope you'll consider:

**Knowing isn't enough.** Our research tells us that simply educating on the facts doesn't move the needle for healthy eating.<sup>1</sup> Most Americans KNOW that eating plant foods, like fruits and vegetables, promotes health but that doesn't translate into action. To bridge consumers' intention-action gap, we must SHOW Americans how plant foods boost their health and happiness and add even more flavor to their favorite meals and snacks.

**Feelings motivate behavior change.** We need to make eating plants personal. Demonstrate how eating more plants helps create healthy habits in the early years, when food is very emotional for families. Make nuts and beans trendy for adolescents. Reinforce how healthy eating boosts mood and mental well-being. In fact, science shows that as people eat more plants, their feelings of short-term happiness and long-term life satisfaction improve.<sup>2</sup>

**Doing should be easy, fun and practical.** Help ensure plant foods, including fruits and vegetables as well as nuts and seeds, are readily accessible, in front of people where they purchase food and consume meals. Focus on flavor, variety and satisfaction, rather than crunching and restriction. Showcase how simple it is to pair favorite meals and snacks with produce and other nutrient-rich choices, like lean protein, whole grains and dairy. Let's help people DO even better with more plant foods.

As we dig deeper, it's clear that there's a growing gap between what consumers and other stakeholders understand to be “plant-based.” Does it prioritize putting more plants on our plates, but still allow for animal products? Or is it a diet that only consists of plants? **How can we, as food and nutrition experts, expect to educate about the positive trend of eating more plant foods if there is no consensus on the words we use?**

That's exactly why we decided to create this guide. Let's cut through the confusion and meet consumers where they are, so that we all can help dispel misperceptions and focus on what really matters: helping all Americans enjoy more plant foods more often. Period.

The goal is to inspire Americans by showing them how incorporating more plants into their everyday life can be easy and exciting. This is our mission – to EMPOWER you and those you reach with insights and tools to EMBRACE and ENJOY more plant foods every single day.

Read on, share your plant-powered feedback with us, and then pay it plant-forward by sharing this resource. Check out our websites too for more info and inspiration – and, in the meantime, here's a plan: Have A Plant®!

*Wendy Reinhardt Kapsak, MS, RD*

**Wendy Reinhardt Kapsak, MS, RD**


President & CEO

Produce for Better Health Foundation

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[www.fruitsandveggies.org](http://www.fruitsandveggies.org)

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# Part 1:

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Defining & Celebrating  
Plant-Forward Eating



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## Creating Clarity: Words Matter

Vegan. Vegetarian. Flexitarian. Mediterranean/Med-Style. Plant-forward. Plant-based. Plant-centric. Today, there are more ways than ever to define plant-focused eating patterns. And, while plant-forward eating has become increasingly popular<sup>3</sup>, what this style of eating actually means has never been more confusing to consumers.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of an established lexicon can leave consumers confused about what the term “plant-based” exactly means.<sup>5</sup> There is strong evidence that a diet rich in plant foods is optimal for overall health<sup>6</sup>, **so let’s focus on the scientific evidence and empower people to enjoy more plant-forward meals for healthier, happier lives.** It’s time to simplify and align on what it means to eat more plants, so we are all speaking the same language.

To limit confusion and encourage a style of eating that prioritizes plants — vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes and whole grains — without excluding other food groups, this guide adopts the term **plant-forward**. We hope this guide places an emphasis on the simple, yet often challenging, goal to **put more plants on the plate**. We recommend the following definitions as you educate people:

**73%**

of survey respondents said they have heard of plant-based diets<sup>5</sup>

**51%**

were interested in learning more about them<sup>5</sup>

**1/3**

say “plant-based” means vegetarian or vegan<sup>5</sup>





### Definition: Plant-Forward Eating

Flavorful fruits and vibrant vegetables, satisfying whole grains and a variety of wholesome, nutrient-packed foods such as legumes, nuts and seeds, edamame and tofu are the mainstays. Low-fat milk and dairy products, seafood, lean meat, poultry and eggs are also parts of this balanced diet and complement plant foods deliciously and nutritiously.



Fruits



Veggies



Whole Grains



Seafood



Nuts and Seeds



Legumes



Edamame and Tofu



Lean Meat



Eggs



Low-Fat Milk and Dairy Products

### Definition: Plant-Based Foods

We use the term “plant-based” more narrowly to define plant-based foods on the market. Any food product made with 100% plants is a plant-based food. Plant-based foods are made from plants, such as chickpea-based chicken nuggets or pea-protein burgers made entirely of plants. Or nut milks and soy products. It also includes produce in any form (fresh, canned, frozen, etc.) This is an exceedingly important distinction.

A plant-forward diet is not about excluding or limiting food groups; it’s about being more mindful of how to add and enjoy more plants on the plate. And that’s one thing we can all agree on: enjoying more plant foods, as part of balanced meals and snack makes for healthier, happier lives.

### Setting Up For Success

Fewer people are familiar with the term “plant-forward” than “plant-based,” but more willing to follow “plant-forward” eating styles now and in the future, according to a 5-year tracking survey on this topic. People feel plant-based is restrictive (associated with vegetarian and vegan), but **“plant-forward” appears to feel more achievable — something people can put into practice without too many rules.**<sup>8</sup>



## Exploring Plant-Forward Eating Styles

There is no single way to achieve a plant-forward eating pattern. Instead, plant-forward eating is a flexible and customizable approach to eating that can fit any regional or cultural dietary tradition and honor individual food values and preferences. There are numerous

paths to a plant-forward style of eating — but at the heart, it's all about making the most of a plant-powered plate, because most Americans don't eat enough plant foods each day, particularly fruits and vegetables.<sup>9</sup>



### Vegetarian

The USDA defines vegetarians as those who do not eat poultry, seafood, beef, pork, lamb or other animal meats, such as bison or exotic meats. Vegetarians also do not eat products containing gelatin or rennin, an enzyme derived from animals that is used to produce many cheeses (USDA via Medline), though most dairy foods and eggs are included in this eating pattern.

### Vegan

A vegan diet is a type of vegetarianism that excludes all animal-based products. Vegans can only consume plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes (dried beans, peas, and lentils), grains, nuts and seeds. Raw vegans eat only plant foods in their uncooked form (USDA, Food Nutrition).

### Mediterranean

A Healthy Mediterranean-Style Eating Pattern was designed by modifying the Healthy U.S.-Style Eating Pattern, considering food group intakes from studies examining the associations between Mediterranean-Style eating patterns and health. These eating patterns contain more fruits and seafood and less dairy than the Healthy U.S.-Style Eating Pattern (USDA, Food Patterns).

### Vegetarian Vs. Plant-Forward:

While vegetarians restrict certain animal-based products, plant-forward eaters swap in animal products and proteins into their diet, rather than eliminating them entirely.<sup>10</sup>

### Vegan Vs. Plant-Forward:

A vegan diet is one of the more restrictive diets. While plant-forward eating allows for consumption of poultry, lean meat, seafood, dairy and eggs, veganism doesn't allow the consumption of any animal-derived products.<sup>11</sup>

### Mediterranean Vs. Plant-Forward:

The Mediterranean diet is a plant-forward style of eating. It's less restrictive of the consumption of animal proteins and has a higher overall recommended intake of good fats.<sup>12</sup>





### Understanding The Health Benefits Of Plant-Forward Eating

The importance of plant-forward eating isn't exactly new news. Strong evidence over several decades shows consuming fruits and vegetables promotes well-being even beyond basic nutrient requirements.<sup>13</sup> [The Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)<sup>14</sup> support nutrient-dense, plant-forward eating patterns, including vegetables, fruits, grains, low-fat dairy, lean meat and poultry, seafood and oils (including nuts) to help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. As plant-forward patterns grow in popularity, so does the evidence supporting their role in optimizing health.

#### Long-Term & Overall Health

**Living Longer:** Enjoying a plant-forward eating pattern, including consumption of fruits and vegetables at recommended levels and a higher intake of nuts, has been associated with a reduced risk of all causes of mortality.<sup>15, 16, 17, 18</sup>

#### Heart Health

**Lowering Risk:** Research has shown that eating a plant-forward diet may reduce the risk of developing and dying from cardiovascular disease (CVD) by 16 and 31%, respectively. In addition, replacing refined grains and added sugars with nutrient-rich fruits, vegetables, nuts (such as walnuts), seeds, whole grains, legumes and oils (such as olive oil) can help lower the risk of heart disease.<sup>19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24</sup>

#### Weight Management

**Losing Weight & Reducing Obesity Risk:** Small studies have indicated that overweight adults who followed a plant-forward diet can lose weight more effectively than those not following this type of eating style. One factor is likely the role of antioxidants and fiber in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, which can promote satiety or feelings of fullness.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup>

#### Cancer

**Reducing Risk:** Significant evidence has illustrated how eating more plants can help reduce the risk of cancer. The research highlights the role of cancer-protective nutrients such as fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals, which are abundant in vegetables, fruits, grains, beans, nuts and seeds.<sup>28, 29</sup>

#### Immunity With Gut Health

**Creating Happier Guts:** Eating more plants may also help improve gut health, which is the starting place for many other benefits, such as a healthy immune system and overall health. This improvement in gut health can be mostly attributed to the fiber and other plant components associated with plant-forward diets. Those nutrients increase the growth of beneficial bacteria that reduce inflammation and chronic disease risk. Overall, a plant-forward diet contributes to healthful microbiome diversity and supports optimal gut health.<sup>30</sup> Emerging research on the gut microbiome suggests plant-forward foods, such as walnuts, may be food to consider for gut health due to their prebiotic potential and possible role in providing a variety of associated health benefits.<sup>31</sup>



In a plant-forward approach to eating, many benefits are linked to the diverse nutrients found in plant foods, such as:



## Vitamins & Antioxidants

Antioxidants, including vitamins A, C and E, are important because they help stabilize cells and protect them from oxidative stress, which can lead to cancer, heart disease and age-related macular degeneration.<sup>32</sup> Antioxidants in brightly colored berries may help improve brain function, maintain strong bones and lower risk for heart disease.<sup>33</sup> Many fruits and vegetables are also rich in phenolics, a type of compound produced by plants to help protect them against oxidative stress.<sup>34</sup>



### Strawberries

141% Daily Value  
Vitamin C Per Cup



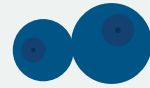
### Sweet Potato

475% Daily Value  
Vitamin A Per  
One Medium Potato



### Avocado

12% Daily Value  
Vitamin E Per ½ Cup



### Blueberries

16% Daily Value  
Vitamin C Per Cup

## Minerals

Dark leafy greens are a top source for 6 of 8 essential minerals, including calcium, copper, iron, potassium, magnesium and zinc — and in a relatively small amount of calories. They're a great low-calorie addition to any meal.



### Kale

6% Daily Value  
Iron Per Cup



### Swiss Chard

7% Daily Value  
Magnesium Per Cup



### Collards

5% Daily Value  
Calcium Per Cup



### Spinach

5% Daily Value  
Potassium Per Cup<sup>35</sup>



## Omega-3 ALA

Omega-3 ALA (alpha-linolenic acid) has been associated with benefits for heart health, brain health and inflammation. Essential ALA is found in plant-based foods, such as walnuts, flaxseed, soybean oil and canola oil. Omega-3 ALA can't be made by the body, so it's important to recommend people get more from plant foods.<sup>36</sup>



### Walnuts

2.5 Grams Per  
One-Ounce Handful



### Canola Oil

1.3 Grams  
Per Tablespoon



### Soybean Oil

1 Gram  
Per Tablespoon



### Flaxseed

6.4 Grams  
Per Ounce<sup>36</sup>

## Fiber

Fiber supports heart health, gut health and weight management, yet most adults don't consume even half of the recommended amount each day.<sup>37, 38, 39</sup>



### Apples, Bananas, Oranges & Strawberries

3-4 Grams Per Cup



### Carrots, Beets & Brussels Sprouts

3-4 Grams Per Cup

## Protein

The amount of protein needed for health varies and is based on age, sex, level of physical activity and health goals. While most Americans consume an adequate amount of protein, it's important that people aim for getting as much high-quality protein in relatively few calories as possible, from foods such as lean meats, seafood and plant proteins like soy, beans, peas and nuts. When enjoying plant protein foods, it's essential to balance calories since it can take more calories to meet daily protein goals from these foods, as compared to animal sources.



### Tofu

6.6 Grams  
Per Quarter Block



### Black Beans

7.5 Grams  
Per Half Cup



### Peas

3.8 Grams  
Per Half Cup



### Almonds

6.2 Grams  
Per Ounce<sup>40</sup>



# Part 2:

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Inspiring Plant-Forward  
Eating Through Insights



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## Shifting Behaviors For Plant-Forward Eating Success

While trend data shows Americans are interested in plant-forward meals, most fall short on actually eating this way — so it’s increasingly key that we focus on how to shift behaviors effectively to inspire healthier, happier lives with plant-forward meals. Americans understand the importance of adding more fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes and all things growing from the ground into their daily meals; yet, 9 out of 10 Americans don’t eat enough fruits and vegetables each day.<sup>41</sup>

### Shift Focus To Feeling & Doing

It turns out that directly influencing what people do is often the most effective path to change.<sup>42</sup> This is especially true in the food domain where we so often see an intention-action gap. People recognize there are healthier ways to eat, and they frequently make resolutions and intend to eat in those healthier ways. **The biggest hurdle, then, is to act on this knowledge and intent. Fruit and vegetable underconsumption is not a failure to know; it is a failure to do.**

Showcasing foods and/or recipes that feel familiar and are commonplace in the American diet, while highlighting benefits to one’s own well-being, can help lessen these “fears.” Among those who rarely or never follow a “plant-based” diet, they are willing to adopt if it makes them feel healthy (41%), they have the ability to eat foods they like (40%) and they can eat what is familiar to them (34%).<sup>8</sup>

## 9 out of 10

Americans don’t eat enough fruits and vegetables each day<sup>41</sup>



### Consider The Evidence

A recent meta-analysis reviewed almost 300 interventions, which were categorized as focusing on what people know (e.g., facts about nutrition), how people feel (e.g., emotional testimonials) or what people do (e.g., placing healthy foods in easy-to-reach places).

We see people succeed when they are able to act on their knowledge. The best way to encourage is to make it easy for people to consume plants.<sup>44</sup> This includes making it easy for people to buy, store, prepare and eat them. For example, it is important to make sure that healthy foods are easily accessible, in front of people at the time of consumption, hassle-free and salient. Feeling is also important because it provides the motivation required for goal setting, a first step in habit formation.

Interventions which focused on this last category, “doing,” were the most effective, followed by “feeling” interventions. “Knowing” interventions, such as those that educate people on what they should eat and why, were the least effective.<sup>43</sup>



**Lower Impact,  
Give Less Emphasis**



**Higher Impact,  
Give More Emphasis**

#### **What People KNOW**

Fact and Skills

#### **What People FEEL**

Desires and Emotions

#### **What People DO**

Routines, Plans, Impulses,  
Trial and Conversations

### Frame Inspiration As KNOW-FEEL-DO™

PBH's own research supports this finding, that facts, or what people know, is simply not enough to motivate lasting behavior change. The real opportunity for behavioral change presents itself when we lean into Americans' emotional desires and help them overcome barriers to action — in going beyond what they simply KNOW and instead tapping into immediate emotions associated with the eating experience — and over time,

create desire and craving. When we cultivate enjoyment, we help people DO something. This approach is known as PBH's KNOW-FEEL-DO™ Behavioral Framework, which also serves as the foundation for its consumer-facing [Have A Plant® Movement](#) and corresponding digital ecosystem ([fruitsandveggies.org](https://fruitsandveggies.org)). As you educate and inspire customers, clients and consumers to incorporate more plants in their diet, consider this KNOW-FEEL-DO™ Behavioral Framework: make it easy (to increase doing) and make it enjoyable (to increase feeling and motivate doing). Consider:



#### Aim For Habits Rather Than Goals

Habits are more effective at creating long-lasting behavior change than goals. Habits are specific, purposeful and repeatable behaviors that gradually transition away from requiring deliberate thought towards becoming reflexive actions. Goals, on the other hand, are often vague aspirations that we have to continually consciously work toward. As Wendy Wood,<sup>53</sup> a leading expert on habits and habit formation, points out, habits are “not what the action is” but rather “how you perform an action.” Every year, people make resolutions that are lofty goals: “I want to eat more vegetables.” What if people resolved to create concrete habits, instead? “In the new year, I’m going to start my meals with fruits and veggies” might be more successful. This type of resolution is easier, more specific and has a better chance at getting the repetition needed to form a habit.



#### Identify & Master A “Bottleneck” Behavior

New habits should focus on a key bottleneck behavior that can be repeated each day. A bottleneck behavior is one that serves as a barrier to completing an action.<sup>54</sup> It is often the first or least desirable step. An example of a bottleneck behavior when it comes to a healthy breakfast is need for preparation.

Having fruits, veggies, whole grains, nuts and seeds prepared and at the ready in the morning makes consumption of such foods easier and, with repetition, eventually habitual.





### Choose A Consistent Context

Habits are formed and solidified by repeating actions in a consistent context, usually the same time and place every time.<sup>55</sup> Repetition in a stable context is crucial to form the mental association between a context cue and an action that characterizes habits. Context cues eventually prompt the desired behavior by drawing on these unconscious mental associations between the context and past actions. Consistently eating walnuts at work every day as an afternoon snack, for example, will eventually lead people to eat walnuts when lunch rolls around without consciously deciding to do so. This now-automatic behavior is a habit.



### Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

It takes time to form habits — weeks to months even depending on the complexity and how consistent your context is. Because of this, repetition may be the single most important aspect of habit formation. Remember, the goal is to make consumption automatic, and the only way to do this is to perform the desired action(s) in the same context over and over and over. Making it easy to repeat a desired behavior is essential. Without repetition,<sup>56</sup> the mental associations between a person's context and desired behavior cannot be formed. That does not mean that we should counsel people to grab the same piece of fruit on the way out the door every morning, but encourage them to grab any type of fruit (and in any form!) each day.



### Recognize With Rewards

Habits are longer lasting and easier to form when behaviors are rewarded soon after they occur. Rewards don't have to be substantial or even tangible, simply enjoying the taste of the veggie dish that someone created or praising a child for eating their veggies are great ways to reward a habit. Pairing rewards with desired behaviors can help clients not only form habits, but also increase how much they enjoy the behavior. It is convenient if the reward was going to happen anyway; for example, eating a handful of carrots before a long, warm shower is a great example of a reward following a habit behavior.<sup>57</sup>



### Emphasize Exposure

Studies have shown that exposure is more important than palatability in increasing produce consumption. Repeated exposure to fruits and vegetables has been shown to increase both people's liking and consumption. That is, exposure will not only help someone tolerate fruits and vegetables, but it will also help them enjoy them too. Research suggests that parents grossly underutilize the power of exposure.

The craft of effective exposure is something all parents (and people) can add to their routine.<sup>58</sup>

### Bring All The Feels

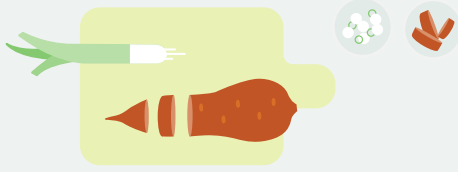
Bring the KNOW-FEEL-DO™ Behavioral Framework to life. When a message taps into how people really feel about enjoying plants in their diet, it is much more likely to catch on and go viral. That feeling can be the satisfaction of serving your family veggie-filled snacks, the happiness someone feels after biting into beautiful berries, or even the pride in having tried a new piece of produce.

Enjoying, or even craving, plants is a good motivation to consume them.





## Tips For Action



### Meal prep, meal prep, meal prep!

Meal prepping is an excellent way to ensure that healthy food options are as, if not more, convenient than unhealthy snacks by eliminating one of the most common bottleneck behaviors — food preparation.<sup>59</sup>



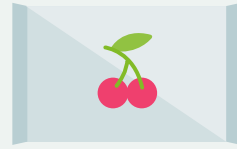
### Include nuts in menu or product options in a simple way.

Highlight nuts like walnuts with oatmeal, on a salad at lunch or as a crust to chicken or fish.



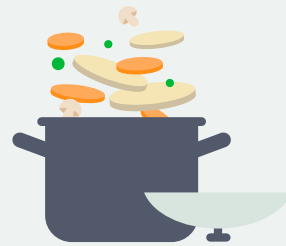
### Balance plant proteins along with animal proteins and high-quality ingredients.

Kidney or garbanzo beans, lentils, walnuts, seeds and high-quality soy protein like edamame or tofu are all great options. Add chopped mushrooms, walnuts, cauliflower or legumes to ground meat.



### Consider all forms!

Whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or 100% juice - fruits, vegetables and beans can make for convenient nutrient-rich options to add more plants in fast meals and snacks.



### Make vegetables, beans and grains a prominent place in an entrée.

A salad, hearty stew or casserole featuring nutrient-rich vegetables, whole grains and lean beef can be the main event.

### Start a meal with plants.

Serving something like a soup or salad at the start of the meal, we're ensuring that fruits, veggies, nuts and seeds, legumes, whole grains, etc. are in front people when hunger is the greatest. It is also a great example of “making it easy” to consume healthy food options. This technique has been shown to increase vegetable consumption in cafeteria settings by 66%.<sup>60</sup>



# Part 3:

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Motivating Plant-Forward  
Eating For Happier,  
Healthier Lives







## Inspiring Easy & Enjoyable Plant-Forward Eating: In Restaurants & When Shopping

Plant-forward eating is not “all or nothing.” It can, but doesn’t have to, be about going meat-free and only eating plants as this may be where we lose some people.

Rather, plant-forward eating can be about a balance and flexibility. We can help consumers by emphasizing small shifts in habits — encouraging people to just try adding more plants within the context of their

daily routines to enjoy the benefits and great taste. As research has shown us and in accordance with PBH’s KNOW-FEEL-DO™ Behavioral Framework, making the doing easy and enjoyable — and rooted in emotional drivers — is the key to success when trying to inspire new eating behaviors.



## Bringing Plants Forward In Restaurants

### *Trends & Insights*

For many years, the foodservice industry has already demonstrated that plant-forward menu items can be delicious. Operators know that many customers are striving to eat more plant-based foods and that the number one strategy consumers use to achieve this goal is to eat more vegetables.<sup>62</sup> This isn't to say that operators are offering less meat on their menus, but they are finding ways to make vegetables more prominent, more craveable and more profitable. Chefs know that if they apply culinary techniques to vegetables that home cooks can't or won't do (think sous vide cooking), they can charge a premium price for a premium dining experience. Today, as diners think more about protecting and promoting their health, the demand for plant-forward menu options will continue to be top of mind. The obligation of the foodservice industry, and subsequently the consumer pressure on the industry, is growing. As those obligations grow, so does the business opportunity and potential profitability. It is in the best interest of the foodservice industry to invest

in plant-forward menu development that delivers first on great taste, our primary driver for our food choices.

**If plant-forward menu items don't taste great, it doesn't matter how health-promoting they are.**

We should work to celebrate plant-forward menu innovation versus criticizing it if it doesn't meet every criterion for what we believe is "healthy." There will always be demand for indulgence in dining but, likewise, as restaurants play a larger and larger role in providing food for people, there is a growing demand for more healthful options on menus.

Sadly, one of the trends in restaurants (due to COVID-19) is the shrinking of menus. Restaurants are doing this to reduce food waste losses from less certain traffic patterns as well as to ensure better, more consistent quality with a smaller menu. Experts see this as a short-term trend. As patrons return to restaurants more often, they'll want to see menu innovation and they'll want to see a greater number of plant-forward menu options that promote good health.



**One trend that will continue through the pandemic and beyond is customization, which is great for people seeking more fruits and vegetables when dining away from home.** For example, did you know

that when ordering at Chipotle, customers can always add — free of charge — a serving of sautéed peppers and onions to their burrito or burrito bowl? In addition, Subway has been offering customers the option to add more veggies to sandwiches for years, and they recently began offering Fresh Fit® Sandwiches that include two servings of vegetables, which shows the power of menu R&D that focuses on increasing fruits and vegetables. Helping consumers understand and appreciate these opportunities to customize can go a long way toward supporting plant-forward eating and increasing fruit and vegetable consumption.

**Another trend experts expect to continue long after the pandemic is over is interest in plant-based alternatives to meat.** Items like walnut chorizo are

gaining traction in foodservice, giving customers a wonderful way to enjoy great taste and nutrition no matter their eating style. One thing many chefs and consumers may not realize is how much protein is in foods like green leafy vegetables, legumes and walnuts. Nutrition professionals can help expand thinking about protein alternatives by providing tips for adding protein from plant-based sources.



### Make It Memorable

Emphasize the definition with customers — plant-forward eating is delicious, healthy and flexible, through menu options and presentation. Make it an experience that's enjoyable. As outlined in this guide, the best way to ensure adoption is through positive reinforcement and association with positive emotions.

### Create Access & Opportunity

Plant-forward eating can feel out of reach for many, and consumer perception of 'healthier eating' can be that healthier equals more money and more time.<sup>63</sup> By making plant-forward meals accessible to all, the choice is not just a healthier one, but a seemingly easy one.

### Celebrate Taste

We know that consumers are driven primarily by taste — so plus-up menus with some fun, delicious, and interesting recipes and enticing menu language, including adjectives such as crispy, crunchy, creamy, smoky and sweet, to guide them in their choice. Consider some of the options in this guide or have fun with your own creations!

### Illustrate The Importance

Prioritizing plant-forward starts with you, the foodservice professional. Try highlighting the definition and value of plant-forward eating in communications and choices. Joining PBH and using the Have A Plant® Movement logo on menu boards, menus and promotional materials can be a wonderful way to align your brand with a trusted, credible third-party organization.



## Culinary Inspiration

Plant-forward cooking celebrates all the sensory attributes — the colors, aromas, textures and flavors, even the sounds that plant foods can bring to delicious meals and snacks, in addition to bringing health benefits. There are certain words that describe sensory attributes we all love, which can be created by combining plants with culinary and cooking techniques. Research from Datassential<sup>61</sup> shows that using descriptors that evoke a positive emotional response can inspire us to crave these foods. Our words matter. And when we're all striving to get people to crave and eat more plants, our words matter even more! Here are some examples of powerful food descriptors you can use when creating recipes and meal tips for people, as well as plant-powered inspiration that's easy and delicious.

*“A plant-forward diet is not just about excluding or limiting food groups; it's about being more mindful of how to add and enjoy more plants on the plate. And that's one thing we can all agree on: enjoying more plant foods, as part of balanced meals and snacks, makes for healthier, happier lives.”*

— Sharon Palmer, MSFS, RDN, The Plant-Powered Dietitian, plant-based and sustainability nutrition expert, author, blogger, professor and consultant

**For more culinary inspiration and recipes galore, follow the Produce for Better Health Foundation on Facebook @fruitsandveggies and Instagram @fruitsandveggies.**

You'll find a slew of nutritious and delicious recipes along with recipe video content.



## Creamy

Boiling or steaming and pureeing vegetables like potatoes, cauliflower, carrots, squash, onions and zucchini can create creamy textures.

Nuts and seeds can also be incorporated into creamy dishes through walnut butters, creams and sauces such as tahini. Include nuts in menu or product options in a simple way. Highlight nuts with oatmeal, on a salad at lunch or as a crust to chicken or fish.

Bananas are the ultimate creamy fruit, making a rich base for smoothies, especially if the banana is frozen before putting them in the blender.



Roasted Pear & Butternut Squash Soup

**Adding oils, such as extra virgin olive oil, can enhance the creamy texture as well as the nutrition content — making an ideal base for a creamy soup or sauce.**



Kale, Apple, Pancetta & Walnut Salad With Creamy Walnut Dressing

## Crispy

Foods that are crispy typically contain very little water. Most fruits and vegetables contain greater than 90% water by weight.

To achieve crispiness with fruits and vegetables, home cooks can thinly slice fruits and vegetables with a sharp knife or use a mandoline and then dehydrating them. Dehydrated onion strips add alluring crispy textures to a fresh green salad. Some newer ovens and toaster ovens come with a dehydrator function.



[Holiday Pomegranate Salsa](#)

**People can also achieve crispiness by baking at low temperatures for a long time, but this takes patience, and some produce (e.g., apples, root vegetables) works better than others.**



[Spinach Salad With Crispy Tofu & Wasabi-Walnut Dressing](#)



## Crunchy

We all appreciate the crunch of raw fruits and veggies, or a great nut or seed, maybe even a toasted grain.

Oven roasting can also create crunchy textures from ingredients like broccoli florets, cauliflower “rice,” seasoned walnuts, shredded potatoes and green beans. Tossing with a spice blend and a little plant-based oil, like Italian seasoning and peanut oil, prior to roasting will create enticing aromas along with crunchy textures that delight the senses.

Another way to add crunchy texture to vegetables is to combine them with walnuts. Consider mashed sweet potatoes topped with walnuts, the perfect combination of creamy and crunchy. In fact, walnuts can boost the nutrition and crunch of many fruit and vegetable recipes.

**Adding walnuts to a dish boosts the nutrition and crunch of so many fruit and vegetable recipes.**



Green Goddess Tuna Walnut Salad Pinwheels



Walnut & Cranberry Stuffed Sweet Potatoes

## Smoky

Smoky flavors aren't just for grilled or smoked meats and fish — they're also delicious in vegetables, which can be simply achieved by grilling.

Ingredients like smoked olive oil, smoked paprika or dried chipotle seasoning can impart a smoky flavor to vinaigrettes and dressings, and can be made simply with vegetable oil, mustard (as the emulsifier), a pinch of salt and smoked paprika.

Grilling adds smoky flavors to delectable fruit like peaches, nectarines and pineapple. Grilling also causes the sugar in fruit to caramelize, which adds another alluring flavor!



Hickory-Smoked Walnut Street Tacos With Superfood Slaw, Avocado, Cotija & Pickled Red Onions

**No grill? No problem. Combining fruit and vegetables with bacon or smoked cheeses is also delicious!**



Slow Cooker Beef & Root Vegetables





## Bringing Plants Forward In Retail

### *Trends & Insights*

Plant-based foods remain a growth engine at retail, and research shows that the steady rise in plant-based products each year indicates that this is not a fad, but a real change in consumer behavior. Retailers are responding to the growth by expanding shelf space — and we have an opportunity to help consumers not only seek out plant-based foods but celebrate plant-forward eating throughout the grocery store, as part of balanced, delicious meals and snacks.

While customers increasingly are seeking plant-based food options and alternatives, we can help them add wholesome, real fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and legumes to their (online) shopping cart more often too!

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U.S. retail sales of plant-based foods continue to grow, up 11.4% in 2020, bringing the total plant-based food market value to \$5 billion. Particularly in the age of COVID-19, when heart disease and diabetes are higher-risk factors than ever, more people are looking to transition toward a healthier diet.

Plant-forward eating is not “all or nothing.” Shoppers do not have to go meat-free to be more plant-forward. The point is, it’s flexible.

The “From Plant-based to Lab-grown” report finds that over half of consumers (51%) had purchased plant-based milk, dairy or meat alternatives in the past three months. And these are not vegetarians. Less than half of plant-based purchasers today (41%) think of themselves as people who are limiting meat, and one in five describes themselves as carnivores.<sup>66</sup>

The Hartman Group provides insights into the complexity behind plant-based buyers’ diets, with only 12% of plant-based purchasers describing themselves as vegetarians, while 41% of them describe their eating styles as “omnivore.” Overall consumers continue to seek balance. Across the board, all categories of plant-based foods showed growth with the highest rates in creamers, sauces, and dips. This illustrates new opportunities for brands looking to expand their portfolio as well as confirm that plant-based products are becoming mainstream and is no longer a niche category.<sup>67</sup>

Retail professionals and retail dietitians are a trusted health and nutrition resource to customers, and they have a unique opportunity to influence eating habits and buying decisions at the point-of-purchase, whether in-store or online. With the diversification of products and the availability of a variety of plant food options, consumers will continue to expect their favorite products as well as new and exciting options to help them sustain this deliciously healthy lifestyle.

*"Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the worldwide demand for plant-forward and superior ingredients. For example, nutrition as well as high quality has driven demand for California walnuts. As a grower from a multigenerational farming family, our family takes great care and pride in producing the finest walnuts for consumers to enjoy in their own homes as well as in restaurant meals."*

- Jack Mariani, walnut grower and founder of Mariani Nut Company



**40%**

of households consume both plant-based milk options and cow’s milk<sup>64, 65</sup>

**98%**

of consumers who purchase plant-based meats also purchase animal meat<sup>64, 65</sup>

**12%**

of plant-based purchasers describe themselves as vegetarians<sup>67</sup>

**41%**

of plant-based purchasers describe their eating styles as “omnivore”<sup>67</sup>

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The plant-forward eating trend will continue as consumers understand the variety of food options in the retail setting that are naturally plant-based, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes and nuts, and as more companies bring next-generation innovations to market that deliver on the most important driver of consumer choice: taste.



## Tips For Action



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3



### Dial Up The Delicious

Retailers and retail dietitians can partner to create fun and interesting recipes that they can take to market and social channels with their clients and customers — feature a cauliflower crust pizza, walnut chorizo or a new grain bowl to which customers will be drawn. Partner with deli teams to ensure plant-forward options — that also have a strong nutrition profile — are offered and featured. While tasting products/recipes on-site is the gold standard through sampling and in-store demos, unfortunately, those activities may not be possible right now, so pivoting and relying on social media to show step-by-step recipe videos or showcase new product offers a creative way to inform and educate your shoppers. Offer how-to guides on gradually adding more plant foods to daily eating habits as inspiration for shoppers.

### Focus On Flexibility

As consumers choose to add more plants to meals, but still include meat, offer videos and live streams that show how to cook once and eat twice, using one cut of meat for two meals. Promote recipes that combine meat, seafood or poultry with vegetables, nuts or beans, offering complementary nutrition that extends the meat to a greater plant-forward portion. During individual consults, provide options of how plant-based foods fit into eating patterns for heart health, diabetes, weight management and other health conditions. Partner with vendors who can offer free product samples or coupons, increasing the likelihood shoppers will try a product they may not be familiar with or used before.



## Tips For Action



### Prioritize Plants

Don't be left behind. Plant-forward eating is here to stay; it is not a trend but rather, a lifestyle. Similar to how manufacturers are responding by continuously innovating to meet consumer demand, retailers can show their customers that they are listening to their values by featuring plant-based products in the forefront, on endcaps, in displays. Consider banner ads of plant-based foods in online shopping. Store magazines, websites and social sites are the ideal place to educate on what plant-forward eating means and your company dietitians are the trusted authority on the topic.

### Make It Memorable

California Walnuts has partnered with PBH's Powerful Produce Pairings program which pairs fresh fruits and vegetables with other nutrient-rich products — including other produce items, whole grains, seeds and nuts, low-fat dairy and/or lean protein — to create meal and snack solution promotions for retail customers. Omni-channel promotions like these are effective as they reach the shopper along the entire path to purchase. An element of these promotions is social engagement by PBH, leveraging their strong consumer influence power and ability to geotarget to a retailer's key markets. These promotions are effective in driving sales, social engagement and consumer awareness of the plant-forward movement.





# Part 4:

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Making An Impact  
With Consumers







Throughout this guide you've learned to help others embrace, empower and enjoy plant-forward eating. The interest is there, the knowledge is there, and now it's up to us as professionals to motivate consumers to not only understand the benefits of plant-forward eating but to put it into practice as well. Below you will find ready-to-use tools and guidance to help you make an impact with consumers with the insights and practices from this guide.

### Ready-To-Use Tools & Guidance

From health professionals and media to retailers, chefs and foodservice professionals, everyone has a role to play in inspiring plant-forward eating for all. Here are a few ideas to get started today.

**Uncover their “why”.** Before guiding customers or clients toward what to eat, focus first on understanding why they want to make a change. Ask open-ended questions like, “How do you think your life might change if you adopted a more plant-forward eating style? Why are these changes important to you? Why have these food choices been challenging in the past?” We know the key to behavior change is harnessing the motivational power of emotion. Help people discover their purpose for making the change and make plant-forward eating personal.

**Put plants front and center.** In foodservice and retail settings, help guide clients and customers toward plant-forward choices by calling them out on menus or offering them as highlighted specials. Feature them at the point of purchase and provide samples that demonstrate the taste and versatility of plants.



**Create fun ways to discover new faves.** Make plant food exploration and experimentation feel like an adventure. For example, create a favorite foods “map” showing the taste, texture and other attractive attributes of a client’s favorite foods and draw routes toward similar plant foods worth “touring.” For example, someone who loves the sweet taste and mushy mouthfeel of bananas may discover they also love baked sweet potatoes, while someone who gravitates toward salty and crunchy snacks might enjoy pickles and salted nuts, too.

**Emphasize additions first.** Ingredient swaps and subtractions can inhibit motivation to change. Rather than focusing on foods to forgo in favor of plants, start by simply piling plants on top of a meal plan. Suggest sliced tomatoes and leafy greens on top of a burger, peppers and onions as extra pizza toppings or berries and walnuts on a scoop of ice cream.

**Spread the word on social media.** Keep the plant-forward momentum going by amplifying motivational messaging through your social and digital channels. Share a pic of drool-worthy plant-forward dishes, or spark a new plant-forward habit in 280 characters or less! Here are just a few click-worthy posts to share:

- DYK just ½ a cup of raw red pepper has over 100% of your daily value of vitamin C? Toss some in your pasta salad or stir-fry and you’re SET!
- Craving a meal that’s cozy, comforting and QUICK? Baked potato to the rescue! Just prick the skin several times with a fork and microwave for 7-8 minutes. Top with broccoli, walnuts, chili and other toppings of your choice for warm, filling and fiber-full goodness in under 10 minutes.
- Remember: Small steps lead to big changes. What’s one plant-forward meal or snack you made this week that you’re feeling proud of?

Promote plant-forward eating. Brands, organization and commodity boards can promote plant-forward eating in their communications and marketing, such as a satellite media tour, newsletter or email campaign. Better yet, partner together and show we’re in this together!





## Taking The Tools To Your Audience

You can find a link to a toolkit which provides tools and resources you can use in your marketing plans, on social and beyond to amplify this plant-forward message and inform consumers about the benefits of plant-forward eating, here:

[fruitsandveggies.org/plant-forward-toolkit](https://fruitsandveggies.org/plant-forward-toolkit).

### This toolkit contains:

*Assets & Graphics*

*Social Media Engagement*

*Key Messages*

*Plant Forward Recipe Resources*

*Socialization Inspiration*

**Key Messages:** Simplify and communicate the plant-forward messages and relevant definitions in your communications.

**Plant-Forward Recipes:** Your central source for plant-forward recipes to incorporate more plants into anyone's diet. Share these recipes in your communications, websites, social media, events and more. For more recipes, you can check out [fruitsandveggies.org/recipes](https://fruitsandveggies.org/recipes).

**Socialization Inspiration:** Help us promote the plant powered message through e-newsletters, webinar, blog posts and other public relations tactics. Have an idea for something else? Share it with us!

## Need More Inspiration?

Visit these sites to gather more ideas related to plant-forward research, meal planning and consumer messaging:



[www.fruitsandveggies.org](https://www.fruitsandveggies.org)



[www.walnuts.org](https://www.walnuts.org)



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