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A place for plant-based learning

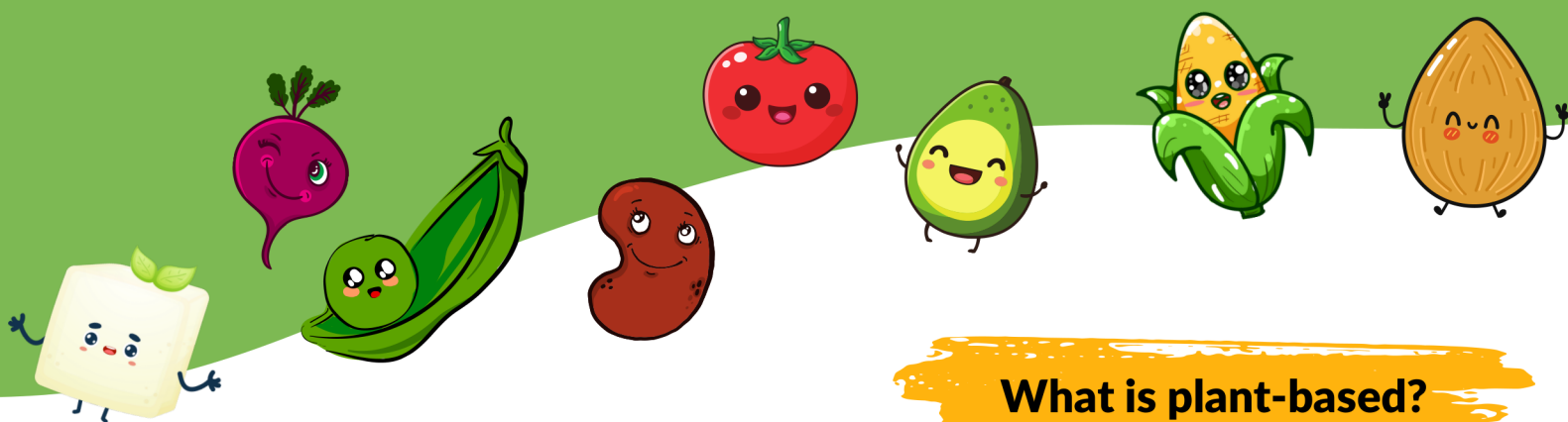


Beginner's Guide to Plant- Based Eating

Let your plant-based journey begin!

Congratulations for taking a great first step into the world of plant-based eating! This guide will cover helpful basics like benefits, tips on transitioning, and simple recipes. So whether you're starting to think about switching or have already begun, you're in the right place.

Looking for even more valuable resources on plant-based eating? After reading through this short book, check out PlantUniversity.ca for more plant-based learning and resources!



What is plant-based?

So what do people mean when they say “plant-based”? Plant-based foods refer to foods that come from plants—think fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes. These foods do not include animal-based foods like meat, dairy, and eggs.

Therefore, a plant-based diet generally refers to a diet that's entirely made of plant-based foods, without any animal products at all.

You may think that sounds a lot like veganism! What's the difference?

Vegans follow a plant-based diet, but also avoid animal products in other areas of life where possible and practical, such as clothing, cosmetics, and household products.

This means using alternatives to leather, wool, silk, and other animal-based materials, and choosing products that are not tested on animals.

For the purposes of this guide, we're focusing just on diet.

Why should you consider transitioning to a plant-based diet?



Good for you

Vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients from plant-based foods can help you feel your best and reduce your risk of diseases like heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes. Check out this [plant-based food guide](#) for more information (which is very similar to Canada's own Food Guide!).



Good for the environment

Eating more plant-based foods can be a great way to reduce your impact on the environment. Animal agriculture is a big contributor to issues like greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and water pollution.



Good for the animals

Animals are intelligent, caring beings. Farmed animals are often raised in industrialized environments where they're subjected to inhumane treatment and living conditions, including confinement, overcrowding, stress, and painful procedures such as castration without pain relief. If you want to show some love to our animal friends, eating more plant-based helps reduce the demand and spare animals from this treatment.



Good for your wallet

Have you mistakenly heard plant-based foods are costly? We are here to break the myth and show people that plant-based eating can be very affordable! Whole plant-based foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes tend to be less expensive than meat, dairy, and processed foods. They are also often sold in larger quantities, allowing you to get more food for your money. A cost-benefit analysis done by the Vancouver Humane Society found that even just a 25% shift to plant-based foods could save you \$12/month or \$144/year.



FACT

Food makes up nearly half of Vancouver's ecological footprint, 98% of which is attributed to the land and energy used to produce food (particularly red meat and dairy) and only 2% is related to the transportation of food.

6 easy tips for transitioning to plant-based eating

1 Start slow

You don't have to go full-on plant-based overnight if that doesn't work for you!

Start by trying out some meatless meals, or substituting your usual burger for a delicious plant-based option a few times a week. You'll be surprised how easy it is to make the switch in small ways—which will make a bigger shift seem less daunting.

2 Find your favourite foods—but plant-based versions!

Love yourself a bite of cheese? Or are you a self-proclaimed meat lover? Don't worry! There are lots of tasty plant-based options.

In fact, alternatives are such good quality these days, that you may be surprised at how little you miss meat or dairy products.

Whether it's tofu, a beyond burger, or vegan cheese, try out a few options and find what works best for you. And as more people turn to plant-based eating, there are even more alternatives that become available!

3 Find some go-to recipes

Making meals plant-based has become simpler than ever before! This is thanks to the growing popularity of plant-based eating and the increasing availability of plant-based ingredients.

Follow plant-based food bloggers or search for hashtags like #meatlessmonday on social media for inspiration.

Looking for more plant-based recipes? There's a whole [library on PlantUniversity.ca](https://plantuniversity.ca/library).

4 Plan your meals

This may seem like a lot of work, but in the end you might find it saves you time and energy throughout the week!

Planning your meals ahead of time can help ensure that you have a variety of plant-based options available all week. Consider meal prepping or batch cooking to make meal planning even easier. When going out to eat, you can research the menu, suggest a restaurant, or bring a plant-based dish to an event to show just how tasty it can be.

5 Be kind to yourself

Remember, transitioning to a plant-based diet is a learning curve, and it's okay to slip up or make mistakes.

So don't beat yourself up about it. Keep trying and taking small steps towards your goals. You've got this!

6 Don't be afraid to ask for help

If you have friends or family members who are already eating more plant-based meals, don't hesitate to ask for their advice or support.

You can also get involved in online or in-person communities, such as Facebook mentoring groups like Challenge22 or try the 21-day challenge on [PlantUniversity.ca](https://plantuniversity.ca).



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Simple plant-based recipes to try at home today!

Many South Asian, and particularly Punjabi, recipes are inherently plant-based, or very easily altered to be plant-based. Contrary to the common perception of Punjabi food being very rich and indulgent and layered with fats, traditional homecooked meals are simple and nutritious. The following recipes are made mostly with ingredients that are pantry staples or easy to find at all major grocery stores. They're easy to make, full of flavour, and are nutrient dense.



Rajma Chawal

Serves 2 People

Rajma is a North Indian dish with many regional variations. This traditional Punjabi version is a comforting, wholesome meal that comes together quickly with some simple ingredients. Serve with jeera chawal (Indian style cumin rice).

Ingredients

1 can low-sodium red kidney beans (540 mL), or 1 cup dried kidney beans, soaked in 5 cups water overnight
1 small onion, finely diced (any kind, approximately ½ cup)
3 cloves garlic, finely minced
1 in piece of ginger, finely minced
½ jalapeño pepper, deseeded and finely minced
2 tomatoes, finely diced (approximately 1 cup) (or can sub 1 cup tomato sauce)
1 tsp cumin seeds
2 tsp turmeric
2 tsp salt
2 tbsp cilantro
2 tsp neutral oil
1-2 cups water

Jeera Chawal:

1 cup basmati rice, rinsed
2 cups water
1 tsp cumin seeds
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp oil
¼ cup frozen green peas (optional)

Instructions

1. If using dried kidney beans, after soaking overnight, boil until soft (~30 mins).
2. If using canned kidney beans, do not drain or rinse—the canning liquid will help emulsify the dish.
3. Heat oil in a pot and add cumin seeds.
4. When the cumin seeds have turned a shade darker, after ~1 min, add the onions.
5. Once the onions have started to sweat, add the ginger and garlic. Sauté until it reaches a dark brown shade, and everything has broken down fully, ~10 mins. Deglaze with water as needed.
6. Add jalapeño, turmeric, and salt. Sauté for 1 min.
7. Add the tomatoes and cook for ~15 mins, until fully broken down. If using tomato sauce, use the back of your spoon to assist the process.
8. Add the kidney beans and mix gently.
9. If using canned kidney beans, add 2 cups of water. If using soaked/boiled kidney beans, add 1 cup of water.
10. Simmer for 20 mins.
11. While the rajma simmers, add the rinsed rice, water, cumin seeds, salt, oil, and green peas (if using) to another pot and simmer until all the water has absorbed.
12. Garnish the rajma with cilantro and serve over the rice.



Kathi Rolls

Serves 2 People

Kathi rolls are a Bengali street food now popular across a large part of South Asia. They pack well and make for a great lunch or mid-day snack. This version is made with seasoned tofu, masala onions, and a spicy chutney. Pro tip: most frozen paranthas at the grocery store are accidentally vegan, just make sure to check the ingredients. The parantha can also be substituted for a plain tortilla.

Ingredients

½ block tofu, cut into small cubes
1 tbsp cornstarch
1 tsp black pepper
½ tsp turmeric
1 tsp paprika
2 tsp chaat masala, divided (optional)
½ tsp salt, divided
1 cup cilantro
Juice of 1 lime, divided
1 jalapeño, deseeded
1 tsp maple syrup
¼ cup water
½ red onion, thinly sliced
2 tsp neutral oil, divided
Red cabbage, thinly sliced
Frozen parantha or tortilla

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375F.
2. To the tofu, add 1 tsp oil, cornstarch, black pepper, turmeric, paprika, 1 tsp chaat masala if using, and ¼ tsp salt.
3. Mix well and transfer to a lined baking sheet.
4. Bake for 20 mins, flipping halfway through.
5. While the tofu bakes, make the chutney by combining cilantro, juice of half a lime, jalapeño, maple syrup, and water.
6. Blend to a thin sauce, set aside.
7. To a nonstick pan, add 1 tsp oil and onions.
8. When the onions begin to sweat, add the chaat masala (if using) followed by the juice of half a lime.
9. Once the lime juice has evaporated, remove the onions from the heat and set aside.
10. Using the same skillet, heat the parantha (or totilla) until lightly browned.
11. To assemble, layer the spiced tofu, sauteed onions, cilantro chutney, and cabbage in the center of the parantha and wrap it up.
12. The components can all be kept separately in the fridge for up to 4 days and assembled up to one night ahead of time, making kathi rolls a great lunch prep option.



Coconut Mango Fruit Cream

Serves 8 People

Fruit cream is a simple dessert bursting with fresh flavours, perfect to serve in the summer after a meal. This version combines mango and cardamom to round out the flavours and add depth and dimension to an otherwise simple dessert. Here we used a mixture of fresh kiwi and apples along with jarred peaches and maraschino cherries (make sure they're vegan), but feel free to use what you have on hand and get creative.

Ingredients

1 can coconut milk (400mL), chilled
½ cup canned mango pulp (can sub with pureed fresh mango if mango pulp is unavailable)
½ tsp cardamom powder
4 cups fruit of choice

Instructions

1. Scoop the thick part of the coconut milk into a mixing bowl fitted with a whisk attachment. Reserve the liquid for another use, such as smoothies.
2. Whip the coconut milk until smooth, then add the mango pulp and cardamom powder. Continue whipping until most of the lumps are gone. Don't worry if it seems thin, it will firm up when chilled.
3. In a separate bowl, prepare your fruit into bite size pieces. Feel free to use any mix of fruit that you have on hand or even a can of drained and rinsed fruit cocktail.
4. Combine the whipped coconut mixture with the fruit and stir gently. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours.
5. Stir gently again once removed from the fridge and serve cold.