



EATING 101

RU DINING HEALTHY?

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE RU HEALTHY DINING TEAM

A Joint Program Between Rutgers Dining Services and The New Jersey Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health

Sustainable Swaps: Plant-Powered Protein

Did you know: most Americans are already eating enough protein, at times even more than they need? However, the majority are falling short when it comes to plant-based proteins. A recent study suggests about 89% of Americans are not meeting the newly recommended amounts (2.5 cups/week) of pulses (beans, lentils, peas, etc.). Why eat plant-based proteins? Aside from providing protein, they are also nutrient-dense and contain fiber, which supports gut health and helps keep you full. To get started, experts recommend simply swapping a few animal-based choices for plant-based ones. Interested in trying a more plant-forward diet? As defined by the Menus of Change organization, this style of cooking and eating reflects evidence-based principles of health and sustainability by prioritizing the incorporation of more plant-based foods in meals you *already* love. You do not have to fully commit to a vegan or vegetarian diet to experience the benefits of plant-based eating; even small changes can plant the seed for healthier habits.

Plant Protein Sources:

Nuts, pulses (beans, lentils, peas)
seeds, whole grains, soy (tofu and edamame)

Menus of Change Tips:

- Move nuts and legumes to the center of the plate
- Use poultry and eggs in moderation

Meal and Snack Ideas:

- Spread peanut butter on a whole wheat bagel instead of cream cheese
- Add tofu and chickpeas to a salad instead of grilled chicken
- Dip raw veggies into hummus
- Pack mixed nuts or seeds as a snack on the go
- Build a burrito bowl with tofu, quinoa, and beans, and a variety of vegetables
- Swap out a beef burger for a black bean burger

Take it slow!

Try using plant-based proteins with familiar textures like meat, such as firm tofu or legumes, along with familiar spices to ease yourself into new foods.

Let-tuce inspire your next meal!

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Sources: Nutritional Update for Physicians: Plant-Based Diets. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3662288/> Accessed on: 11/28/18. Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Menus. Available at: <https://www.menusofchange.org/principles-of-healthy-sustainable-menus> Accessed on: 11/03/2025. Is plant-based protein for you? Here's what you need to know. Available at: <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/is-plant-based-protein-for-you-heres-what-you-need-to-know> Accessed on: 11/03/2025. Role of plant protein in nutrition, wellness, and health. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31322670/> Accessed on: 11/03/2025. Protein: What's Enough? Available at: <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/protein-and-heart-health>. Pulse consumption trends in the US in the context of 2025–30 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12408265/>



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