Food and Climate Change

In the Bay Area, almost 20% of our carbon footprint comes from food — what we eat, where it travels, and how much is wasted. For many people in our region, the food we eat can generate more emissions than the fuel we burn driving. The simplest ways to reduce your carbon foodprint are to eat more plants and waste less food.

Need support? Join Acterra’s My Healthy Plate, Our Healthy Planet online community on Facebook. This community space is for people that are interested in food sustainability and who want to have access to resources, recipes, food waste tips, learn about local events, and so much more. We welcome people of all ages, backgrounds, and diets.

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### The carbon footprint of foods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Item</th>
<th>Pounds CO₂e per Serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>6.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legumes</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### A planetary health plate

A planetary health plate with very limited (and optional) meat and dairy consumption

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### EAT MORE PLANTS

#### Choose a plant-forward diet

by eating more vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes. A plant-forward diet is healthier for you, the planet and your wallet. Project Drawdown lists a plant-rich diet as #4 out of the top 100 climate solutions profiled.

#### You don’t have to go “cold-turkey”

and turn vegan. A meatless lunch avoids 6–7 pounds in carbon emissions compared to a lunch with animal meat. Avoiding meat just one day/week can reduce your carbon foodprint by 15% over the course of a year. Resources: MeatlessMonday.com, Reducetarian.org.

#### Plant-based meats and dairy are mainstream

at grocery stores and many restaurants. Growing demand for plant-based burgers and milks (oat, nut, soy, etc.) is diversifying and improving these products. 63% of millennials are adding more plant-based foods into their diet (YouGov.com).

#### Plants have protein, too!

Think again if you’re worried you won’t get enough protein on a plant-forward diet: most Americans are actually getting far too much. 51 g/day is the recommended amount for an average 140-lb adult. A 2000 calorie diet of only plants supplies 70g of protein. GameChangersMovie.com.

#### Choose local and seasonal produce

to further reduce your carbon footprint. Opt for whole foods; try to avoid processed, heavily packaged convenience foods which release more pollution and warming emissions while traveling from farm to factory to stores.

#### Great plant-forward recipes

are easy to find and prepare. There are also plenty of tips for what to substitute in place of the meat and dairy in your old favorite recipes. Some standout websites: 101cookbooks.com, vegnews.com/recipes and budgetbytes.com (vegetarian or vegan recipes).
WASTE LESS FOOD

An estimated 40% of food in the U.S. is wasted in its journey from farms to consumers to the landfill, effectively squandering the equivalent of $165 billion (NRDC). Restaurants and institutions generate 43% of that waste (Food Waste Reduction Institute). Trimming food losses by just 15% would be enough to feed more than 25M Americans per year (USDA). Wasted food consumes 21% of US landfills and 21% of US agricultural water use while contributing 2.6% of national greenhouse gas emissions (typically methane, a powerful greenhouse gas). You can reduce the harmful impacts of food waste through prevention, food donation, and composting. Resources: SaveTheFood.com, Refed.com.

The estimated food waste of a typical family of four over just one month!

![Food Waste Diagram](image)

**Shop smarter** to waste less. When food shopping, buy only what you can use. Never shop when you’re hungry. Plan your weekly menus and create grocery lists. Then stick to your list!

**Store smarter** to keep food fresh. Wash and cut veggies and store them in clear containers in your fridge. Check regularly to remove and compost aging produce before it spoils the rest. Label leftovers with a date and use within 3-4 days when stored in the fridge or 6-12 months when stored in the freezer.

**Think before you toss** out food or scraps. Potato and carrot peels are edible and nutritious—just scrub well and leave them on. Use stale bread to make french toast or breadcrumbs. Use overripe fruits in smoothies and baked goods. Veggie scraps can be used to make stock. As a last resort, put it in your compost bin.

**Plan ahead for food rescue** from your party. Get RSVPs and plan conservatively when ordering or preparing food. Set out moderate amounts of food and replenish serving trays as needed. Ask your guests to bring their own reusable containers (or provide some) and let them take home leftovers or contact your local soup kitchen in advance to see if they can accept a delivery of donated food.

**Put less on your plate** or use a smaller plate. Dining out? Put half the food from your plate into the reusable container you brought along.

### Food Recovery Hierarchy

- Source Reduction: Reduce the volume of surplus food generated
- Feed Hungry People: Donate extra food to food banks, soup kitchens and shelters
- Industrial Uses: Provide waste oils for fuel conversion and food scraps for digestion to recover energy
- Composting: Create nutrient-rich soil amendment
- Landfill Inoculation: Last resort for disposal

For more info, visit acterra.org/healthy-plate