Moving Food Forward: A Win-Win Proposition

Meatless eating has gained in popularity in recent years with 43 percent of Americans eating vegetarian meals at least once a week. Programs like Meatless Monday and Lean & Green Days have helped institutions bring and market meatless options to their guests. Some institutions are meeting this growing demand with meatless options or vegan stations in their cafeterias.

Adding more plant-based options to your school’s menus can help please guests seeking healthier meals, demonstrate the school’s commitment to sustainability, and spare animals from factory farms. In this toolkit you’ll learn why eating plant-strong is sweeping the nation, what to serve, and how to implement and market these programs.
The Business Case for Plant-Strong Menu Planning

Financial Benefits

Save Money While Meeting Student Demand for More Meatless Options

Consumers, particularly young people, are looking for meatless options more now than ever before.

“More people, especially those over 65 and those under 30, are eating less and less meat and searching for high protein items to replace meat.”

–USA Today

Meat prices are expected to continue rising. Reducing meat purchases by increasing meat-free fare can help save your dining operation money. Affordable favorites like three-bean chili and black bean burritos make hearty, protein-rich replacements for meat-based dishes.

“Meatless Monday has proven to be nutritionally adequate by offering sufficient calories & protein, but with lower total fat & saturated fat and higher fiber intake than that of the traditional entrees served in school lunch.

The implementation of Meatless Monday has helped us to continue to meet the meal pattern requirements and improve our weekly nutritionals. The result of the improved nutritionals has allowed room for some “extras” in our meal plans, thus providing the students with renewed excitement for school lunch. Our average participation levels for lunch have remained steady at 60% district-wide from January 2014-January 2015.”

–Tricia Neura, RD, MPH, Assistant CNP Director, Hoover City Schools, Hoover, Ala.

Many districts are reporting back an estimated $0.10 - $0.20 cost savings per meatless meal offered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Popular Protein Sources in Child Nutrition Programs</th>
<th>Commercial pricing per 2 ounce serving in participating Florida schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>$0.15 - $0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark &amp; White Meat Chicken, diced or fajita-style</td>
<td>$0.33 - $0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Meat Crumbles or Chicken-Style Strips</td>
<td>$0.37 - $0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetarian Chili, 1 cup</td>
<td>$0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef Crumbles</td>
<td>$0.33 - $0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark &amp; White Meat Chicken, diced or fajita-style</td>
<td>$0.33 - $0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish Sticks</td>
<td>$0.45 - $0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.bringfoodforward.org
Why Plant-Strong Menu Planning?

**Student Health**

Diets rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, and nuts are consistently linked to lower obesity rates, blood cholesterol levels, and blood pressure. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics notes the benefits of eating more plant-based meals and says this type of diet is appropriate for all stages of life, including childhood, adolescence and athletes. The benefits include a lower risk of death from heart disease (the leading cause of death in the U.S.), lower overall cancer rates, lower rates of type 2 diabetes, and a lower body mass index.

“Our mission in the HISD Food Services Department is getting kids to eat good food and everybody knows that encouraging a little bit more of a plant based diet helps with all sorts of health issues.”
—Ray Danilowicz, Executive General Manager, Houston Independent School District Food Services Department

**Sustainability**

Animal agriculture has been implicated by the United Nations as one of the top contributors to global environmental problems, due to its vast use of water, land, and fossil fuels and high carbon dioxide and methane emissions. Prominent environmental organizations like the Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, and more advocate for reduced meat consumption. According to Environmental Defense Fund, “If every American skipped one meal of chicken per week and substituted vegetables and grains...the carbon dioxide savings would be the same as taking more than half a million cars off of U.S. roads.”

“If Americans reduced meat consumption by just 20 percent, it would be as though we all switched from a sedan to a hybrid.”
—The Sierra Club

**Animal Welfare**

The majority of the meat, milk, and eggs produced in the U.S. come from animals intensively confined in factory farms, their lives bearing no resemblance to the way most of us envision farm life. By increasing and highlighting meatless options even just one day a week, your schools can help spare animals from factory farms.
How to Implement Plant-Strong Menus

Plant-Strong Menu Planning

Create Delicious Meatless Entrees with these Menu Planning Tips

Adding more plant-strong meals to your menus is an excellent way to complement existing nutrition education efforts within child nutrition programs. Here are a few ideas to help with menu planning:

• Conduct a menu planning meeting with administrators and school managers to receive menu ideas and develop ownership of the menu and campaign out at the schools.
• Email us your address and we’ll send you a free copy of Vegan in Volume, which contains over 125 bulk quantity vegan recipes, made for cafeterias and created by a registered dietitian.
• See Appendix A: Recipes. All recipes included in the Appendix meet the NSLP Nutrition Standards and are standardized for 100 servings each.
• See Appendix A: Meatless foods available to purchase. This is a list of ingredients and products available to purchase from existing food manufacturers. Some of these manufacturers offer CN labeled products. Contact us for additional manufacturer information.
• See Appendix A: Menu samples. These menu suggestions include recipes and food products mentioned in the above bullet points.

Get the recipe for this twenty-minute chili at humansociety.org/recipes.
Implementation: Do What Works for You

Getting more plant-based foods on your menus isn’t a one-size-fits-all program: Because every school is unique, with its own demographic, cafeteria, geography, and local traditions, it’s important to add these options in a way that will work for your district and students.

Many schools participate in a Meatless Monday or a Lean & Green Day, making all their options meatless on a designated day of the week, but it’s important to start in a way that will work best for your school. Try highlighting the vegetarian options at your retail and à la carte stations or adding new meatless options on Mondays, for example.

Vegetarian or Vegan?

While “meat-free” and “meatless” suggest vegetarian, we recommend entirely plant-based dishes for several reasons:

1. Everyone can eat vegan food! If food is vegetarian but contains dairy or eggs, students with allergies, religious adherences, or other dietary restrictions won’t be able to participate in the program.

2. Eggs and milk products are often high in fat and cholesterol, and removing them can make your meat-free options even healthier.

Plant-Strong Menu Planning Tips

• Add a Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day logo to your menu.
• List the featured meatless recipe items first on the menu.
• Place the featured meatless entrees first in the serving line.
• Give items a creative, appealing name. Researchers at Cornell University worked with one school that found by simply renaming “Bean Burrito” as “Big Bad Bean Burrito,” they increased burrito consumption by more than 40%! (It could have been more, but they sold out in the second of three lunch periods!)
• Encourage school staff to hand out samples from new recipes with students.
• Develop 1-2 nutrition bullet points on each recipe. For example:
  o Magnificent Marinara with Chickpeas: Did you know that the high fiber, potassium, vitamin C and vitamin B-6 content, coupled with the lack of cholesterol, make chickpeas a heart-healthy food?

www.bringfoodforward.org
Introducing Plant-Strong Menus to the School Community

- Appendix A: Send the sample letter to parents or faculty. This informs the community about the program to help explain the reasons you’re adding more meatless options to your menus.
- Appendix A: Host a kickoff event. Check out the kickoff ideas and sample invitation.
- Appendix A: Hold a special faculty meeting, or include it as a topic at a regularly scheduled meeting.
- Appendix A: Post information about your plant-based options on the child nutrition services website, using our sample web site text.

The "Meatless Monday" lunch menu at the Academy of Global Citizenship in Chicago includes minestrone soup, veggie wrap, and garden salad.
Marketing Plant-Strong Menus

There are endless options for promoting your plant-strong menus and Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

• **Appendix A:** Send a news release to the local news media. We can work with your team to develop and distribute one or you can use our template to get started.
• **Appendix A:** Put up posters in cafeterias to raise awareness. Email us at meatlessmonday@humanesociety.org for free posters.
• Put up point-of-sale signs promoting Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day, add logos to the menus, and hand out stickers to students who choose the meatless options.
• **Appendix A:** Social media: Use your school’s social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) to post weekly or regular reminders.

Students at St. Rose of Lima get excited to learn about Meatless Monday in a nutrition class.

Photo by Michelle Icahn
Appendix A: For Nutrition Directors

Recipes
Use these sample recipes to get your program off to a great start. Each recipe meets NSLP Nutrition Standards and is standardized for 100 servings.

Meatless foods available to purchase
Use these meatless products in existing recipes and to complement your robust, flavorful menu. All items listed are readily available to schools and compliant with crediting standards for the National School Lunch Program.

Menu samples
Check out several menu concepts that can be easily integrated into any lunch menu. These templates highlight ways to include plant-strong entrees anywhere from once a week to every day.
Sample Letter to Parents

[School Logo]
[Date]

Dear Parents:

It’s with great excitement that I announce that [name of school] will be taking part in a new program to improve student health and environmental sustainability. This important campaign, called Meatless Monday, will begin on [when]. You will also find an attached guide with links to multiple resources you might find helpful, as well as an invitation to a launch event.

The mission of our Meatless Monday program is to promote healthier, more sustainable choices by choosing to eat meatless meals one day a week. It’s one of the easiest and effective ways for us, and especially our children, to enjoy the numerous benefits associated with eating healthy meat-free meals. Students and the larger community can make a great impact by choosing to make one small change, one day a week in our schools and in our homes.

Meatless Monday was started by the U.S. government as a resource-saving measure during World Wars I and II. In 2003, it was revived by The Monday Campaigns in association with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to reduce meat consumption by 15 percent for our personal health and the health of the planet.

Scientific studies show that reducing meat in your diet, which can be high in both cholesterol and saturated fats, and eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is better for your health and a key way of fighting obesity and preventing heart disease and cancer. This is why organizations like the American Heart Association support Meatless Monday as a way to eat a well-balanced diet.

Schools, universities, hospitals, and restaurants across the country are getting on board. We are proud to become part of this growing list. We take our responsibility to educate our children about the healthy food options available seriously in order to help them make more informed decisions. The habits formed today will help to build a healthier tomorrow. We’re grateful for your support.

Sincerely,
[Name]
Sample Letter to Faculty

[School Logo]
[Date]

Dear Faculty:

It’s with great excitement that I announce that [name of school] will be taking part in a new program to improve student health and environmental sustainability. This important campaign, called Meatless Monday, will begin on [when].

The mission of our Meatless Monday program is to promote healthier, more sustainable choices by eating meat-free foods one day a week. It’s one of the easiest and more effective ways for us, and especially our students, to enjoy the numerous benefits associated with eating healthy meatless meals. Students and the larger community can make a great impact by making one small change, one day a week in our schools and in our homes.

Meatless Monday was started by the U.S. government as a resource-saving measure during World Wars I and II. In 2003, it was revived by The Monday Campaigns in association with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to reduce meat consumption by 15 percent for our personal health and the health of the planet.

It will come as no surprise to you that our nation is facing a rash of public health issues—many of them largely preventable through simple lifestyle changes. One of the most pressing is the childhood obesity epidemic. Scientific studies show that reducing meat in your diet and eating more fruits and vegetables is a key way of fighting obesity and preventing heart disease and cancer. This is why organizations like the American Heart Association support Meatless Monday as a way to eat a well-balanced diet.

Schools, universities, hospitals, and restaurants across the country are getting on board. We are proud to become part of this growing list. We take our responsibility to educate our children about the healthy food options available seriously, in order to help them make more informed decisions. We’re grateful for your support of this program.

Sincerely,

[Name]
Sample Text for Web Site

We’re excited to announce that starting on [date], the [name of school district] is joining the international Meatless Monday public health initiative. We hope the information below will answer any questions you might have and we invite you to join us by engaging in Meatless Monday at home.

**What is Meatless Monday?**
The mission of our Meatless Monday program is to promote healthier and more sustainable choices by choosing meatless meals one day a week. It’s one of the easiest and more effective ways to familiarize our loved ones, especially our children, with the numerous benefits associated with choosing healthier plant-based meals. The benefits will improve our community’s health and decrease our environmental impact, and spare animals from factory farms as well. The school community, parents, and students can all make a big impact by choosing to make one small change, one day a week.

Meatless Monday was started by the U.S. government as a resource-saving measure during World Wars I and II. In 2003, it was revived by The Monday Campaigns in association with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to reduce meat consumption by 15 percent for our personal health and the health of the planet. Celebrities from Oprah Winfrey to Paul McCartney are participating. K-12 schools, universities, hospitals, and restaurants across the country are getting on board. We are proud to become part of this growing list.

**Why Meatless Monday?**

*For our Health*
Diets rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, and nuts are consistently linked to lower obesity rates, blood cholesterol levels, and blood pressure. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics says this type of diet is appropriate for all stages of life, including childhood and adolescence and for athletes, and notes the benefits of eating more plant-based meals including a lower risk of death from heart disease (our leading cause of death in the U.S.), lower overall cancer rates, lower rates of type 2 diabetes, and a lower body mass index.

“The American Heart Association recognizes the role of plant-based foods in a healthy dietary pattern. Use Meatless Mondays as another opportunity to eat a well-balanced diet.”
— Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association

Meat is often heavy in cholesterol and saturated fats, unlike most meatless foods. Compare the protein content of a 52g hotdog at approximately 5g of protein and 52 grams of black beans (4 tbsp) at approximately 11g of protein, and you’ll see that plant-based products usually have the same—or even more—protein than animal-based foods and little or no saturated fat and cholesterol. Saturated fat and cholesterol are associated with preventable chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and obesity. Choosing meatless meals once a week can reduce saturated fat intake and lower the risk of these serious health issues.
**For the Planet**
Animal agriculture has been implicated by the United Nations as one of the top contributors to global environmental problems, due to its vast use of water, land, and fossil fuels and high carbon dioxide and methane emissions. Prominent environmental organizations like the Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, and more advocate for reduced meat consumption. According to Environmental Defense Fund, “If every American skipped one meal of chicken per week and substituted vegetables and grains...the carbon dioxide savings would be the same as taking more than half a million cars off of U.S. roads.”

“If Americans reduced meat consumption by just 20 percent, it would be as though we all switched from a sedan to a hybrid.”
—The Sierra Club

**For Animals**
The majority of the meat, milk, and eggs produced in the U.S. come from animals intensively confined in factory farms, their lives bearing no resemblance to the way most of us envision farm life. By increasing and highlighting meatless options even just one day a week, our schools can help spare animals from factory farms.

**For Education**
Healthy bodies create healthy minds, and what kids eat in school cafeterias has far-reaching effects. Meatless Monday provides students with the opportunity to learn about new nutritious foods and exposes them to beans, legumes, and other protein sources with which they may be unfamiliar.

**Why Monday?**
For most Americans the week begins on Monday. On Monday we move from the freedom of the weekend back to the structure of work or school. We set our intentions for the next six days. We plan ahead and evaluate progress.

From an early age we internalize this rhythm. Studies suggest we are more likely to maintain the behaviors begun on Monday throughout the week. That makes Monday the perfect day to make a change for your health and the health of our planet.

Monday is the call to action built in to every calendar each week. And if this Monday passes you by, next week is another chance to choose meatless meals!

**What can we do at home?**
Try Meatless Monday at home. Cook with your family on Mondays to acquaint kids with new healthy foods. Visit [humanesociety.org/recipes](http://humanesociety.org/recipes) for recipes and more information on meat-free eating and [Fruits and Veggies More Matters](http://fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org) for ideas for getting kids involved at home.

**What can we do at school?**
Visit [this page](http://thispage) for resources and activities.
Sample News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[School district name] Kicks off Healthy Eating Program: Meatless Monday

School system brings meatless options to community

City, State (Date) — [School district name] is the latest to join the international Meatless Monday movement. [School district name] will participate in Meatless Monday by offering a variety of meatless meals in its cafeterias every Monday and educating students about the health benefits of eating more plant-based meals.

“At [School district name], we believe that healthy eating helps to create healthy minds,” said [name, title]. “We’re participating in Meatless Monday to introduce our students to the wide variety of nutritious, delicious foods available and to encourage healthier eating habits.”

“Americans eat too much meat, and we pay a heavy price for it. Providing more plant-based meals to kids can improve their health and raise their consciousness about how their food choices connect to the world around them,” said Kristie Middleton, senior food policy director.

Meatless Monday was started by the U.S. government as a resource-saving measure during World Wars I and II. In 2003, it was revived by The Monday Campaigns in association with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to reduce meat consumption for our personal health and the health of the planet.

Facts
• Meatless Monday raises awareness about the animal welfare, environmental, and public health impacts of industrial meat production.
• According to Environmental Defense Fund, “If every American skipped one meal of chicken per week and substituted vegetables and grains...the carbon dioxide savings would be the same as taking more than half a million cars off of U.S. roads.”
• Public figures, celebrities and athletes—including President Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres, Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez, JayZ, Russell Simmons, Russell Brand, Carl Lewis, Tony Gonzalez, and more—have touted the advantages of eating less meat.

- 30 -

Media Contact: [name, email, phone number]
Social Media Ideas

**Meatless Monday Model Tweets and Facebook Posts**

Tweets:
- Mondays just got better! It’s #MeatlessMonday. Check out our Asian noodle stir-fry, a delicious way to get your veggies.
- Why #MeatlessMonday? Your health, animals, & the environment.
- It’s that time of week! #MeatlessMonday. What will you eat?
- Have you tried #MeatlessMonday? Share your food pics and tag #MeatlessMonday.
- Who else is doing #MeatlessMonday? Watch this short video and find out! [http://youtu.be/tpziz8cJMaI](http://youtu.be/tpziz8cJMaI)

Facebook posts:
- What’s #MeatlessMonday? (post image, top right)
- Have you tried #MeatlessMonday? What’s your favorite meat-free meal?
- We love #MeatlessMonday because of the food. What’s your reason? (post image, middle right)
- Who else is going meat-free on Mondays? Watch this fun video to find out: [http://youtu.be/tpziz8cJMaI](http://youtu.be/tpziz8cJMaI)
- It’s #MeatlessMonday. What will you have for lunch today? (post image, bottom right)

Email meatlessmonday@humanesociety.org to sign up for weekly Meatless Monday social media ideas.
Assembly/Launch Event Ideas

Holding an assembly or launch event is a great way to show students that the entire community—parents, other students, and faculty—are all excited about your plant-strong menus. Contact us about sending a representative from The Humane Society of the United States to the kickoff event and receiving free marketing materials. This can be a simple morning assembly or a community fair. Student groups, faculty, parents, and teachers can coordinate to make the event a success. Here are some ideas:

- Host a presentation by an HSUS representative, a local chef, and/or a teacher about plant-strong foods.

- Offer food samplings to acquaint students to new meat-free foods.

- Rent costumed mascots like giant carrots or peas, or a cow, pig, or chicken to greet students.

- Hold a poster-making contest and announce the winner at the kickoff.
  - The posters can address the three great reasons to eat more meatless meals: health, sustainability, and animal welfare.
  - Hang posters in the cafeteria to remind students of why they’re enjoying more plant-strong meals.

- Email the Humane Society for resources and materials available to be shipped at no cost to your school at meatlessmonday@humanesociety.org.
Sample Kickoff Party Invitation Text

Get excited, because you’re invited!

Learn more about how you can help your health, the planet, and animals!

School Address

February 1, 2015, 1 p.m.

Interesting speakers
Delicious food
Games
Contests, Prizes
and more
Plant-Strong Menus Introduction Meeting for Staff

Please contact us for resources for this meeting. HSUS representatives may be available to present at your meetings free of charge with advance notice.

You can send the following memo to faculty and staff in preparation for the meeting:

Dear faculty and staff,

On [date] at [time] we will have a faculty meeting to discuss Meatless Monday, an important program our school has proudly embraced. We will explain the overall concept of Meatless Monday and the importance of your participation to ensure its success. We’ll also show how critical this program is to the health of our students. This meeting will:

- Discuss Meatless Monday’s purpose;
- Cover questions that may arise from parents and students;
- Brainstorm ways to integrate Meatless Monday into the classroom; and
- Help us prepare for our Meatless Monday program launch.

Thank you in advance for your support!

Sincerely,

[Name]
Appendix B: For School Administrators

Bringing Plant-Strong Menus into the Classroom

There are numerous ways to integrate nutrition education on your plant-strong menus into the curriculum, for example:

- Morning Meetings. Dedicating a small amount of time to discussing your program in the classroom each Monday morning—before lessons begin—can help students understand the importance of the program. Ideas include reviewing the day’s lunch menu, asking students about what plant-strong meals they enjoy at home, sharing recipes, discussing reasons the school is offering more plant-based options, and current events related to food choices.
- Activities related to plant-strong eating. Puzzles, word searches, coloring pages, and other activities related to plant-strong food choices can be used during transition times, indoor recess, morning work, and when students finish a task sooner than others. Reward good work and behavior with Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day stickers during activities.
- Extra credit projects. Teachers can assign activities related to plant-strong eating for extra credit assignments. Ideas include students writing brief reports on the benefits of eating more plant-strong meals or presenting what they ate for Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day to the class.
- Host a guest speaker or take a field trip. You can host a local chef or farmer, or take a visit to a local farm.

Example Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day Morning Meeting – For the Classroom

*Ideas can be modified for elementary, middle, and high school students.*

- Introducing the concept to students: On the first day, create a KWL chart during the morning meeting. Discuss what students know about Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day, what they want to know about Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day, and later what they’ve learned about Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day. Continue building on this chart throughout the year.
- For excitement, engagement, and unity say “It’s Meatless Monday!” or “It’s Lean & Green Day!” as a group at the start of every Monday meeting.
- Get students focused on the food being served for Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day by having a Monday morning menu reader. Choose a different student to read the menu daily.
  - After the menu is read have students take turns saying what they are going to eat for Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day. Discuss the options that would work for Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day, and what some of the healthiest choices are on
the menu and why. You could have a Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day prop that students can hold when it’s their turn.

• If Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day is assigned as part of an extra credit or homework assignment, students can share what they did to observe Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day (see section on Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day as extra credit). Students who share get a Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day carrot. If the entire class gets over a certain number a week, the class will get some sort of reward, e.g., two extra minutes of recess.
• Stay current with Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day (for older grades). Be on the lookout for stories relating to healthy eating or the environmental impacts of factory farming.
• Assign Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day researcher as a job or as part of extra credit/homework.
• Have students bring in articles or summaries of news clips pertaining to one of the three pillars of Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day: health, the environment, and animal welfare. Discuss these during the morning meeting.
Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day homework, extra credit, and in-class activities

One of the most important parts of making these programs successful is student participation at home. Here are easy ideas for extra credit projects related to Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day:

- Encourage students to eat meat-free at home on Mondays (or the day the school designates as its Lean & Green Day) and report about it.
- Ask students to write a paragraph about how Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day helps our health, the environment, and animals.
- Students can draw a picture with a caption and labels related to Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day.
- Make a plant-based recipe together to learn about following instructions.
- Students can get creative as long as they can present on how they were participating in Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day and why they chose to.
  - Students can present on this at morning share or during another time on Monday.
- Use the coloring pages on the Fruits and Veggies More Matters website for fun ways for students to learn about fruits and vegetables, and have students explore the website for games and activities to learn about healthy eating.

Additional ways to integrate Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day into the curriculum

Meatless Meals Math

- On Mondays, use fruits, like raisins and grapes, for counting or other math exercises, and then use some of the food as a snack or prize.
- Challenge students to make word problems related to Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day.

Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day Writing / English Language Arts

- Use Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day as the theme to teach the different forms of writing (persuasive, fiction, non-fiction, etc.).
- Students can use Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day as a foundation to learn about interviewing individuals and journalistic writing.
- Assign different books, or a film, relating to food issues. See Learning Resources, below, for more ideas.

Social Studies/History

- When teaching about different cultures, holidays, world regions, or agriculture, present on meat-free cuisine relating to the different topics. For example, discuss fruits native to a certain region or traditional meat-free cuisines.
- Discuss the politics of the food industry with older students. Topics include animal welfare, public health policies to combat obesity, or the environmental impact of factory farming.
Science/Sustainability

- Discuss nutrition and the benefits of increasing fruits and vegetables in our diets.
- Discuss food-related health problems and how we can prevent them.
- Discuss the detrimental impacts factory farming has on the environment and animals, such as its contribution of greenhouse gases, pollution of local water sources, water usage, etc.
- Art/PE/other electives
- Host a poster-making competition addressing food sustainability, nutrition, and animal welfare.
- Have coaches speak to students about the importance of fruits and vegetables in their diets and nutrition in general.
- Choose athlete of the month discussing how eating a more plant-strong diet can help improve athletic performance.
- If your school has a garden program, cooking classes, after school farmers’ markets, use them as platforms to discuss plant-based eating.

Model plant-based eating at breakfast and lunch

- Reward every student who participates in the Meatless Monday / Lean & Green Day meal with a sticker.
- Share students’ favorite meat-free recipes with dining directors.

Other in-school ideas

Competitions and fun events

On the first Monday of each month, announce an easy student-geared activity, game, or contest that will occur on the last Monday of each month to keep students excited about the initiative. Parent groups can help organize with an appropriate faculty point-person and student clubs. Ideas include:

- Scavenger hunts;
- A trip to the school or community garden;
- Recipe competitions;
- Drawings or raffles;
- Essay competitions; and
- Meatless recipe taste-tests.

Throw a mid- or end-of-year party recapping all the things students have learned and how they’ve helped themselves, the planet, and animals.

Students at the Academy for Global Citizenship took the lessons they learned at school to sell the produce they grew to local restaurants.
Guest Speakers and Field Trips for Your Area

Field Trips

Farmers’ Markets: This can be an opportunity for students to get hands-on experience learning more about fruits and vegetables, how to plan for meals, the environmental impact of our food choices, and a chance to meet real, local farmers. Log on to FarmersMarketOnline.com to find farmers’ markets in your area. You can also talk to community members to see if you and your class can visit a real vegetable farm or fruit orchard to learn where the food is grown.

Animal Sanctuaries: Visit a local animal sanctuary to meet rescued farm animals in person! This is a chance for kids to meet farm animals like chickens, pigs, cows, and turkeys, and to learn about their lives.

Health Food Stores: Many health food stores offer cooking classes and food demonstrations. Contact your local health foods stores—including Whole Foods if there is one—to make arrangements.

Guest Speakers

The Humane Society of the United States: If scheduling permits, a representative from The Humane Society of the United States can visit your school to discuss the many benefits of enjoying more plant-based meals. Presentations can be geared to students of all ages and to a variety of educational subjects.

Farm to School Speaker: Farm to School is a program that connects schools and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias. Contact your state office to request a speaker who can talk about fruits, vegetables, and more to your class and bring in samples to share.

A hen at Farm Sanctuary flaps her wings.
Photo by Matt Prescott/The HSUS
Learning Resources for Plant-Strong Meals

**K-5**
*Gassy Cows* — a short video made by Animal Planet about the impact meat production has on our planet.

[Download a host of activities](#) ranging from coloring pages to word searches, puzzles, scrambles, and more on the benefits of eating more fruits and vegetables.

**Middle School**
*The Meatrix* is an interesting and animated take on the hit film *The Matrix*, and explores our industrial food system in an easy-to-digest way.

**High School and Older**

*Rethinking the Meat Guzzler* by *The New York Times* encourages students to investigate and discuss the environmental impact of factory farms.

*Food, Inc.*, an Oscar-nominated documentary, examines our modern food system and how we can all improve it. It’s available on Netflix.

*Eating Animals* by Jonathan Safran Foer is the true tale of an award-winning novelist investigating the welfare of animals raised for food and the impact it has on the environment.

*Forks Over Knives*, a groundbreaking documentary about the health benefits of meat-free fare.