It is important to make this a required question so that you have the preference for all diners. We conducted a study that found that people prefer to actively check a box to opt into a plant-based option, make plant-based the default and have people check a box to opt into a meal with animal products.

Studies have shown that this simple switch increases the number of people choosing the veg option by an average of 60 percentage points, which cuts catering’s carbon footprint by 40% and water footprint by 24%.

Here is some sample language you can use to flip the default on your registration form:

**Example 1, mission-aligned plant-based default:**

[Name of Organization] is committed to hosting environmentally-friendly events to align our practices with our commitments to public and environmental health [or replace with relevant organizational values]. In order to reduce our carbon and water footprint, all attendees will be served plant-based meals by default. If you prefer something different, please indicate your dietary preferences below:

☐ I would like to stick with the plant-based meal default
☐ I would like to switch to meat meals instead

Please let us know if you have any other dietary restrictions or allergies:

**Example 2, food-focused messaging:**

Our chef has created a delicious plant-based menu with exciting and satisfying creations that are inspired by the flavors and cuisines from cultures around the world. All attendees will be served the plant-based menu by default. If you prefer something different, please indicate your dietary preferences below.

☐ I would like to stick with the plant-based menu default
☐ I would like to switch to meat meals instead

Please let us know if you have any other allergies or dietary restrictions:

*It is important to make this a required question so that you have the preference for all diners. We conducted a study that found that people prefer to actively check a box, which is why we suggest offering both options rather than only having an opt-out box.*
Tips for Working with Venues & Caterers on Plant-Based Default Menus

• Ensure that the plant-based meals you are offering are packed with protein and flavor so they will be both satisfying and delicious.
  • If the vegan option only contains grains and vegetables, request the addition of beans, tofu, or plant-based meat to add protein.
  • If multiple meals are being served, make sure to rotate different types of protein for each meal so that diners are not eating tofu three times a day.
  • Make sure the dish is spiced well so that it is not bland.
• Opt for international cuisines that are naturally plant-forward, such as Mexican, Indian, Vietnamese, Ethiopian, Mediterranean, or Middle Eastern.
  • If the option they suggest does not sound familiar or appetizing to you, request changes to make a dish you would be excited to eat.
  • Review their existing options to get a sense of the types of ingredients and flavors they usually offer, then request that they create a plant-based version of one of their signature dishes.
    • Example: When tasked with a vegan menu, one venue created a new dish called "Baba Ghanoush Lasagna." This did not sound appealing, so instead, the client requested that they simply offer their existing Kung Pao Beef Stir Fry with tofu instead of beef.

• Rather than offering a different entree for people who select the meat option, ask the caterer to simply add or substitute meat for the plant-based protein in the default plant-based option so that everyone is enjoying the same flavors.
  • Addition: If the dish preparation entails cooking all of the ingredients together, add meat to the plant-based entree for those who request it.
    • Default plant-based meal: “Southwest Sweet Potato and Black Bean Chili with Cornbread”
    • People who opt into meat will receive the same chili with the addition of grilled chicken.
  • Substitution: If the dish preparation entails cooking and plating the ingredients separately, swap out the plant-based protein for meat for those who request it.
    • Default plant-based meal: “Thai Peanut Noodle Bowl” with tofu, fresh vegetables, and rice noodles in peanut sauce.
    • People who opt into meat will receive the same noodle bowl with the substitution of chicken for tofu.

Want more tips? Visit www.greenerbydefault.com or email katie@betterfoodfoundation.org for one-on-one support.