DEFAULTVEG

resource guide

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Introduction: DefaultVeg Defined

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What is DefaultVeg?

DefaultVeg is a simple and inclusive way to offer healthier and more sustainable meals. A DefaultVeg menu features plant-based meals as the default option, while giving diners the choice to add or opt into meat and/or dairy options upon request. Simply by changing the default, consumers are much more likely to choose a plant-based meal, even when meat and dairy options are available.[1] DefaultVeg helps achieve sustainability goals, reduce catering costs, and serve more inclusive meals.

Why is DefaultVeg good for YOU?

- Meet the demands of your diners who are increasingly calling for healthier, more sustainable, plant-based dining options,[2] while still giving other diners the option to eat animal products.

- Meet the demands of your institution, which likely has a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Play a key role in meeting that goal by offering more plant-based meals. We'll help you quantify your impact!

- Increase inclusivity by meeting the needs of those with more restrictive diets, thereby including everyone else, by default.

- Implement this new default easily with our expert assistance if you ever need it. Free!

- Look out for your bottom line. DefaultVeg is net neutral and in many cases saves you money.

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1   Harvard School of Public Health, Workshop on Behavioral Insights and Health

2   Michael Whiteman,   Consultants Predict 11 Hottest Food and Beverage Trends in Restaurant and Hotel Dining for 2018,   Baum+Whiteman Trend Reports, accessed October 3, 2019, https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/0c5d00_90935d6fda344991a8fc2452eb112c83.pdf

Why is DefaultVeg good for others?

- DefaultVeg is good for the environment. Eating more plant-based foods is one of the most effective way individuals can reduce their contribution to climate change.[3]

- DefaultVeg is good for your diners. Serving DefaultVeg meals makes it easier for everyone to eat healthier meals and create a healthier world.

- DefaultVeg is good for animals. DefaultVeg is a kinder alternative for the more than 99 percent of U.S. farmed animals confined on intensive factory farms.[4]

In short, everyone can feel good about DefaultVeg.

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3   Damian Carrington, Avoiding meat and dairy is 'single biggest way' to reduce your impact on Earth, Guardian May 31, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/avoiding-meat-and-dairy-is-single-biggest-way-to-reduce-your-impact-on-earth.

4   Jacy Reese, US Factory Farming Estimates, Sentience Institute, April 11, 2019, https://www.sentienceinstitute.org/us-factory-farming-estimates.

02

Implementation: How to go DefaultVeg

DefaultVeg for any Dining Setting: A How-To Guide

Talking Points for your Caterer or Dining Operations Manager

Celebrating DefaultVeg

DefaultVeg for any Dining Setting: A How-To Guide

A CATERED MEETING OR PLATED MEAL

Institutions can implement DefaultVeg in a variety of settings. Lunch at the office or a formal dinner for a fundraiser is a great opportunity to go DefaultVeg. Depending on how you order food, there are several ways to make your next meeting or event DefaultVeg.

For Individual Ordering with a Caterer:

If everyone is asked to order from a set menu, adopting DefaultVeg may mean redesigning the menu to nudge people toward plant-based options. For example, in some cases you can work with your caterer to create a DefaultVeg menu filled with delicious and exciting plant-based options, with only a limited number of meat options.

For the meat options offered, encourage your caterer to use recipes that make the animal products a garnish rather than the main portion of the meal. Use appealing language to describe the plant-based options and make sure the plant-based options are listed first and aren't segregated in a section by themselves.

For Individual Ordering from a Restaurant:

If you normally order from a restaurant, you can create your own DefaultVeg menu by flipping the ratio of choices on any given menu. For example, if you're ordering sandwiches and the restaurant you're ordering for has 7 meat options and 3 veggie options, offer people a choice of 4 total options: 3 veggie sandwiches and 1 meat sandwich. In this way, you're switching the ratio of veggie to meat sandwiches from 3:7 to 3:1, making plant-based sandwiches the default.
Tip: Don't forget to list the plant-based items first!

For Group Ordering:

If you order food for a group meal, inform the group that the meal will be DefaultVeg and that they can apprise you if they would like to opt into meat. Caterers already know how to make delicious plant-based meals—all you have to do is let the caterer know the number of plant-based and meat meals that are needed for the event. When the food arrives, meals with meat will come separately marked (similar to meals for those with allergies or other dietary restrictions). If attendees will pick up their food themselves, bring the catered food to the designated area with the meat option labeled and off to the side (similarly to how vegetarian options may be placed currently). If the food will be served to seated diners, use the same system that you currently use for people who requested vegetarian meals, but to identify those who requested meat.

FOR A CONFERENCE OR A BUFFET

Conferences are a wonderful place to adopt DefaultVeg. Through either an adjustment to the registration site or a change in the buffet format, conferences can simply and effectively go DefaultVeg. Try one or more of these methods at your next conference:

Pre-register for meals with animal products

On the registration site, inform attendees that the conference will be DefaultVeg and that they can opt into a meat meal in the dietary preferences and restrictions section. With this simple change, one conference went from serving only 24% vegetarian meals to over 67% vegetarian meals[1], while another conference increased their vegetarian meals served from less than 15% to over 70%,[2] with both conferences going on to receive positive feedback about the food from the attendees. Once attendees arrive at the conference, those who requested a meat meal receive a ticket they can give to a staff member in exchange for a meat meal.

Buffets

Here are several ideas for how to make your buffet DefaultVeg:

Create a plant-based buffet with a meat option or add-on at the end

Create a plant-based buffet and include a meat option or add-on at a different station or another table

Create a plant-based buffet with a sign at the end of the buffet that tells attendees where to go or who to ask for a meat option

These three methods are simple ways of changing the structure of the buffet while ensuring that attendees are happy with what they are eating!

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1   Meier, Adam.   Workshop on Behavioral Insights and Health.   (Harvard School of Public Health, 2016).

2   Case Study: Society for the Study of Theology Conference. (Society for the Study of Theology, 2019).

ALL YOU CARE TO EAT DINING

From small changes in the type of food served, to larger structural changes of the layout, DefaultVeg can be implemented in many ways at an All You Care to Eat dining facility.

Swap plant-based products for animal products

Certain products (e.g., milk, butter, mayonnaise) can easily be changed to plant-based, allergen-friendly options. Today's plant-based options are just as tasty and most people can't tell the difference!

Swap the Ratio

Work with the chefs to create more plant-based meals and decrease the amount of meals served with animal proteins.

Labels

Research has shown that the way we label food impacts consumer's food choices. To go DefaultVeg, label items that contain animal products instead of labeling items that are vegetarian or vegan. This simple change can increase the number of plant-based options served.[3]

Rethink the Dining Facility

You can ask chefs to prepare mostly plant-based meals with the option of adding meat on the side. Alternatively, chefs can add animal protein to a customer's dish only when it is requested. Additionally, you can establish a small, separate meat station where customers can go if they would like to add animal protein to their meal.

Follow us on Instagram and Twitter for real life examples of how institutions have adopted DefaultVeg, and email info@defaultveg.org with any other questions

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3   Meier, Adam.   Workshop on Behavioral Insights and Health.   (Harvard School of Public Health, 2016).

> **Talking Points for your Caterer or Dining Operations Manager**

Speaking with your caterer or dining staff about sustainable changes can be intimidating. If you don't know where to start, we're here to help! Below is a toolkit to help guide you through the process of changing your institution's food offerings:

Key questions for speaking with your caterer or institutional dining staff:

1. Before you start, let them know about your interests in sustainability.

a. Providers often enjoy working with diners who are passionate and cooperative. Starting the conversation by stating the reason you're so passionate about this topic sets a good impression!

2. Ask for the right person to speak with.

a. The representative you first meet may not be the right person to talk to about sustainability and food, but they can point you in the right direction.

3. Ask about their current sustainability initiatives.

a. Many food providers already want their service to be more sustainable and have undertaken programs and initiatives to waste less or to buy more organic, local, or plant-based. Unless you have been a part of all of those efforts, you are unlikely to know everything they are already doing. Ask! Otherwise, you may put your contact in the frustrating position of having their existing efforts left unacknowledged, while suggesting that they are not proactive enough. Before you share new ideas about improving dining, show your support for the initiatives they have already undertaken.

4. Share information about DefaultVeg, how it benefits the health of diners, animals, and the planet, and (if relevant) how it supports your institution's sustainability goals.

a. Our DefaultVeg one pager makes it easy. Just print the document and/or share the link electronically, along with a description of your institution's sustainability goals.

Tip: If your institution has set a goal to become carbon neutral, find out if food is part of that goal. If so, that gives you a good basis for DefaultVeg. If not, you can introduce DefaultVeg as an additional means for the institution to reach its climate goal. Encourage planners to incorporate food into future conversations about climate goals.

5. Ask for their honest thoughts about going DefaultVeg. Listen carefully. You might discover

a. They're convinced! Caterers and dining staff want to make their clients happy. You may have provided everything that they need to go DefaultVeg. Congratulations!

b. They need more information about DefaultVeg. In this case, point them to the DefaultVeg website, where all of their questions should be answered. Schedule a follow-up meeting to revisit DefaultVeg after they review the site.

c. They are not convinced that DefaultVeg has sufficient support in your group. For example, one student asking a dining hall to go DefaultVeg may not be enough. If staff seem open to DefaultVeg, but wary about how it will go over with diners, find more allies who support DefaultVeg and can sign a letter, send emails, or best of all, come to the next meeting.

d. They don't understand how they could structure DefaultVeg to work in their situation. In that case, share the DefaultVeg 'How-To Guide' (pg X) with them.

e. They need help knowing what to cook. Resources abound! Check out our Culinary Resources section for institutional recipes, free chef trainings, and DefaultVeg's Recipe Collection.

If you get stuck, you can contact the DefaultVeg team to ask for advice. Don't hesitate to reach out! You can connect with us by emailing info@defaultveg.org

Celebrating DefaultVeg

Description of DefaultVeg

Curious about how you can describe your DefaultVeg event? Here's a sample paragraph that you can share in your communications about this decision.

The <insert name> is going DefaultVeg because making plant-based meals the default nudges all of us to choose delicious food that's better for the environment and our health. By simply going DefaultVeg, <insert name> will reduce our carbon footprint, offer more inclusive and sustainable food, and increase the overall health of our meals, while still preserving diners' freedom of choice to opt in for animal products. <Insert name> champions DefaultVeg because it makes it simple to make decisions that align with our values.

03

Impact: Why go DefaultVeg

Carbon Calculations

Why Defaults Work

The Impact of DefaultVeg

Going DefaultVeg can have a measurable impact on human behavior, human health, and the environment. Here we show the impact of DefaultVeg in two ways. First, we conducted research to measure the greenhouse gas emissions saved by switching from meat meals to plant-based meals. Second, we surveyed how changing the default can significantly affect human behavior without limiting choice.
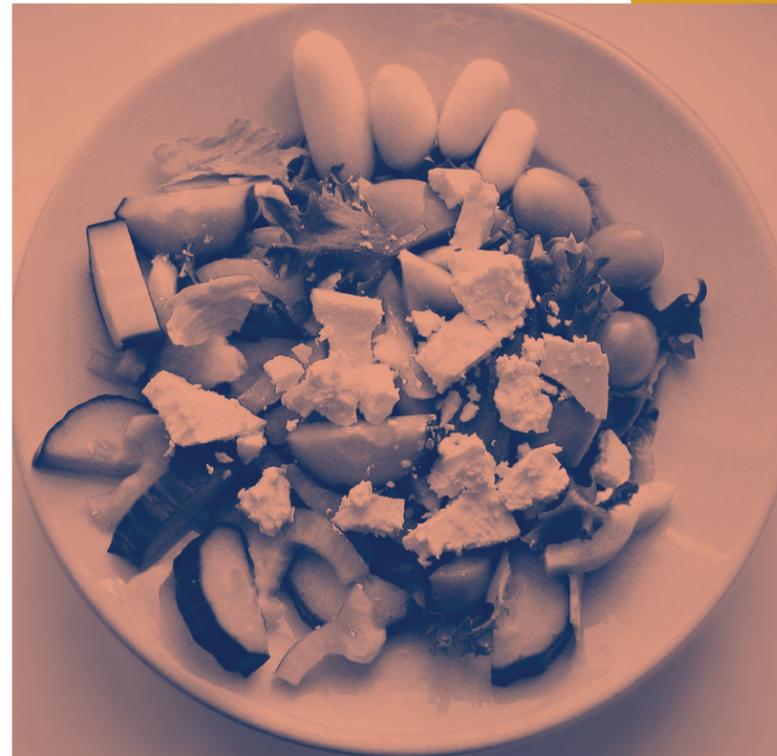
Cost Neutral Carbon Savings

Note: See appendix for menu analysis
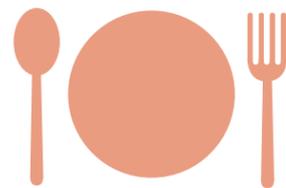
Save 1,600kg Co2 By Serving

1,000
PLANT-BASED MEALS

1,600KG CO2 = Driving 4,141 Miles It Would Be Like Driving From Chicago To Paris.

1,600KG CO2 = Converting 60 Dorm Rooms to LED Bulbs. The Cost to Convert 60 Dorm Rooms to LED Bulbs = > $1,000

The Impact of Defaults: Behavioral Research

Defaults can have a powerful effect on individual and group behavior. People tend to go with the status quo rather than opting into a different choice, since opting in or out of a condition requires more time and effort. Subtle changes to the default can affect behavior in ways that advance the public good without removing an individual's autonomy. [1] One example of the power of defaults comes from organ donation. Countries where action is needed to opt into donating organs have donation rates as low as 15 percent. Yet, countries where action is needed to opt out of donation have rates as high as 90 percent.[2]

Another example is retirement savings. When companies automatically enrolled employees in savings plans upon hire (unless they opted out), new employee participation shot up by 25 percentage points.[3]

Discreet changes in the default have been shown to impact diners' food choices. In a peer-reviewed study, researchers altered the default in a buffet-style cafeteria by changing the layout of the food.[4] They served rice, chili con carne, white salad and red salad. In the control setting, the flow of the buffet started at either the rice section or salad section and diners could choose how much salad they wanted on their plate. In the default setting, salads were divided into pre-portioned bowls and participants could take as many bowls of salad as they liked. The default condition successfully increased vegetable consumption by an average of 45g compared to the control. Although the change in layout was subtle, it positively impacted diners' choices as they went with the flow.

Harvard School of Public Health conducted a field experiment to test the effects of defaults on meat consumption. The control group was presented with a meat option as the default, and the experimental group was presented with a vegetarian option as the default. Results showed that when the default meal was changed from meat to vegetarian, the percentage of people who ate meat dropped 43 percent (from 67.4 percent to 24.4 percent). A statistical analysis to exclude all vegetarians was conducted (assuming that a higher number of vegetarians may have been assigned to veg conditions by chance) and found that the impact of defaults were actually significantly larger.[4,5]

Based on the promising results of this research and anecdotal evidence from other institutions, we believe DefaultVeg is a highly effective way to encourage people to eat more plant-based meals.

1   Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

2   E.J. Johnson and D. Goldstein, Medicine. Do defaults save lives?, Science, no. 302 (November 2003): 1338-1339.

3   J. Beshears, J.J. Choi, D. Laibson and B.C. Madrian, The importance of default options for retirement savings outcomes: evidence from the United States (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007).

4   Friis, Rasmus et al. Comparison of three nudge interventions (priming, default option, and perceived variety) to promote vegetable consumption in a self-service buffet setting. PloS one vol. 12,5 e0176028. 31 May. 2017, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0176028

5   Meier, Adam. Workshop on Behavioral Insights and Health. (Harvard School of Public Health, 2016).

04

Culinary Resources: DefaultVeg is Delicious!

Example Chipotle Menu:

Fajita Veggie and Guacamole Burrito Bowl, Tacos or Burrito
Sofritas and Fajita Veggie Burrito Bowl, Tacos or Burrito
Beans & Rice Burrito Bowl, Tacos or Burrito
Chicken & Fajita Veggies Burrito Bowl, Tacos or Burrito (contains chicken)

Example Panera Menu:

Vegetarian black bean soup
Mediterranean Sandwich
Vegetarian garden vegetable soup
Fuji apple salad (contains chicken)

Example Sweetgreen Menu:

Shroomami Bowl
Spicy Thai Salad
Lentil and Avocado Salad
Hollywood Bowl (contains dairy)

Example Whole Foods Menu (all plant-based):

Vegan signature sandwiches and wraps
Falafel Duo with Hummus
Mediterrean Vegan Platter
Chicken or Vegan Mexican Fiesta

Example Veggie Grill Menu (all plant-based):

VG Beyond Burger
Quinoa Power Salad
Masala Bowl
Beyond Burger Cheesesteak Sandwich

Example Olive Garden Menu:

House Salad
Traditional Marinara Pasta
Breadsticks
Bruschetta Caprese (contains dairy)
Peach Mango Smoothie

05

Appendix

> Greenhouse Gas Impact: Sample Menu Analysis

BREAKFAST SAMPLE MENU					
Meat Options	**GHG Per Serving (kg CO² eg)**	**Grams Protein**	**Grams Saturated fat**	**Miligrams Cholesterol**	**Miligrams Sodium**
Cheese and Sausage Omlette	2.12	30.9	19.8	594.3	982
Yogurt and Granola	1.3	22.8	3.75	10	157
Pancakes	0.612	18.6	12.4	157	2,073
DV BREAKFAST SAMPLE MENU					
DV Options	**GHG Per Serving (kg CO² eg)**	**Grams Protein**	**Grams Saturated fat**	**Miligrams Cholesterol**	**Miligrams Sodium**
Tofu Scramble	0.282	21	3	0	1,656
Oatmeal with Soymilk	0.37	25	3	0	136
Vegan Pancakes	0.31	20.4	2.5	0	1,134

Summary

In order to measure the environmental impact of going to a DefaultVeg food policy, we compared plant-based meal options to similar meat options. Surveying breakfast, lunch, and dinner, we found that the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of plant-based meals are, on average, 63 percent lower than the GHG emissions of animal-based alternatives. Switching 1,000 meals from animal-based options to plant-based options saves GHGs equivalent to switching 60 light bulbs burning for a year from incandescent to LED, or driving an average American passenger car 4,140.9 miles. We also found that plant-based meals contained less saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium than equivalent meat options.

Methods

We chose recipes that most closely resembled meals that universities, conferences, or meetings provide for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. We accounted for serving size in our calculations; all findings indicate one serving size of about 650 kilocalories. We calculated the nutritional content of each meal by inputting the quantities of each option on Nutritionix.

We used The University Caterers Organization's (TUCO's) Greenhouse Gas Footprint Calculator to compare the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from sample plant-based meals and sample animal-based alternatives. Total GHG emissions for each meal were calculated by inputting the ingredients and quantities for each recipe. If a product was not present in the TUCO database, we used a similar or alternative product (e.g., swapping tomato paste for the equivalent volume of tomatoes that would be required for tomato paste).

We compared meals' GHG emissions to GHGs emitted by an average fossil-fuel-burning car.

We used the Environmental Protection Agency's figure for annual CO2 emissions from an average passenger vehicle: 8,887 grams emitted per gallon. This data was divided by the average number of miles driven per gallon to calculate the amount of CO2 per mile driven.

We also compared meals' GHG emissions to the GHGs saved by switching from incandescent light bulbs to LED. We calculated this by finding the difference in watts used by an incandescent and LED bulb over the course of one year, using Viribright's estimate of three hours usage per day . That number was then converted to kilowatt hours (kWh) and multiplied by the average pounds of CO2 emitted per kWh, then converted to kilograms. The LED bulbs' difference in kg of CO2 emitted per kWh/annum was the GHG savings for switching from incandescent to LED.

Results

The sample plant-based meals carried a lower GHG footprint than animal-based alternatives across the board. By comparing breakfast, lunch, and dinner meal options, we found that the GHG emissions of plant-based options were, on average, 63 percent lower than the GHG emissions of animal-based alternatives. Switching one meal from animal-based options to a plant-based option saves on average 1.6 kg CO2e, equivalent to driving an average American passenger car 4.14 miles. Switching 1,000 meals saves 1,600 kg CO2e, equivalent to driving 4,140.9 miles or switching 60 light bulbs a year from incandescent to LED. Finally, a direct nutritional comparison shows that compared to meat-based meals, plant-based meals contain, on average, 7.5 fewer grams of saturated fat, 156 fewer milligrams of cholesterol, and 157 fewer milligrams of sodium.

LUNCH SAMPLE MENU

	GHG Per Serving (kg CO² eg)	Grams Protein	Grams Saturated fat	Miligrams Cholesterol	Miligrams Sodium
Beef Burger	2.96	31	23	127	1324
Turkey Sandwich	1	29	9.2	67.6	1277
Cream of Chicken with Wild Rice	1.76	37	8	95	490
Canitas Burrito	2.09	43.8	16.25	120	1085

DV LUNCH SAMPLE MENU

	GHG Per Serving (kg CO² eg)	Grams Protein	Grams Saturated fat	Miligrams Cholesterol	Miligrams Sodium
Vegan Burger	0.47	31.5	6.5	0	596
Roasted Veggie Sandwich	0.648	26	4.2	0	909.12
Lentil Soup	0.862	34	1.8	0	244
Black Bean Burrito	0.728	27.4	11	0	504

DINNER SAMPLE MENU

	GHG Per Serving (kg CO² eg)	Grams Protein	Grams Saturated fat	Miligrams Cholesterol	Miligrams Sodium
Farmed Salmon w/ Rice Veggies	1.76	52	3.25	107.25	597
Chicken Caesar Salad	1.5	38	9.6	91	602
Beef Lasagna	7.41	37.5	16.5	136	1,993

DV DINNER SAMPLE MENU

	GHG Per Serving (kg CO² eg)	Grams Protein	Grams Saturated fat	Miligrams Cholesterol	Miligrams Sodium
Spicy Peanut Butter Tempeh & Rice	0.66	46	7.09	0	919
V Beyond Meat Chicken Caesar Salad w/ Chick-pea Croutons	0.916	40	4.17	0	1,215
Vegan Lasagna	1.37	40	2.5	0	1,366

TOTAL SAMPLE MENU COMPARISON

	GHG Per Serving (kg CO² eg)	Grams Protein	Grams Saturated fat	Miligrams Cholesterol	Miligrams Sodium
Breakfast	1.0	2.0	9.2	253.8	95
Lunch	1.3	5.5	8.2	102.4	480
Dinner	2.6	0.5	5.2	111.4	-102.66
Avg. for All	1.6	2.6	7.5	155.9	157.44667
Avg. % Change	-63.02%	-5.89%	-42.76%	-100.00%	-0.42%