A GUIDE TO
Plant-based Alternatives

A Resource from the Plant Based Foods Association
You may have noticed an uptick in requests for plant-based foods in your dining facility or store. Are you curious about exploring the abundant plant-based meat, dairy, and egg alternatives you can offer your customers?

Look no further; we developed a practical guide to help familiarize you with plant-based alternatives and how to use them.

Plant-based meats

Plant-based meats (also called “meat alternatives”) are increasingly popular, especially among young people. They come in a variety of textures and tastes, and take on the flavor of the same sauces and seasonings you might add to traditional meat dishes.

Seitan (pronounced “say-tan”)

What is it?
Seitan is derived from the protein component of wheat, and has a meaty texture. It’s sometimes called wheat gluten or wheat meat, and it’s high in protein and low in fat.

How to use it?
Seitan comes in familiar textures and formats including grounds, slices, loaves, cubes, and cutlets. You can cook with plain seitan, adding flavorings as you would to traditional meat, or you can choose from many pre-seasoned varieties. Seitan can be simmered, braised, baked, pressure cooked, fried, grilled, or sautéed.

Seitan Wrap
Tempeh

What is it?
Tempeh is a traditional fermented soybean food. It’s high in protein, fiber, and nutrients, and has a firm texture and nutty flavor.

How to use it?
Tempeh is often cut into cubes, strips, and fine slices. It can even be grated to produce a grounds-like texture. Add tempeh to just about any recipe that uses traditional meat. It can be sautéed, baked, steamed, grilled, or fried.

Tofu

What is it?
Tofu is a soybean food made in a variety of textures often referred to as “soft/silken”, “firm”, and “extra-firm”. The process of curdling soymilk into tofu is similar to the process used to curdle dairy milk into cheese. Tofu is high in protein, calcium, iron, and is gluten-free.

How to use it?
Tofu has a neutral taste-profile that easily takes on the flavorings of your choice. As a meat alternative, choose a firmer tofu that can be battered/crusted, baked, boiled, pan-fried, stir fried, deep-fried, glazed, or crumbled.

Jackfruit

What is it?
Jackfruit is a low-calorie fruit that is chockful of fiber. Young jackfruit is harvested before it ripens so it is not sweet. Its consistency and texture is often compared to pulled-pork or shredded beef.

How to use it?
Jackfruit can be used in any dishes that might traditionally include meat. It takes on the flavor of marinades, sauces, and seasonings used to prepare most meats. Jackfruit is available in bulk or in ready-to-eat formats.
Plant-based milks and other dairy alternatives

Many people opt for plant-based dairy alternatives for reasons such as lactose intolerance or sensitivity, allergies, health, sustainability, animal welfare - and most importantly - taste.

Plant-based milks

Years ago, the only plant-based milk you could find was soymilk, but there’s now a wide array of non-dairy milks available in delicious flavors. Plant-based milk is often made from nuts, seeds, grains, or legumes (such as peas). Among the most popular are almond, soy, cashew, and coconut.

Plant-based milks are used as one-to-one replacements in any recipe. They are also popular alternatives to dairy milk on cereal, in smoothies, or your morning coffee. They come in sweetened and unsweetened varieties including:

- **Almond milk** is the most popular plant-based milk on the market due to its creamy texture and taste. It’s increasingly found in coffee shops, restaurants, and on college campuses as a common plant-based option.
**Soymilk** has been a staple dairy alternative for decades in the U.S., but the history of soymilk dates back thousands of years. Soymilk is made from soaked and steamed soy beans which are blended with water to create a tasty, creamy milk that is naturally high in protein and other nutrients.

**Cashew milk** is another plant-based milk that is gaining popularity due to its creamy consistency and subtle nutty taste. The main ingredients found in cashew milk are simple: raw or roasted cashews and water.

**Plant-based cheeses**

Plant-based cheeses have come a long way since their debut decades ago. They are currently available in most of the traditional forms of dairy cheese, and in a growing variety of tastes and textures. Shreds, blocks, slices, cheesy sauces, cream cheese, and specialty varieties are easy to use.

**Shreds** Shredded plant-based cheeses are designed to melt and can serve as a staple ingredient. They come in cheddar, mozzarella, and pepper jack varieties, among many others. Add shreds to your pizzas, soups, sauces, or in any dish where you might use dairy cheese.

**Blocks and slices**

Plant-based cheeses are also available in whole blocks and slices. Blocks are convenient for slicing, dicing, and shredding to your desired size. Slices are great on sandwiches or burgers, and come in many traditional flavors and textures.

**Sauces** Plant-based cheesy sauces and dips are often made from cashews, nutritional yeast, and vegetable broth or water. Ready-made plant-based cheese sauces or queso dips are available in a wide range of flavors.

**Cream cheese** Plant-based cream cheeses (in flavors ranging from jalapeño to good old-fashioned plain) are a great dairy-free alternative spread for bagels and sandwiches.

**Specialty cheeses** Specialty nut-based cheeses are perfect for catering formal affairs. They can be served as spreads, in blocks or wheels – or sliced for a traditional cheese and cracker tray.
Plant-based egg replacer

Plant-based egg replacers come in powdered or liquid form and are used in place of eggs for baking, and in recipes that require a binding agent. You can even make omelets and scrambles.

Plant-based yogurts

Dairy-free yogurt can be made from almonds, soy, coconuts – even flax seed – and come in many delicious flavors. Plant-based yogurts can be served alone (great for "grab and go"), as an ingredient in smoothies, or in any recipe to replace dairy yogurt.

Plant-based egg-free spreads

These spreads have all the flavor you crave from a mayonnaise, but without the eggs. They come in traditional flavors – and even more robust varieties such as chipotlé – to add flare to your recipes and sandwiches.

Plant-based butters

Delicious plant-based butters can be used just like dairy butter. They are made from coconut oil or other plant-based ingredients.

Our Plant-based Foods Directory

Curious about the variety of plant-based foods you can include in your dining halls, restaurants, or stores? Our online directory of our members’ plant-based foods provides you with a user-friendly search tool. Want to use plant-based meats, eggs, or cheeses in your recipes? Our directory displays member companies making specific plant-based alternatives and more. Visit: plantbasedfoods.org/our-members.

Have questions? Contact our executive director Michele Simon at michele@plantbasedfoods.org