

MENU PLANNING

Increasing the Use of Plant-Based Proteins



Canada's food guide encourages eating a variety of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and protein foods. Try to choose protein foods that come from plants more often, like peas, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds and tofu.

Plant-based proteins:

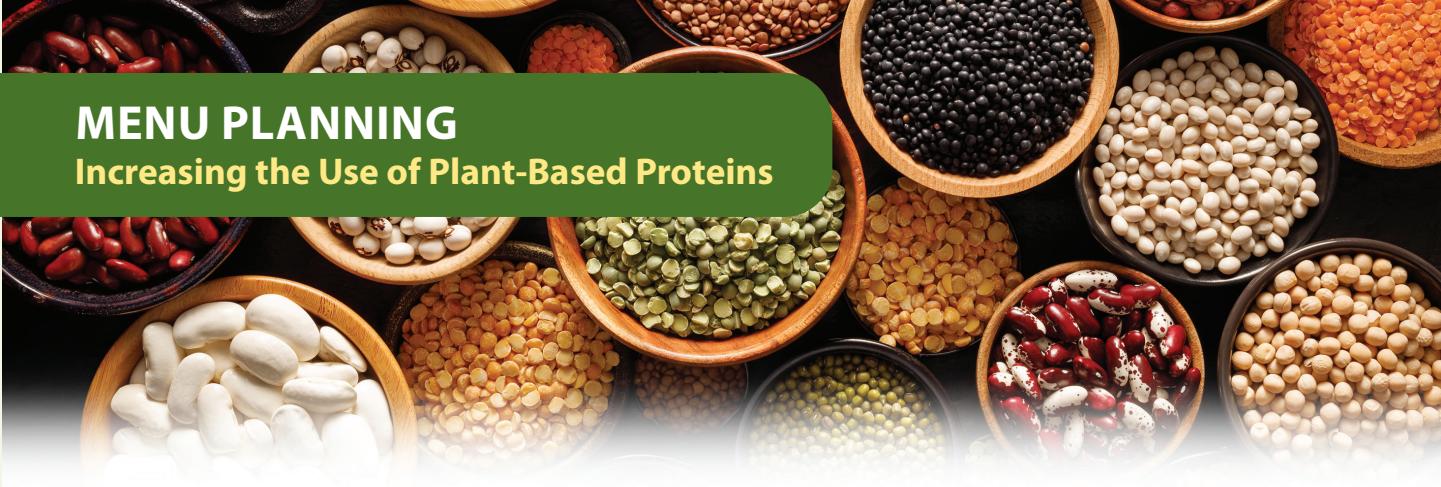
- Have more fibre and less saturated fat
- Have a lower environmental impact
- Can be less expensive than animal based options, helping stretch food budgets
- Add variety and new food exposures to children

When choosing and preparing chickpeas, split peas, beans, and lentils:

- Look for varieties with **no added sodium (salt)**.
- Drain, and rinse. Canned legumes are already cooked.
- Cook dried legumes. Follow package instructions.
- Prepare large batches of legumes then freeze in smaller amounts for future use.



Ontario Dietitians in Public Health
Diététistes en santé publique de l'Ontario



MENU PLANNING

Increasing the Use of Plant-Based Proteins

Ways to add more plant-based proteins to your menu:

Beans

- Add beans to any salad, soup or stew.
- Add whole or mashed dark-coloured beans (i.e., black beans, red kidney beans) to tacos and burgers, or purée and use in baking.
- Add light-coloured beans (i.e., Navy beans, white kidney beans and chickpeas) to ground chicken, turkey or tuna. Mash into potatoes, purée into dips or use to thicken soups or sauces.
- Try [Bean and Cheese Quesadillas](#) or [Sweet Potato Black Bean Stew](#).

Lentils

- Add green or brown lentils to meatloaf, [burgers](#), meatballs, and tacos.
- Make [red lentil tomato-based sauces](#) to increase the fibre and protein content.
- Prepare [lentil bars](#) for a higher fibre snack.



MENU PLANNING

Increasing the Use of Plant-Based Proteins

Tofu

- Tofu is made from soybeans. It takes on flavours well.
 - Marinate tofu with low sodium soy sauce, garlic and ginger or your favourite marinade.
 - Use a variety of tofu textures:
 - Soft or silken** for smoothies, dips, sauces, salad dressings and baking.
 - Firm** on its own or scrambled or crumbled into eggs or ground meat dishes like lasagna, sloppy joes, tacos, or pasta sauce.
 - Extra firm** for stir-fry dishes, grilled or shredded.
 - Press the water our of firm or extra firm tofu before using by draining and placing the tofu between paper towels or clean cloths, and pressing out the liquid.

Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP)

TVP is made from soybeans. It comes dried, is shelf-stable, inexpensive and takes on flavours well. Its texture closely resemble ground meat and can be used in similar ways.

- Extend or replace ground meat in spaghetti sauce, stews, casseroles, burgers, tacos and chili.
- Rehydrate by adding boiling water or low-sodium broth using a 1:1 ratio. Soak for 5 to 10 minutes.





MENU PLANNING

Increasing the Use of Plant-Based Proteins

For more recipe ideas:

- [Healthy Eating](#) (Ottawa Public Health)
- [Paint Your Plate](#) (Ontario Dietitians in Public Health)
- [Recipes – Early Learning and Child Care](#) (Alberta Health Services)
- [Tried and True Recipes – A Resource for Schools and Child Care](#) (DévourezLesAliments)
- [Plant-Based Proteins: Recipes Made Easy-Peasy](#) (Guelph Family Health Study)

Refer to [Child Care Menu Planning – Practical Guide](#) to ensure that recipes meet the guidance provided.



Ontario Dietitians in Public Health
Diététistes en santé publique de l'Ontario