Plant-based meat alternatives are being eaten by a wide variety of people, many of whom also eat animal proteins. Restaurants can take advantage of this macro-consumer shift by ensuring that they have at least one or two appealing plant-based items on their menu. The best approach is having a variety of protein options available for most dishes.

HOW YOU ORGANIZE YOUR MENU MATTERS

Most consumers are looking for familiar foods when they dine out, so marketing plant-based menu entrées should focus on ensuring that these items are integrated into the rest of the menu and that they are labeled with appealing and familiar words.

Studies have shown that when plant-based entrées are moved from a “Vegetarian” section of a menu into the general menu, sales more than double.1 Given that fewer than five percent of consumers eat a vegan or vegetarian diet, in order to appeal to a wider swath of the population, plant-based entrées should be mixed in with other similar menu items.

The World Resources Institute’s Better Buying Lab is currently working with Panera, Hilton Hotels, Stanford University, Unilever, Sodexo, and others to identify ways to help consumers shift to more plant-based dishes. Preliminary research conducted by the Better Buying Lab has shown that even terms like meatless and meat-free should be avoided. When consumers are choosing foods in the moment, they don’t want to be reminded of what the food is.

When plant-based entrées are moved from a “Vegetarian” section of a menu into the general menu, sales more than double.1


CAPITALIZE ON THE SHIFT TO PLANT-BASED EATING!

goodfoodscorecard.org
Many restaurants are reporting that adding plant-based offerings attracts new customers. Pret A Manger saw double-digit sales increases of its plant-based dishes, and has found it to be the #1 driver of new sales chainwide — now accounting for one-third of all expenditures to grains, white meat, and red meat. Millennials devote the smallest share of food expenditures to grains, white meat, and red meat. According to the USDA, among all generations, the Millennial generation accounts for 25% of the U.S. population and is projected to spend $1.4 trillion annually by 2020, this is an important segment to consider. According to the USDA, among all generations, Millennials devote larger shares of their food dollars to meat alternatives in a restaurant. Given that appealing to Millennials can meet or exceed the popularity of their animal-based equivalents, the reasons why this represents an opportunity for your restaurant, ideas on adding plant-based entrées to your menu, and best practices in marketing these dishes.

### How You Describe Plant-Based Entrées Matters

Plant-based dishes can taste as good as or better than ones that use ingredients from animals, however they aren’t always described in a way that makes them sound appealing or appetizing. A study conducted at Stanford University and released in June 2017 by JAMA Internal Medicine tested the naming of vegetables in a dining hall context and concluded that labeling them in decadent terms (e.g. “Sweet sizzlin’ green beans and crispy shallots”) increased their selection by 41% versus healthy restrictive terms (e.g. “light ‘n’ low-carb green beans and shallots”).

Using positive, indulgent language that emphasizes taste and flavor seems to be much more effective than positioning dishes as the “better” choices. Even though consumers may indicate a desire to eat healthy foods and even though a dish may indeed be quite healthy, indulgent descriptors will increase the likelihood of it being ordered and will actually increase satiety in the consumer as well.

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### For More Information Contact:

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