



DefaultVeg

A Better Food Foundation Initiative

Flip your school's food with DefaultVeg

Why DefaultVeg?

We've all had that experience of sitting down to eat in a group and discovering that meat and dairy dominates the menu, while one or two plant-based options are relegated to a small section at the very bottom. Not only is this alienating for the millions who are choosing animal-free foods for their health, animals, the environment, or religious and cultural reasons—but it also sets a harmful standard: that a “normal” meal must include meat at the center of the plate. **DefaultVeg flips that!**

Imagine a different world, or at least a different campus experience—one where it's easy for everyone to make the compassionate and sustainable choice because it's become normal. A DefaultVeg menu does just that: it features plant-based meals as the default option, while giving diners the choice to add or opt-in to meat and/or dairy options upon request. By simply being presented with a new default through this behavioral “nudge,” people are much more likely to choose a plant-based meal, even when meat and dairy options are available.

Asking people to change how they serve food can be scary, especially if you want them to stop serving foods that are popular. Because DefaultVeg does not take away choice—it simply flips which choices are offered as the default—we've found that students have a much easier time asking for this change, and getting others to enthusiastically say, “Yes!”

Who is this toolkit for?

If you're a student, faculty, or staff member of any college or university and you care about animals, sustainability, and inclusivity, then this is for you—no experience needed! This guide makes it so easy to start bringing DefaultVeg to your campus for events, clubs, or even your campus cafe—and these wins will all add up to a more resilient food future for students to come!

Here are five quick ways to flip your campus's food norms today!

1

Student Groups

Start where you're already well-connected: the **clubs, sports teams, fraternities/sororities, and other groups** you're involved in on campus. A request from a trusted member for these groups to go DefaultVeg can be really convincing.

Or expand outward and look for those that are already friendly to the cause: environmental clubs, social justice groups, or other volunteer-based organizations. By committing to go DefaultVeg, they'll simply offer plant-based options first (with meat/dairy as a backup) any time they're ordering food or hosting events.

2

Offices & Departments

College **offices and academic departments** like those focused on sustainability or equity and inclusion are great places to start with gathering support for this strategy by school officials. And don't forget faculty members you already have a good relationship with, who can help you get commitments to DefaultVeg catering by their department. (Feel free to reach out to us at BFF to ask if we know of friendly faculty at your school, too!)

3

Conferences and large events

If a **big conference or ceremony** is coming to your school, try to get in touch with the organizers and ask about a DefaultVeg menu. If participants register in advance, the conference can easily adjust the registration form to provide a couple plant-based meals as the default choices, with an optional checkbox for an animal-based meal.

4

Dining catering menus

If your college or campus cafe has a separate **catering menu for events**, it can be much easier to ask for DefaultVeg strategies to be worked into that menu than asking for the whole dining hall to go DefaultVeg. Some ideas include making sure that the plant-based options outnumber animal-based options by at least 2:1 and are placed near the top of the menu, swapping in vegan ingredients like mayo and plantmilk as the default in prepared foods and coffee, and ensuring that vegan dishes have mouth-watering labels (like "roasted butternut squash and sage risotto," instead of "low-fat vegan risotto").

5

Campus Cafes

Often student-run, your **campus cafes and coffee shops** are great candidates for DefaultVeg menus. By offering oatmilk by default, or by simply eliminating the upcharge for plant-based milk options, coffee shops can adopt an inclusive and sustainable future. Print out our quick guide on oatmilk defaults to share with your cafe's manager.

Check out these pointers to help you in your conversations with decision-makers.

Let them know that DefaultVeg can help your school address multiple issues that it cares about, including:

- **Inclusivity:** DefaultVeg makes menus more inclusive to those with religious or cultural dietary restrictions.
- **Food Justice:** DefaultVeg menus are more accessible for those with dairy intolerance, who are disproportionately from communities of color, while increasing availability of healthy plant-centered meals for low-income students who may not have ready access to fresh fruits, vegetables and plant-based proteins in their homes.
- **Sustainability:** Our recent study in collaboration with the Food for Climate League at three university campuses found that when plant-based defaults were consistently implemented, the uptake of plant-based foods increased dramatically—without any other intervention or changes. Institutions can expect food-related carbon savings of about 40 percent and water savings of 24 percent. For every million meals served, that's like saving over a million miles driven by a passenger car!

Through your work, your school will join these trailblazing universities that are building a plant-based norm!



HARVARD
Office for Sustainability



Durham
University
Centre for Catholic Studies

Northwestern
PRITZKER SCHOOL OF LAW
Donald Pritzker
Entrepreneurship Law Center



Stanford
MEDICINE | Stanford Prevention
Research Center



NYU

Office of
the Provost



PRESIDIO
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Reach out to us!

Do you want to flip food at your school but need a little more guidance or support? Email kenzie@betterfoodfoundation.org and we can help you with things like making a presentation to your school's administration, dining services, or sustainability office to kickstart even bigger changes to how food is served at your school. And if you want to get more involved, you can become a DefaultVeg Ambassador and connect to students around the country who are learning together in order to flip food at their schools.

Share your successes at any point along the way!

Do you have a DefaultVeg success story? Tell us about it so we can track how far this change is spreading. And share your story online to inspire others!

betterfoodfoundation.org

f  X @defaultveg

