

# 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.



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### 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.



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### 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 out 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.



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### 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](#) (DévouvrezLesAliments)
- [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.

