

# From the Nutritionist

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Vegan, vegetarian, herbivore, flexitarian, semi-vegetarian ... There are many versions, and many names for someone who eats a plant-based diet. Maybe you are a vegetarian, or have thought about becoming one. Or, maybe the last thing on earth you ever plan to do is to become one.

No matter where you stand on this issue, consider making your diet more plant-based, even if you never cross the line into vegetarian territory.

The USDA's MyPlate campaign encourages filling three quarters of your plate with fruits, vegetables, and grains. Most health professionals agree that eating plants is the way to go. Study after study shows that eating more plant foods leads to better health, including decreased risk of obesity, diabetes, cancer and heart disease. The more plant foods in your diet the better! So, while strict vegetarians may get the most health benefits, even regular meat eaters can improve their health by eating more fruit, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds.

Plant foods are rich in a variety of vitamins and minerals that are essential for good health, and are virtually free of cholesterol and saturated fat. Plant foods are also the natural source of fiber in your diet. Fiber is important to keep your digestive tract running smoothly, may help lower your cholesterol, and helps food to be more satisfying, but most non-vegetarians fail to get the recommended amount of fiber each day. These are just a few of the reasons why eating more plant foods can improve your health.

To boost your intake of healthy plant foods, think about ways you can increase your intake. Add vegetables to sandwiches, pizza, and omelets. Have fruit for dessert. Add sunflower seeds to your salad, and granola to your yogurt. Switch to whole grain bread or pasta.

If you're feeling more adventurous, try some of the vegetarian food available on campus. You don't have to become a vegetarian to eat food that is vegetarian – but it's one simple way to make your diet more plant-based.

Since October is Vegetarian Awareness Month, it's a perfect time to try some new vegetarian foods. ASC has symbols on the menu boards to help you identify vegetarian food:



This food is vegetarian, and does not contain meat, fish or poultry.



This food is vegan, and does not contain meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy, honey or gelatin.

*Andrea Hart, registered dietitian nutritionist and New York State-certified dietitian/nutritionist, is available for free, confidential, one-on-one counseling and as a speaker or facilitator for campus groups, panels or classes.*

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