

A GUIDE FOR CONSUMERS: INTRODUCING PLANT-BASED MEAT

Developed in collaboration
with Teri Lichtenstein,
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WHAT ARE MEAT ALTERNATIVES, SUCH AS PLANT-BASED MEAT?

Australia, like many other Western nations, has seen an explosion in the availability and variety of meat alternatives, with a wave of new plant-based meat options hitting supermarket shelves. Similar trends are beginning to emerge across New Zealand.

You may have also seen your favourite restaurant chains and meal delivery services adding plant-based meat options to their menus, or your grocery store stocking them in the meat aisle alongside conventional meat.

Traditional meat alternatives, such as tofu and falafel, as well as combinations of whole ingredients like lentil burgers, have long been available to people seeking meat-free protein options to be at the centre of their meals. More recent additions to the meat alternative category include fruits, vegetables or fungi being prepared to mimic meat, for example 'pulled pork' jackfruit.

Beyond these more familiar meat alternatives, one part of the meat alternative category is creating the most buzz: plant-based meat.

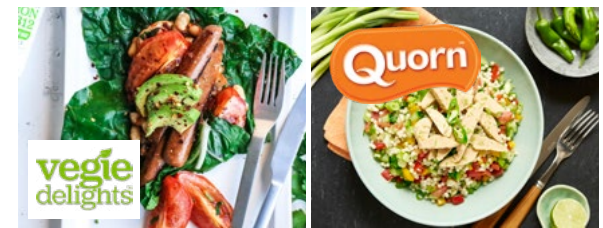
SO, WHAT IS PLANT-BASED MEAT?

Plant-based meat is made from combinations of plant proteins or mycoprotein (a protein made from fungi), plant oils and starches. These are then combined with spices, seasonings and other common food additives.

There are two types of plant-based meats – legacy and new generation products:

Legacy products helped popularise plant-based meats back in the 1980s and are primarily favoured by those who follow a meat-free lifestyle. These products have traditionally been found in a dedicated vegetarian/vegan section of the grocery store.

New generation products began arriving to supermarkets and appearing on menus a few years ago. These products aim to achieve a far more realistic sensory experience akin to similar conventional meats – from preparation to appearance, texture and flavour. These products are often favoured by flexitarians and meat-reducers who are seeking familiarity and convenience when substituting for conventional meat in their diet.



Plant-based meat – Legacy: Tofurky® Plant-Based Deli Slices, Veggie Delights™ Veggie Sausages, Quorn™ Garlic & Herb Fillets



Plant-based meat – New generation: Beyond Burger®, Plantein™ Plant-Based Schnitzel, v2food™ v2mince

WHY CHOOSE MEAT ALTERNATIVES?

As the world's population continues its march towards 10 billion people by 2050, demand for meat is growing exponentially. This demand is driving some of the greatest health, food security and sustainability challenges facing our world.^{1,2}



From the rise of diseases like cancer and type 2 diabetes, to other public health issues like antibiotic resistance and zoonotic disease, there are significant threats associated with the continued, heavy reliance on systems of intensive animal agriculture and consumption of meat beyond government dietary guidelines.

In relation to the rise of non-communicable disease, global health authorities including The World Health Organization, World Cancer Research Fund and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health have issued strong warnings about the impacts of high consumption of red meat, particularly processed meat, in many well-publicised studies.

Findings from these studies have been summarised in clear recommendations for Western consumers:

EAT MORE PLANT FOODS, AND LESS RED MEAT, PARTICULARLY PROCESSED MEAT, FOR BETTER HEALTH AND TO COMBAT CHRONIC DISEASE.

Yet, Australians and New Zealanders are consuming meat well beyond government dietary guidelines. And in Australia, one-third of adults' daily average meat consumption comes from non-lean and processed meats, which are the types of meat dietary guidelines recommend to limit.³

Meat alternatives are one solution to help sustainably satisfy consumer demands, whilst addressing sustainability and public health challenges. Rising interest in plant-based eating and meat alternatives reflects an increasing desire amongst Australians and New Zealanders to reduce their meat consumption.

AUSSIES EAT MORE THAN DOUBLE THE RECOMMENDED AMOUNT OF RED MEAT



AND KIWIS EAT 36% MORE THAN RECOMMENDED

Annual meat consumption in Australia and New Zealand, per person (OECD, 2019)⁴; AU Dietary Guidelines Recommended Consumption⁵; NZ Dietary Guidelines Recommended Consumption⁶

In research conducted by Colmar Brunton, health was named as the number one reason Aussies and Kiwis are choosing to eat less meat.⁷

CAN PLANT-BASED MEATS HELP ME TO MEET DIETARY GUIDELINES AND IMPROVE MY HEALTH?

There is wide agreement amongst global health authorities about the need for many people to reduce consumption of meat⁸ and increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains. These changes in Western diets are essential to reduce public health risks, chronic diseases and to promote good overall health.⁹

To provide consumers information to guide their dietary choices, Food Frontier's report, [Plant-Based Meat: A Healthier Choice?](#), includes a nutrition analysis of plant-based meats available in Australia and New Zealand across common formats, from burgers to sausages to mince and more.

The report also examines these products within a more holistic understanding of 'health', with research and data exploring the impacts of a variety of ingredients (including additives), as well as the impacts of food processing.

Because plant-based meats are designed to provide people an easy swap for their centre-of-plate proteins, the report also reviews the health impacts of the similar conventional meat products for which they are an alternative.

Key findings from the nutrition analysis of plant-based meats

Food Frontier analysed¹⁰ 95 plant-based meats available in the Australia and New Zealand markets to determine nutrition averages across common types of products (categories including Sausages, Burgers, Bacon, etc.).

The analysis found that across most product categories, plant-based meats, on average, **are nutritionally superior or comparable to their conventional meat equivalents**, having:

- ✓ LOWER OR COMPARABLE KILOJOULES AND SODIUM
- ✓ HIGHER OR COMPARABLE PROTEIN
- ✓ LOWER FAT AND SATURATED FAT PER 100G
- ✓ THE PRESENCE OF HEALTH-PROMOTING FIBRE (CONVENTIONAL MEAT HAS NONE).

Scroll to the next page to see the full nutritional insights!



Image: v2mince x Marley Spoon – Summer Ragù, Tomato & Peas

HOW DO PLANT-BASED MEATS COMPARE TO CONVENTIONAL MEAT?

Red meat-style plant-based meats compared to conventional red meat equivalents (per 100g) on average

Nutrient	Sausages	Burgers	Mince	Bacon
Energy (kilojoules)	✓	✓	=	✓
Protein (g)	✓	=	✗	✓
Fat, total (g)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Saturated Fat (g)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carbohydrate (g)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sugars (g)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dietary Fibre* (g)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sodium (mg)	✓	✓	✗	✓
Health Star Rating	✓	✓	=	✓

* Dietary Fibre: Calculated based on products that list fibre nutrient value

- ✓ Plant-based average is better
- = Average is comparable within 10%
- ✗ Plant-based average is worse

To explore the full findings of this analysis, download your free copy of [Plant-Based Meat: A Healthier Choice?](#)

White meat-style plant-based meats compared to conventional white meat equivalents (per 100g) on average

Nutrient	Poultry – Crumbed	Poultry – Uncrumbed
Energy (kilojoules)	✓	=
Protein (g)	=	=
Fat, total (g)	✓	✓
Saturated Fat (g)	✓	✓
Carbohydrate (g)	n/a	n/a
Sugars (g)	n/a	n/a
Dietary Fibre* (g)	✓	✓
Sodium (mg)	✓	=
Health Star Rating	✓	✓

* Dietary Fibre: Calculated based on products that list fibre nutrient value

SO, WHAT DO THE REPORT'S FINDINGS RECOMMEND?

The following guidelines are based on the findings of Food Frontier's report and prepared in collaboration with report co-author Teri Lichtenstein, Accredited Practising Dietitian.



Considering dietary guidelines

Consult an expert: When seeking to make any kind of dietary decisions with respect to your health, consult an expert such as an Accredited Practising Dietitian or a qualified health professional.

Reduce meat intake: If your consumption of red meat, particularly processed meat, is currently higher than recommended by the Australian and New Zealand dietary guidelines, consider reducing meat intake in line with government health authorities' recommendations to reduce risk of chronic disease.

Prioritise plant proteins: At the same time, consider increasing intake of protein from plant-based sources, in line with dietary recommendations from the Australian Heart Foundation.

Choosing a plant-based meat product

Swap in plant-based meals or meat: If you are seeking to eat more plant-based meals, there are countless recipes featuring whole food options including vegetables, legumes, mushrooms and grains. However, if you'd like to reduce your meat consumption and still enjoy a burger to barbeque or bacon in a BLT, plant-based meats can provide alternatives that are, on average across most product formats (e.g. burgers), nutritionally comparable or superior to conventional meat.

Always read the label: Given the wide variety of plant-based meat products in the Australian and New Zealand markets, it's important to read nutrition and ingredient labels to help you choose the healthiest product to suit your needs, in line with individual recommendations from a qualified expert.

General tips: In the absence of individualised advice, there are a few things you can keep in mind to choose a healthier plant-based meat product:

- Choose products with a Health Star Rating of 3.5 or greater, and that contain the least amount of sodium (that still suit your taste) and the greatest amount of dietary fibre. Sodium and fibre are two important nutrients to consider for their impacts on health.
- On average plant-based meats contain about 23 percent of the adult recommended daily intake of sodium, per 100g. However, some individual products are higher in sodium. Refer to the suggested dietary targets for sodium to consider how these products fit within your diet.
- As a general guide, choose low or moderately salted products (<120mg, and <400mg sodium per 100g, respectively) and plant-based meats that are a good source of fibre (4g of fibre or more per serving). Over a third (37 percent) of plant-based meats surveyed are considered "good" choices with less than 400mg of sodium per 100g.
- If you're concerned with getting adequate intake of micronutrients that are commonly found in conventional meat (e.g. iron, zinc, vitamin B12), it's important to eat a varied diet to maximise nutrient intake and bioavailability, including by selecting meat alternatives that contain these key micronutrients.

CHOOSE PRODUCTS WITH A HEALTH STAR RATING OF 3.5 OR GREATER.

All plant-based meat categories surveyed have an average HSR of 3.5 or greater.



RECIPES: REDUCING MEAT CONSUMPTION WITH MEAT ALTERNATIVES

Plant-based meat can easily be swapped for conventional meats in a variety of your favourite recipes. The following collection of recipes¹¹ features plant-based meat swaps for several types of products, from mince to chicken pieces to burgers and more. These recipes also provide an option to substitute a whole food for conventional meat, such as lentils in place of mince.



SPICY MEATLESS MINCE TACOS

Serves: 4

This recipe is: ✓ Good source of protein

✓ Low in sugar

✓ Source of fibre

Ingredients:

Taco filling:

- 500g plant-based mince, such as Naturli' Mince
- *Or, for a whole food option, substitute a lentil and walnut mix, using:*
 - 500g button mushrooms
 - ½ cup walnuts
 - 400g tin lentils, rinsed and drained
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ½ onion, finely diced
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- 1–2 x 28g sachets taco seasoning, or homemade seasoning (see tip below)
- 8 taco shells

Taco toppings: Add your favourite mix of taco toppings, such as guacamole, sour cream and cheese (regular or non-dairy), diced tomatoes, shredded cabbage, pickled carrots, diced green onions, coriander and hot sauce.

TIP: MAKE YOUR OWN TACO SEASONING!

Combine:

- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tbsp hot or sweet paprika
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- salt and pepper

Steps:

1. In a saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Fry the onion, garlic and chilli flakes for 5 minutes, until the onion is translucent and aromatic.

2. Add the plant-based mince to the pan.

If substituting lentil and mushroom mix:

First, finely chop the mushrooms into tiny cubes, and use a food processor to grind the walnuts into a coarse powder. Add just the chopped mushrooms and fry for a further 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until they begin to soften.

3. Stir in the taco seasoning and ½ cup water and simmer for 30 seconds.

If substituting lentil and mushroom mix:

After simmering for 30 seconds, stir the lentils into the mushroom mixture, along with the ground walnuts.

4. Cook, stirring, for 2 minutes, or until the mixture thickens. Remove from the heat and keep warm until ready to serve. Meanwhile, heat the taco shells according to the packet instructions.
5. Place all the taco toppings in separate bowls, including the hot mince (or lentil and walnut mix) filling, and the hot taco shells. Serve straight away, inviting diners to fill their own tacos however they choose.

Recipe adapted with permission.



PLANT-BASED SCHNITZELS WITH CREAMY DILL SAUCE AND DAIRY-FREE POTATO SALAD



Image: Courtesy of Fry's Family Food

Serves: 4

This recipe is: ✓ **Excellent source of fibre** (17.8g per serve)
✓ **Good source of protein**

Ingredients:

For the potato salad:

- 4 large potatoes
- ¾ cup vegetable stock
- ⅓ cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ½ cup gherkins, finely chopped
- ½ red onion, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp chives, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper

For the schnitzel and sauce:

- 2 x 320g box of plant-based chicken schnitzels, such as Fry's Golden Crumbed Schnitzels
- *Or, for a wholefood option, substitute eggplant:*
 - Two small-to-medium eggplants, sliced lengthways
 - 1 tsp Dijon mustard
 - 2 tbsp wholemeal flour
 - 1/3 cup soy milk
 - 2 cups breadcrumbs or LSA (ground mix of linseeds, sunflower seeds and almonds)
 - Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 4 tsp flour
- 2 cups almond milk
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ¼ cup nutritional yeast
- 1 tbsp dill, finely chopped
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper

To Serve:

- 8 lime wedges

Steps:

For the potato salad:

1. Place the potatoes in a pot of cold salted water. Bring it up to a boil over medium heat. Cover and cook for 20-25 minutes until fork tender. Refresh the potatoes under cold water. While still hot, carefully peel and then slice the potatoes into 0.5 cm rounds.
2. Combine the stock, vinegar, oil, mustard, mustard seeds and garlic in a small saucepan over medium heat and simmer, one minute.
3. Pour the warm mixture over the warm sliced potatoes, top with the gherkins, stir and cover. Cool and refrigerate for at least one hour or overnight.
4. Before serving, stir in the red onions and chives and season it to taste.

For the schnitzel and sauce:

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Arrange the 8 plant-based crumbed schnitzels on a lined baking tray and bake until golden and crisp, about 10-12 minutes.

If substituting eggplant:

- Wash and slice eggplants lengthways, creating 1.5-2 cm thick slices and set aside.
- Mix together the Dijon mustard, flour, salt and pepper

and soy milk in a bowl to create batter, set aside.

- Pour breadcrumbs into flat bowl and set aside.
 - Cover eggplant slices in batter on both sides, then place into breadcrumb mix, covering both sides in crumb. Place on baking tray and repeat until all eggplant slices are covered in batter and crumb mixture. Ensure eggplant slices are placed in a single layer.
 - Option to lightly spray with cooking oil before placing tray into oven. Monitor progress and flip eggplant once top is browning. Remove once both sides are browned.
3. Heat the coconut oil in a small saucepan over medium heat until melted. Whisk in the flour and cook for 30 seconds. Whisk in the almond milk and garlic and simmer 3-5 minutes until thick and pourable. Whisk in the nutritional yeast, dill and mustard. Season to taste and keep warm.
 4. To serve, pour some of the dill sauce over each portion of the plant-based schnitzels (or eggplant) and serve with the potato salad. Add the lime wedges on the side.

SPICED “BRAISED BEEF” AND PUMPKIN SALAD

Serves: 2

This recipe is: ✓ **Excellent source of fibre** – one serve provides 100% of daily fibre needs for Australian adults
✓ **Low in sodium**
✓ **Good source of protein**

Ingredients:

- 250g of a mushroom-based plant-based meat, such as Fable Food Co's Plant-Based 'Braised Beef'
- *Or for a whole food option, substitute:*
 - 250g porcino mushrooms, sliced
- 400g Japanese pumpkins, cut into 3cm cubes
- 2-3 generous handfuls of baby spinach
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 25g pine nuts
- 1 lemon
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 3 tsp of maple syrup
- 1½ tsp ras el hanout spice mix
- Olive oil, total of 5 tbsp
- Salt, total of 2 pinches

Tahini Dressing:

- 4 tbsp tahini
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ¼ of the minced garlic
- Squeeze of lemon juice (about 1 tbsp)
- Pinch of salt

Steps:

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Cut pumpkin into 3cm cubes and place in a mixing bowl.
3. In a small bowl, combine 2 tbsp olive oil, cumin, smoked paprika, cinnamon, maple syrup, a squeeze of lemon (approx 1 tbsp) and a pinch of salt. Whisk to incorporate and pour over pumpkin. Stir in, ensuring pumpkin pieces are evenly coated.
4. Place pumpkin in a roasting tray and roast for 30 minutes or until slightly soft and caramelised. Once roasted, remove from oven and cool.
5. While the pumpkin is roasting, roast pine nuts by placing in a dry pan over low to medium heat for 2 minutes. Stir frequently and watch closely, as they can burn very quickly. Once golden, take off heat and transfer into bowl immediately.
6. To make the dressing, combine tahini, 1 tbsp of olive oil, ¼ of the amount of minced garlic, a generous squeeze of lemon juice and generous pinch of salt. Whisk together with a fork and add 3-4 tbsp of warm water. Whisk vigorously until combined and smooth. Add more water for thinner consistency. Adjust seasoning to desired taste and set aside.
7. Heat 2 tbsp of olive oil in pan over medium heat. When hot, add remaining minced garlic and the plant-based 'braised beef' and cook for 1 minute.

If substituting porcino mushrooms:
Follow step 7 as above, except cover and cook for about five minutes (or longer if mushrooms give off a lot of water).
8. Add ras el hanout spice; ensure it coats plant-based 'braised beef' (or mushrooms) evenly and continue frying. While cooking, press and agitate the plant-based 'braised beef' in the pan with your wooden spoon so that it starts to break apart and caramelise. Cook for further 7-10 minutes (1-2 minutes for mushrooms). Finish with a squeeze of lemon juice.
9. In a salad bowl, place spinach leaves, sliced onion, pumpkin and cooked plant-based 'braised beef' (or mushrooms). Toss to combine. Drizzle generously with the tahini dressing and top with pine nuts.

Recipe adapted with permission from Fable Food Co.



THAI YELLOW CHICKEN-STYLE CURRY



Image: Courtesy of Flave

Serves: 4

This recipe is: ✓ Excellent source of fibre (17.2g per serve)
✓ Good source of protein
✓ Low in sugar

Ingredients:

- 320g of plant-based chicken, such as NEXT! Chick'n Chunks
- *Or, for a whole food option, substitute:*
 - 300g tofu or tempeh
- 250g broccoli
- 250g green beans
- 1 red capsicum
- 5g Thai basil (optional)
- 5g coriander (optional)
- 5g red chili, thinly sliced (optional)
- 4 tbsp sesame oil
- 500ml coconut cream
- 500ml water
- 4-6 tbsp of Thai yellow curry paste of choice

Sesame Rice:

- 200g brown rice
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 3g salt
- 2g black pepper

Steps:

Begin the sesame rice:

1. Cover rice in water, add salt, bring to boil.
2. Simmer for 25 minutes until cooked.
3. Drain rice, add sesame oil, salt & pepper.

Then, prepare the plant-based chicken and vegetables:

4. Cut the red capsicum into small triangles, lay onto a tray & coat with 2 tbsp sesame oil. Roast lightly at 170°C for 10 minutes.
5. Spoon yellow curry paste into large pot with a splash of sesame oil and fry for 30 seconds until fragrant. Add water and coconut cream to the pot; simmer for 10 minutes on low heat.
6. Meanwhile, cut broccoli into small florets and green beans into thirds.
7. Bring a pot of water to the boil, add broccoli and green beans, and cook for 2 minutes. Drain and put aside.
8. Heat 2 tbsps of oil in a pan over medium heat. Add plant-based chicken chunks and sauté for 3-4 minutes.

If using tofu or tempeh:

Cut into desired size chunks and pan fry with sesame oil until browned. Set aside.

9. Plate the dish in four bowls – add rice, then top with equal amounts of the broccoli, green beans, roasted red capsicums and plant-based chicken; pour over the curry sauce. If desired, top with fresh coriander, Thai basil and red chili.

Recipe adapted with permission.

ULTIMATE PLANT-BASED BLTS WITH AVOCADO

Serves: 2

This recipe is: ✓ Excellent source of fibre (more than 10g per serve)
✓ Good source of protein
✓ Low in sugar
✓ 25% less sodium than a traditional BLT¹²

Ingredients:

- 80g plant-based bacon, such as Made with Plants Meat-Free Bacon
- 2 tbsp oil of your choice for pan-frying
- Or, for a whole food option, substitute a marinated tofu, using:
 - ½ cup soy sauce
 - ½ cup maple syrup
 - 2 tsp liquid smoke
 - 200g firm tofu, sliced into thin rectangular strips
 - 1 tbsp rice bran or grapeseed oil, for pan-frying
- 1 ripe avocado
- 2 tsp fresh lemon juice
- ¼ tsp salt
- 4 slices multigrain bread, toasted
- 2 tbsp mayonnaise (regular or egg-free)
- 1 ripe tomato, sliced
- 4 cos lettuce leaves

Steps:

1. Prepare the plant-based bacon: add 2 tbsp of oil to a pan and fry on medium heat on both sides until well cooked.

If substituting tofu:

- In a bowl or airtight container, combine the soy sauce, maple syrup, liquid smoke and ½ cup water.
 - Submerge the tofu strips in the marinade, then cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or overnight if possible.
 - Heat the oil in a frying pan over high heat. Add the tofu strips, along with 2–3 tbsp of the marinade.
 - Cook for 2–3 minutes, then flip the strips over and cook until the marinade has been absorbed, and the tofu is browned and crispy on both sides.
2. Meanwhile, mash the avocado in a bowl with the lemon juice and salt.
 3. To assemble your epic BLTs, toast the slices of bread, smear them with the avocado spread, then add the crispy plant-based bacon (or tofu strips), and mayonnaise to taste.
 4. Top the whole thing off with some juicy tomato slices and lettuce leaves, then enjoy!

Recipe adapted with permission.






For more resources on plant-based eating, check out these links to plant-based recipes from Australia and New Zealand's top culinary media:

- [Nourish Magazine](#)
- [Taste.com.au](#)
- [BestRecipes.com.au](#)
- [Delicious.com.au](#)
- [HealthyFoodGuide.com.au](#)
- [GoodFood.com.au](#)
- [Eatwell.co.nz](#)
- [VegKit](#)

To learn more about the health and nutrition of plant-based meats, read Food Frontier's recent report, *Plant-Based Meat: A Healthier Choice?* available for download at [FoodFrontier.org/Reports](#)

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