



Advocate for Climate-Friendly, Plant-Based Food at Your School

Ask for more plant-based options in your cafeteria.

As you work to get more plant-based options on the menu, we encourage you to try working *with* your school district's nutrition services department to accomplish your goals of having more plant-based, climate-friendly food at school. Offering your time and support to nutrition services staff will help build a mutually beneficial relationship that will help you accomplish your goals!

Key action steps include:

1. Gather your team! Reach out to environmental clubs or animal welfare groups to find other students that are interested in transforming school food to be more plant-forward and climate-friendly.
2. Determine your ask. Do you want to ask for plant-based options one day a week (e.g., [Meatless Mondays](#)) or every day? Once you have a clear idea of what you'd like to ask for on your school menu/what you'd like to see change, it's time to reach out to your nutrition services department!
3. Meet with your food service director! Discuss what is needed for them to add plant-based entrée options on the menu. Offer to work with your school district's nutrition services team to help taste test plant-based items among your peers, create marketing materials for new menu items, or conduct a student survey to gather data on student taste preferences.
 - Review [this document](#) for step-by-step guidance and a list of questions to ask your food services director!
 - Request a meeting using [this sample outreach email](#).

Grow your campaign with any of the following activities:

- Start an online petition asking for more plant-based menu options to demonstrate support from your peers and school community. Check out [this student example](#) from students in California!
- Give presentations to your peers (e.g., student clubs or classes) to encourage other students to support your campaign — use [this educator resource](#) for guidance.
- Create your own marketing materials (e.g., posters, social media posts, flyers) to encourage students to choose plant-based meals at school.
- Get creative! Organize a school-wide event around Earth Day to promote plant-based foods as a climate solution, start a social media "challenge" or student pledge that encourages students to eat plant-based school food, circulate a student survey asking students what they prefer/want to see on school menus, etc.

To learn how other students have done it, check out [these student blog posts!](#)

Interested in seeing more organic food in your cafeteria?

- Check out Friends of the Earth's [Organic School Food Roadmap](#), which outlines key strategies and shares seven brief case studies from diverse school districts in California that show how school districts with various food service models can successfully source organic food.
- [Organic, Plant-Forward, Scratch Cooked School Meals](#) is a case study featuring three schools in California currently implementing the Conscious Kitchen feeding model, which is rooted in providing 100 percent organic, scratch-cooked meals from low-waste kitchens.
- From CivilEats: read how [Pandemic Disruptions Created an Opportunity for Organic School Meals in California!](#)
- If you're in California, encourage your nutrition services director to apply to the [DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program!](#) Through this program, your school district can access local, organic foods for your school food program at a low cost.
- Encourage your school district to purchase from local, organic farmers in your area! To help support your district, you can provide a list of local, organic farmers to your nutrition service team. For example, in California, [CCOF](#) and [CAFF](#) offer great databases to find local, organic farmers near you!

Interested in reducing food waste / food packaging waste at school?

- [Cafeteria Culture](#) (CafCu) is an environmental education organization working with youth to creatively achieve zero waste schools, plastic free waters, and climate smart communities. Check out [their website](#) full of resources and information for student advocates to [take action](#) to stop plastic pollution and for *equitable* zero waste!
- Resources from the Center for Environmental Health (CEH):
 - [Ditching Disposables Toolkit](#)
 - Case Studies: [Bishop O'Dowd High School](#) (CA), [Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School District](#) (NC), [Palo Alto Unified School District](#) (CA)
 - [GreenScreen Certified™ Standard for Food Service Ware](#)
- [Plastic Free Restaurants](#) actually *pays* schools to stop using petroleum-based plastics! They pay the cost difference of one set of single-use items to one set of reusable items.
- [resources from StopWaste:](#)
 - [Food Share Table Guide](#)
 - [Food Donation Guide](#)
 - [How to sort cafeteria waste](#) (video)
 - [How to use a food share table](#) (video)
 - An [animation](#) on how food share works (video)
- Organizations that work with schools to help them implement "Zero Waste" programs:
 - [Seven Generations Ahead](#)
 - [Green Schools National Network](#)

Reach out to Friends of the Earth for support at climatefriendlyfood@foe.org. We can help answer any questions you may have and offer guidance for your campaign!