



“Cooking for Climate” Video Series: Discussion Guide for Plant-Based Eating

Hello! Thanks for exploring plant-based eating with us here at the Community Kitchen Co-operative KW (CKCKW). This discussion guide is a complement to the webpage on plant-based eating on the CKCKW site, which you can find here: www.kitchencoopkw.org/plant-based-eating. On this site you will also find many resources to help you, your family, friends and community in the journey of going more plant-based.

Before you get started

This site also includes two great videos produced in our community called ‘*Cooking for Climate*’, which are the foundations for this discussion guide and designed to “help get the conversation going”. We hope you’ll take a look at these before getting started! To watch them, visit: www.kitchencoopkw.org/plant-based-eating, or use the YouTube links found below.

These videos make some important starting links between plant-based eating and climate action, and will help to provoke conversation and inspire future plant-based cooking! Please consider going back to them if you’d like to clarify any points or simply for the fun of it. The two videos are:

Video 1: Making Pav Bhaji (*pronounced, ‘pow bhaaji’*): The first of two videos exploring the joys of plant-based cooking and its links both to health and climate action, this introductory video shares some key points to think about and the steps to follow for making a delicious (and not spicy!) plant-based dish from northern India. You can [download the recipe here](#). The video link is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79447Xsw5uA>





Video 2: Potato Coconut Curry: Exploring the joys of plant-based cooking and its links both to health and climate action, this video introduces a Kitchener-based volunteer group called 'Food Not Bombs' whose members walk us through cooking two delicious recipes. The main recipe featured is a plant-based Potato Coconut Curry ([download the recipe here](#)). The video link is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGrXt66cjGo>



About this guide

This Discussion Guide has been designed as a **starting point** to help prompt some discussion around the videos, and around the shift to plant-based eating and its connections to climate action. It's a starting point for group dialogue that you can then build on, to help support you, your community, your friends and your family on a shared journey towards going more plant-based.

Note that going plant-based looks different for different people – involving different recipes and meals that best appeal to your tastes, and also involving different paces of change. In addition, at least for some people plant-based diets can also still include small amounts of animal-based foods, such as lean meats, dairy products and eggs, depending on the person, while still being majority plant-based.

What the balance ends up looking like is up to you – through these inspiring videos and guide, it's our goal to simply encourage you to incorporate *more* plant-based eating into your day-to-day and to make it *easier* to go plant-based :)



Further supports for hosting conversations about plant-based eating:

One further guide that we recommend good insights on how to talk with people about plant-based eating is by One Meal A Day For The Planet, and can be found here: https://omdfortheplanet.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/OMD_ConversationGuide_Jul_2019.pdf

In this guide, the writers recommend the following high-level points for guiding a conversation:

- 1) Remember that food is often a big part of who we are, and our relationships. That also means we often talk about it!
- 2) Be careful to check your attitude when engaging in conversations about plant-based eating and food generally – and avoid bringing judgment to the conversation. Remember that change is hard, and most people are doing their best.
- 3) Listen, ask questions, then listen some more
- 4) Be open, vulnerable, and speak from your own experience

Further ideas and talking points can be found in the guide linked above.

Why go plant-based?

There are so many good reasons to consider going plant-based, or at least to bring more plant-based foods into your diet. With positive health benefits, better land use, preservation of ecosystems and much lower emissions contributing to climate change, *plant-based eating truly is planet-based eating*. By moving away from meat-heavy and dairy-heavy diets and going more plant-based, you can help 'take a bite out of climate change', reducing land degradation and land needed to produce food, allowing natural ecosystems to heal and helping to build more resilient food systems in the face of a changing climate.

Plant-based eating is a journey

One thing we want to note from the outset is that *going more plant-based is a journey*, that will happen at different speeds and in different ways for different people. While for some people this shift to eating more plant-based may be quicker and easier than for others, it is our goal to help support everyone wherever you may be at on this journey.

Your journey is personal to you, and at the same time, it's helpful to realize that many people are on a similar journey and have had experiences of transitioning to plant-based eating that may be relatable and helpful to you – so it's great if we can support each other!



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www.kitchencoopkw.org/plant-based-eating

Lastly, this guide is a little different than some in that it explores both supporting the journey of going plant-based, and also the intersections of a plant-based diet with climate action. We hope you appreciate this layered conversation, and encourage you to connect your group discussions to other forms of climate action and climate justice where it makes sense for you.

Discussion Starting Point: Plant-Based Eating and the Land

As a starting point for discussion, we'd like to encourage you to think about the basics: where our food comes from, and the intersections between plant-based eating and caring for the land that sustains all of us.

All the lands that we walk on and eat food from have history. We encourage you to take a moment to reflect on and acknowledge this history, with a land acknowledgement – recognizing both the historical and enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples on these lands. What lands are you and your community situated on today? What is their history? How are these lands used by different peoples today?

Know The Land Territories Campaign



For further details on making land acknowledgements in Waterloo Region and beyond, see for instance: <https://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland> and <https://native-land.ca/>



‘Cooking for Climate’ Video 1: Making Pav Bhaji

In this video we hear first from Doug Jones, Chair of the Waterloo Region Community Garden Network. Doug shares a few insights that are helpful to discussing specific benefits of plant-based eating.



1. “Plant-based eating is good for you, and good for the planet”

This insight on the benefits of plant-based eating for both people and planet is key. Here, Doug draws our attention to the benefits of plant-based diets for climate action, helping to reduce the amount of water use, land use and other inputs required for food production.

Doug also shares some additional insights worth reflecting on:

“It may surprise you to learn that today, more than 80% of all farmland is used to either raise animals or grow the crops that feed them. This results in less habitat for wildlife, and more emissions contributing to climate change. Healthy plant-based diets have a much lower impact on climate change, water use, fertilizer use and especially land use. Eating this way can help to slow down the earth’s warming, and begin to restore health to the land and ecosystems that have been degraded.

We need more resilient natural ecosystems that absorb the carbon that’s in the air, and we can do that by focusing on sustainable food systems that include more plants. As nature heals, the benefit will be there for the planet and for each of us on it.

The main takeaway is plant-based eating is planet-based eating. Let’s take a bite out of climate change together by enjoying some good plant-based foods”



In small groups or pairs, discuss the following:

- *What are your own thoughts and feelings about these comments shared by Doug? Is there anything that surprises you in this? Anything that you agree with, are not sure of, or disagree with?*
- *What do you think could be some of the benefits of plant-based eating for the planet?*
- *How do you think plant-based growing and eating can be beneficial for climate action?*

2. The joys and health benefits of plant-based eating

Josalyn Radcliffe is a member of the Waterloo Region Food Systems Roundtable, and talks about some of the joys of plant-based eating in this video, sharing some wonderful insights:

“What do I love about plant-based eating? So many things! It’s good for our bodies, it gives us lots of energy, tons of health benefits – and it’s so cheap. A bag of beans or lentils costs so much less than meat at the store, and it’s full of such good protein.

There really are so many options for everyone – from stir-fries, dahls, curries, burgers, cheeses, pastas and more – there really is something out there for every family to enjoy.

Plant-based diets that are full of healthy proteins – think tofu, beans and lentils – when they are eaten together with healthy fruits and vegetables, they really reduce health risks. They reduce types of cancers, heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. At the same time, when you grow plant-based foods you produce fewer climate-harming gases, which leads to a healthier planet, which is good for all of us.

And when those plant-based foods come from your local environment, you help to build a stronger, more resilient food system in the face of a changing climate.”

In small groups or pairs, discuss the following:

- *What is something about plant-based eating that gets you excited? Put another way, what is a plant-based meal that you already really enjoy?*
- *What do you think could be some of the benefits of plant-based eating for human health?*
- *How does better human health connect to climate action?*



For more details on the beneficial connections between plant-based eating and human health, see for instance:

www.becel.ca/en-ca/healthprofessionals/plant-based/talking-to-clients-about-plant-based-eating

www.pcrm.org/good-nutrition/plant-based-diets/recipes

3. Making 'Pav Bhaji'

In the third part of this video, local resident Abhi Dewan shares her insights on how to make the classic north Indian plant-based dish, 'pav bhaji' (pronounced "pow baaji").

The ingredients to this recipe are as follows:

- 1 carrot
- 2 small potatoes
- 1 cup of squash
- 1 cup cauliflower
- 1 bottle gourd (or, sub with more squash)
- 1 cup of green peas (optional – tasty and adds colour)
- 2 tomatoes
- 1 red onion
- 1-2 garlic cloves
- 1-2 inches of ginger
- 1-2 green chillis (optional, to taste)
- 1 tbsp cooking oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tsp "pav bhaji masala" spice (available at most Indian grocers or you can make your own, see [recipe for spice mix here](#))
- Fresh buns as desired (the "pav" in "pav bhaji")
- Optional (garnish): dried fenugreek leaves (called "kasuri methi") / fresh coriander / fresh salad / lemon as desired.

The steps to this recipe are as follows:

- Step 1: Chop and pre-cook the vegetables
- Step 2: Make the masala (like frying the spice mix, with tomatoes and onion)

More details on the steps for this recipe can be downloaded at the [link here](#).



In small groups or pairs, discuss the following:

- *Following watching Abhi make 'pav bhaji', what did you think? Is this something you could see yourself enjoying eating or making? Why or why not?*
- *What might you find challenging about making pav bhaji?*
- *What excites you about plant-based dishes like this?*
- *Are there any other plant-based dishes you get excited about?*

'Cooking for Climate' Video 2: Making Potato Coconut Curry



The second video in the 'Cooking for Climate' series profiles local volunteers with the grassroots chapter of 'Food Not Bombs', based in Kitchener, Ontario, which serves plant-based food to those in need in the area.

One local cook Stacey shares over the video the steps involved in cooking a potato coconut curry that the volunteers prepare in a large quantity, making about 12 servings, and is as follows:

Ingredients

- ½ cup cooking oil
- 12 small onions
- 12 small potatoes
- other vegetables (should fill the pot ½ to ¾ full after liquids are added)



- zucchinis, spinach, other soft green veggies
- carrots, turnips, other root vegetables
- cauliflower
- a few apples for sweetness if available
- 2 cans coconut milk if available (or can use coconut powder)
- 2 cans of chickpeas
- ¼ cup curry powder
- ¼ cup turmeric
- ¼ cup garlic powder
- additional spices as desired, such as cumin or paprika
- ¼ cup salt
- 2 tbsp lemon juice (or other acidic substitute, such as vinegar)

The directions for the recipe are as follows:

Note: As you cook, add curry powder, turmeric, garlic powder, and any other spices in small quantities throughout, to taste. If cooking dry lentils, cook them separately in boiling water for about 30 minutes, then dump into the curry pot.

Step 1. Sauté the onions in cooking oil.

- *Alternatively, sweat onions on low heat.*
- *Another method is to cook onions in a cast iron pan in oil and a small amount of spice, then transfer the onions to an empty pot.*

Step 2. Add curry powder, turmeric, and garlic powder and cook for a couple of minutes

Step 3. Start sautéing the potatoes and other long-cooking root vegetables, for instance in a cast iron pan. Add small amounts of spices and stir regularly.

Step 4. Add potatoes to a larger pot. Once you can no longer see the bottom of the pot, add cold water until you cover the vegetables and turn the heat to medium-high.

Step 5. Add other vegetables, beginning with the ones that take the longest to cook.

Step 6. Add chickpeas or beans (if canned), or cooked lentils, and salt.

Step 7. Add water as needed and cook down until it's a nice, thick consistency.

Step 8. Add coconut milk and lemon or lime juice, if desired, at the very end.

Step 9. Taste curry and add salt if required.



In small groups or pairs, discuss the following:

- *Following watching the team make a potato coconut curry, what did you think? Is this something you could see yourself enjoying eating or making? Why or why not?*
- *What might you find challenging about making this curry?*
- *What excites you about plant-based dishes like this?*
- *Are there any other plant-based dishes you get excited about?*

Closing discussion

Plant-based eating clearly has many benefits, and can be a joy to make, to eat and to share with others. However, there can also be challenges that emerge and that need to be overcome, and where it can be helpful to have support. Take a moment to talk through some of the possible challenges, and what could be done to help make these less challenging, or to overcome these.

Consider the comments made by Josalyn Radcliffe at the end of the first video, to help guide this discussion:

“Plant-based eating can be easy and fun – but it can be a challenge to try something new, to start a new habit, like cooking more from scratch so you avoid some of those more packaged and processed foods that are less healthy.

To eat more whole, nutritious foods, it sometimes helps to build a food repertoire of a list of key meals that you can make, that you like, and that are good for you too. Meal planning is also helpful for a lot of busy families. To get you started, we have a list of plant-based recipes on our website and you can share your own too.”

*If you'd like, feel free to share some plant-based recipes that you like with our team! Email: ckcoopkw@gmail.com



In small groups or pairs, discuss the following:

- *What are some challenges that you anticipate in transitioning towards a more plant-based diet?*
- *What are some ways that you could reduce these challenges? How can others support?*
- *Given what you've learned and may also know beyond these videos, how do plant-based diets 'measure up to' and address the immense global challenge of climate change?*
- *How can we support more people in transitioning towards being more plant-based?*
- *Take a moment to brainstorm some plant-based dishes that you think you'd enjoy, that could be part of your 'food repertoire' to help make plant-based eating easier for you. What exciting dishes or recipes could be added to this list?*

Further resources and support on going plant-based (among others)

- Challenge 22 (a supportive resource to try going plant-based for 22 days)
<https://challenge22.com/>
- Eating Well - Plant-Based Recipes for Beginners
<https://www.eatingwell.com/gallery/12307/easy-plant-based-recipes-for-beginners/>
- Food System Roundtable Waterloo Region
<https://foodsystemroundtablewr.ca/>
- Forks Over Knives (began as a documentary, now a great place to explore plant-based food)
<https://www.forksoverknives.com/>
- Happy Cow (a tool for finding plant-based restaurants and options near you)
<https://www.happycow.net/>
- Meal Planner with Elavegan (handy meal planner app)
<https://meals.elavegan.com/>
- Minimalist Baker - Plant-Based Dinner Recipes
<https://minimalistbaker.com/20-best-plant-based-dinner-recipes/>
- Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (includes nutrition advice, and recipes)
<https://www.pcrm.org/good-nutrition/plant-based-diets/recipes>
- Plant-Based Cooking Show (focus on easy whole-foods, plant-based diets)
<https://plantbasedcookingshow.com/>



- Rainbow Plant Life (tips and recipes for plant-based cooking at home)
<https://rainbowplantlife.com/category/recipes/>
- The No Meat Athlete (plant-based diets and strategies for athletes and getting fit)
<https://www.nomeatathlete.com/>
- Veganuary (supports and recipes for going plant-based)
<https://veganuary.com/>
- Well Your World (fun video tutorials on making tasty plant-based foods)
<https://wellyourworld.com/pages/youtube-videos>

Further information on the benefits of plant-based eating for the planet

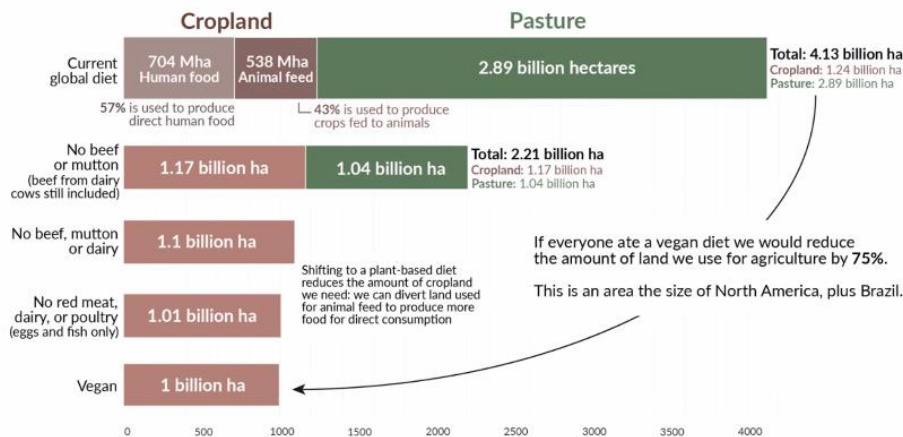
Doug Jones shared that “more than 80% of all farmland is used to either raise animals or grow the crops that feed them. This results in less habitat for wildlife, and more emissions contributing to climate change.”

To back up this point, consider the below diagram from the plant-based treaty that shows the amount of agricultural land used for different purposes. This diagram further points out that animal products provide only 37% of global protein and 18% of global calories – while simultaneously being responsible for 83% of farm land used and 71% of global deforestation.

This was based on a study on global land use across different diets by Poore & Nemecek (2018), *Reducing food’s environmental impacts through producers and consumers*, published in the journal *Science*. For more details, see also: <https://plantbasedtreaty.org/>

Global land use for agriculture across different diets

Global agricultural land use is given for cropland and pasture for grazing livestock assuming everyone in the world adopted a given diet. This is based on reference diets that meet calorie and protein nutritional requirements.



Data Source: Joseph Poore & Thomas Nemecek (2018). Reducing food’s environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *Science*.

