



Plant based diets

Can you still have a healthy diet if you cut out meat, or all animal products? Yes.

We know that for some canteens, catering for vegetarian students and staff can be tricky. With our tips and a little extra planning, preparing vegetarian meals does not need to be a chore. Best of all, most vegetarian items will be categorised as **Green**.

Vegetarian diets are common and increasing. There reason varies e.g. ethical reasons, religious beliefs, environmental concerns, taste or health. The high cost of meat and other animal products is another consideration. Whether it is a life-long choice or a short-term experience, it is important to be mindful of replacing the nutrients that animal products often provide.

Animal products are our best source of several nutrients, including:

- **Protein** - for muscle growth and development
- **Iron and vitamin B12** - needed to make healthy blood
- **Calcium** - for strong bones
- **Zinc** - for a strong immune system
- **Omega-3** - for a healthy heart.



The vegetarian balance

Dietitians Australia recommend:

- Eggs, dried beans, lentils, nuts or seeds
- High-fibre breads and cereals
- Dairy foods or calcium enriched soy foods
- Plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Healthy fats like olive oil
- Foods fortified with vitamin B12
- Flaxseed oil, chia seeds, walnuts
- Omega-3 fortified foods e.g. bread.

One of the easiest ways to find out what the vegetarian students would like to eat is simply by asking them! Invite students to submit a recipe with the best one being added to the menu.

This empowers the students as they get to have a say on what foods they eat and gets them excited because their favourite dishes are on the menu – **it's a win win!**

See this video demonstrating how easy it is to roast vegetables and the many uses in the canteen.

Roasted Vegetables



Canteen menu solutions

Meat free Monday

This can be an easy switch where the Monday special each week is vegetarian. Or perhaps the whole menu is vegetarian one day per week. For example, spinach and ricotta cannelloni, quiche or frittata.

Meal swaps

Plan meals where the bulk of the preparation and ingredients are the same for all students, with just one variation for vegetarians.

Burgers The salads, burger rolls, condiments, reduced fat cheese and any side dishes can be the same for everyone. Cook up a couple of different patties (e.g. lean beef, chicken and a bean or falafel patty). The bean patty along with the cheese provides protein, iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B12.

Pizza Again, the same prep work can be done for all students, just add meat topping for those who want it. The vegetarian students will still get protein, calcium, and vitamin B12 from the reduced fat cheese on the pizza.

Parmigiana Eggplant parmigiana is all the rage in restaurants and cafés at the moment and are easy enough to make. The sauce, reduced fat cheese topping and all the sides can be the same for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. This would make a great 'meat free Monday' option, or simply swap the chicken for eggplant.

Explore cuisines

A number of international dishes are traditionally vegetarian and are packed full of flavours that students love. All the ideas below are on the WASCA website.



Mexican

- Bean burritos/tacos
- Vegetarian chilli con carne
- Buddah bowl with corn salsa and roasted chickpeas



Asian

- Sushi bowl with omelette and vegetables
- Vegetable and noodle soup with a boiled egg
- Vegetable fried rice



Indian

- Dhal curry
- Lentil and chickpea curry
- Eggplant and cauliflower tikka masala



Mediterranean

- Couscous with roasted vegetables and feta
- Pasta with napoletana sauce
- Vegetarian lasagne

Further information: <https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/health-advice/vegetarian-diet>