

SUSTAINABILITY

SUSTAINABLE BODIES, SUSTAINABLE PLANET

Sustainable eating continues to gain more and more attention as individuals, communities, and companies begin to invest in personal health as well as planetary health.

One way to measure the environmental impact of our food choices is through our **carbon footprint**, or amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, like food production.

Our food supply alone accounts for about 20% of total U.S. GHG emissions, which is a result of manufacturing, travel, farming practices, etc. To make matters worse, about 45% of all harvested produce is discarded, and roughly 33% of *all* food produced is wasted annually. Wasted food is the largest contributor to landfills.

Luckily, we can make conscious changes in our daily dietary habits that will help.

Eat More Plants and Less Animal Protein

Adopting a plant-forward diet is better for your body and the environment in the long run. Plant-forward *does not* mean strictly vegetarian or vegan; it means putting plants at the center of your plate, with animal products, if desired, as accompaniments.

Health Benefits

Substantial evidence supports the health benefits of a plant-forward diet. For example, substituting fish, beans, nuts, and legumes in place of red meat has been shown to reduce heart disease risk. Although fish are not plants, they contribute health benefits to a plant-forward diet. While red meat is a great source of iron and protein, its saturated fat content can raise LDL cholesterol, increasing heart disease risk. This is not to say we should avoid eating red meat forever; just rethink the proportions of red meat in your diet. In addition to protein sources, make sure fruits and vegetables fill half of your plate with each meal—these are some of the most nutrient-dense foods we have access to.

Environmental Benefits

Foods with the greatest carbon footprint are red meats, like beef and lamb, because their production uses more resources like water, land, and feed, creating more pollution. Of course, there are many more parts to this equation. Foods with some of the smallest carbon footprints are produce, grains, legumes, and nuts.

Buy Local

The smaller the distance your foods need to travel, the less pollution is created. Produce is picked at peak ripeness, so you're getting an ideal product in terms of taste and nutrition. Buying local also supports small business in your community.

For more information on sustainability, contact us at RAForLife@RestaurantAssociates.com.