

Affordability of Plant-Based Diets

Washtenaw Optimal Wellness (WOW)

<https://washtenawoptimalwellness.org/>

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Whole Foods Plant Based (WFPB)

.Washtenaw Optimal Wellness goal is to have Washtenaw County designated as a Blue Zone Project™

.One of the objectives is to promote a Whole Foods Plant-Based diet to the citizens of Washtenaw

.Synonyms:

-Plant-forward

-Plant-slant

WFPB vs. SAD

- Whole Foods Plant-Based (WFPB) diet versus the conventional Standard American Diet (SAD)
- WFPB diet is predominantly eating foods that are plants
- SAD is a diet that is predominantly eating foods that are animal derived
- Logical to reduce the Affordability discussion to the cost (expense) of plant- to animal-derived foods
- *Note: animal-derived foods consist of dairy, eggs & meat (including aquatic animals)*

Caveat

- Many people associate a WFPB (nearly vegetarian) diet to an ORGANIC vegetarian diet
- In fact, Vegetarian Times had an article that compared a vegetarian diet to SAD; however, the vegetarian diet was cost out with organic vegetables but the SAD was cost out with conventionally-grown foods
- Fairness requires that we compare apples to apples, thus we will limit our analysis to conventionally grown foods

Luxury Foods

- .Since most Americans eat non-luxury foods on a regular basis, we will forgo any discussion of expensive foods
- .Caviar, lobster, Kobe beef, etc. are off the table
- .Truffles, pine nuts & white asparagus are also off the table

WFPB Diet Includes

- Beans & Legumes (*includes lentils*)
- Grains & Starches (*includes oatmeal, rice, potatoes, whole grain bread & pastas*)
- Fruits & Vegetables (*includes frozen and canned*)
- Nuts & Seeds
- Meat/Dairy Replacements (*tofu, tempeh, even limited amounts of plant-based milks*)

Meat More Expensive

- Generally, per weight (& volume) meat is more expensive than vegetables & fruits
- Animal products are less nutritiously dense than vegetable & fruits – protein is not the only nutrient in food
- Without federal & state subsidies animal-based foods would be enormously more expensive
- Little government subsidies in vegetable & fruit production
- Yes, huge subsidies for grain, but it's mostly grown for animal feed, not human consumption

Pricing Example

- Kroger's Ground Beef (80% lean), ~ \$5.50/#
- Kroger's Ground Turkey, ~ \$5.00/#
- Kroger's Chicken Thighs (w/ bone & skin), ~\$2.00/#

.VS.

- Kroger's STO Tofu (*that's organic*), ~\$1.90/#
- Kroger's Long-grain Brown Rice, <\$1.00/#
- Kroger's Pinto Beans, <\$1.25/#

Health Care Costs

- Health care costs associated with diet should be part of calculus
- Chronic diseases associated with animal-based diet include: diabetes, IBS, diverticulitis disease, gastro-oesophageal reflux, etc.
- Acute diseases associated with animal-based diet include: heart disease, colorectal cancer, colon cancer, etc.
- Chronic diseases associated with vegan diet include B12 deficiency – *vegans should take B12 vitamin*
- Acute disease associated with WFPB diet

Studies

- Research Studies have demonstrated that WFPB diet is significantly less expensive than SAD
- Canada based its entire national food guide on plant predominant, sustainable diets based on extensive studies.

BUY IN BULK

- Beans, grains, rice & pasta are easy to buy in bulk
- Food co-ops (People's, Ypsi), By The Pound, Arbor Farms have large bulk food sections
- Whole Foods & Kroger have bulk food sections
- Even with a dedicated freezer, it's nearly impossible for the average person to purchase in same quantity (# of servings): meat, dairy & egg
- Can store bulk beans, grains, rice & pasta in basement if you don't have a pantry
- Buy a vacuum packer to store 5, 10, 20, 50 pounds of beans, grains, rice, pasta, dried fruits
- Use mason jars (quart & half gallon) to store large amounts
- Jars & lids are endlessly reusable, but specialty plastic bags are not

BUY AT ETHNIC GROCERS

- A number of fruits & vegetables are cheaper at ethnic grocery stores
 - Limes, mangoes at Indian grocers
 - Rice at Indian, Asian grocers
 - Dates, figs, nuts at Middle Eastern grocers
- Many ethnic grocers are on AAATA bus routes
 - e.g., Patel Brothers - #4

BUY LOCAL

- Farmers' markets & CSA's (*Community Supported Agriculture*) are great source of good priced seasonal fruits & vegetables
- Local farms serve the community with less expense for shipping – *it's much cheaper to get lettuce to Ann Arbor from Chelsea, MI than it is from California*
- Use Double-Up SNAP bucks at your local farmers market.*

GROW YOUR OWN

- Tomatoes are especially easy to grow at home, even in containers
- Live in an apartment, grow at community gardens (Project Grow)
- Square Foot gardening minimizes weeds & maximizes yield

AVOID HIGHLY PROCESSED FOOD

- Avoid meat analogs

- Expensive

- Impossible Burger (@ Kroger, pre-made patties \$6.99/8oz.) VS.

- Lightlife Organic Tempeh (@ Kroger, \$4.79/8oz.)

- Tofurky Deli Slices (@ Kroger, Ham or Turkey style \$3.79/5.5oz.) VS.

- Simple Truth Organic Extra-firm Tofu (@ Kroger, \$1.79/14oz.)

- Not healthy (generally, high in saturated fat)

- Environmentally much worse than whole foods

- Avoid pre-cut or small-portion convenience foods (baby carrots, chopped lettuce, lunchables)

PURCHASE IN SEASON

.Winter

- Cauliflower, cabbage, kale, broccoli, dark leafy greens
- Oranges, grapefruit, lemons, tangerines

.Spring

- Asparagus, broccoli, beets, parsnips, peas
- Strawberries, blueberries, tangerines

.Summer

- Summer squash, green beans, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, corn
- Watermelon, nectarines, peaches, melons

.Autumn

- Cabbage, swiss chard, leeks, butternut & acorn squashes, sweet potatoes

PURCHASE CLEAN PRODUCE

.When purchasing conventionally-grown produce

-**The Clean Fifteen** (*cleanest first*)

.avocado; sweet corn*; pineapples; onions;
papaya*; frozen sweet peas; asparagus;
honeydew melons; kiwi; cabbage; mushrooms;
cantaloupe; mangoes; watermelon; sweet
potatoes

* *small amount of these are GMO*

.Consider purchasing organically-grown produce

-**The Dirty Dozen** (*dirtiest first*)

strawberries; spinach; kale, collard & mustard

BUY FROZEN

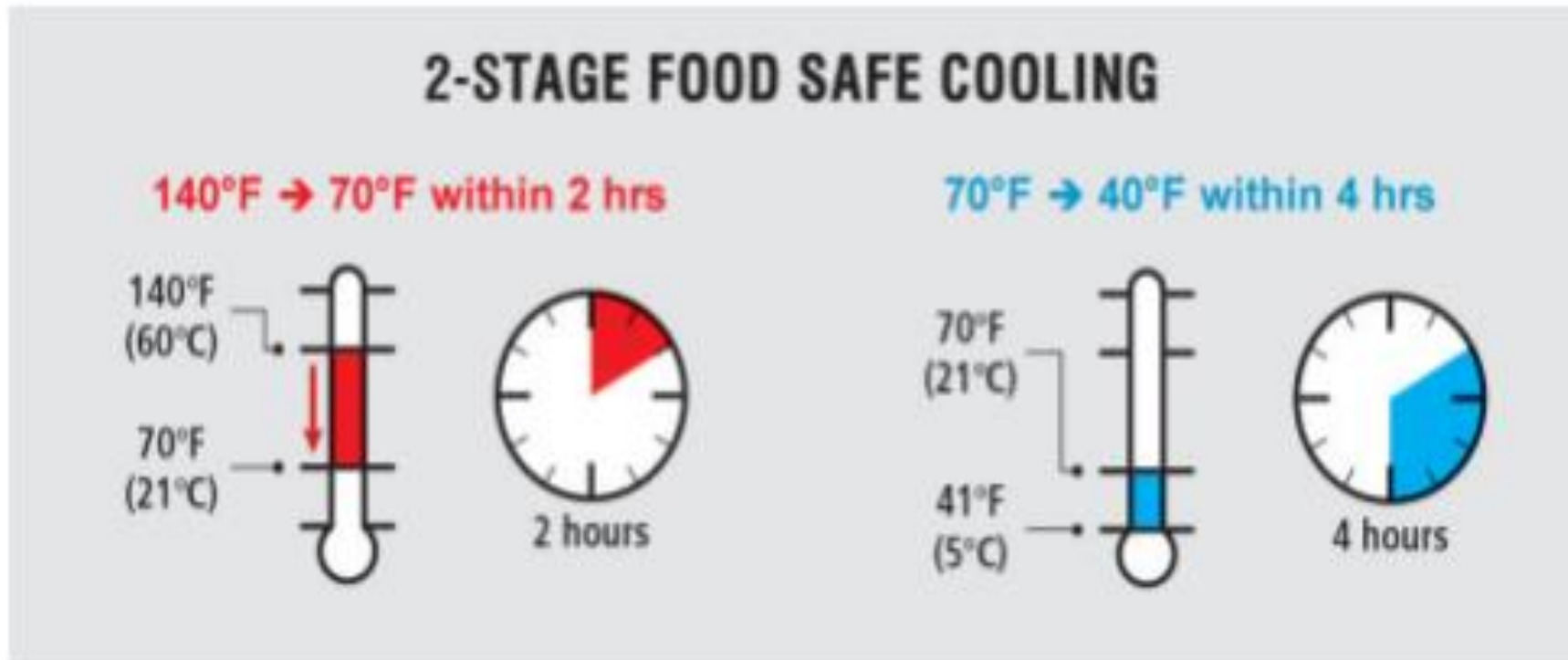
- Frozen, but buy larger bags (not 10oz, try 32oz.)
 - Kroger's mixed vegetables \$2.89/32oz. vs. \$1.25/12oz.
- 15% markup (\$1.45 for 32oz vs. \$1.67 for 12oz.)
- Canned Foods
- High in salt (very few no salt options)
- Generally available only in 15-16oz.
- Costco
- Frozen fruits & veggies available in 4-5# bags

REDUCE FOOD SPOILAGE

- Buy fresh produce that you can eat within a few days
- Remaining produce cook into stews & soups (veggies), compotes (fruits); freeze or can (e.g., tomatoes)
- Know what you can refrigerate
- Refrigerating bananas & avocados slows down ripening, but not tomatoes (unless already sliced)
- Know Proper storage
- Onions & potatoes store to prevent sunlight exposure
- Useful techniques
- e.g., cut avocado with ceramic or plastic knife (metal knife hastens oxidation process)
- e.g., store cut avocado upside down in sealed container; better yet vacuum pack in small glass mason jar

REDUCE FOOD SPOILAGE

- Prevent spoilage with proper cooling techniques.
- Refrigerate foods under 41°F.



RECIPES ONLINE

•Recipes are readily available on the Internet

-Plant-Based on a Budget website:

<https://plantbasedonabudget.com/>

-Broke Bank Vegan website (*includes recipes with estimated ingredient costs*):

<https://brokebankvegan.com/>

LEARN TO LOVE LEFTOVERS

- Flavors of cooked food need time to meld together
 - Especially for sauces, soups & stews
- Learn to batch cook and freeze in portions
- Make your own plant-based milk alternatives

DON'T WASTE FOOD

- Don't peel off skins (*e.g.*, carrots, potatoes) or cut off green tops (*e.g.*, beets, carrots)
 - Highly nutritious (vitamins, micro-nutrients, fiber)
 - Beet greens in salads
 - Carrot tops in pesto
 - Don't peel carrots or potatoes, just use vegetable brush

FINAL THOUGHTS

MEAT IS HIGHLY SUBSIDIZED

- Federal & state governments highly subsidize animal husbandry, but not fruits & vegetables
- Yes, large subsidies exist for grains (*think corn*), but this is generally for animal feed (or ethanol) not human consumption

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

-Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) vegan starter kit:

-<https://www.pcrm.org/veganstarterkit>

-Nutrition Facts website – *great resource for all things vegan nutrition related:*

-<https://nutritionfacts.org/>

-Dr. Michael Greger's Evidence Based Plant-Based Eating Guide:

-<https://nutritionfacts.org/healthkit/>

-Plant-Based Pantry Staples List:

-<https://www.arespectfullife.com/2018/03/22/plant-based-pantry-staples-vegan-pantry/>

-42 VEGAN Dollar Tree food products:

-<https://easyveganmealprep.com/vegan-dollar-tree-food-products/>