In R&DE Stanford Dining, we know that the campus food environment plays a critical role in determining the health and well-being of our students and the environmental impact of our food programs. Guided by the Menus of Change Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Menus, and in support of R&DE Stanford Dining’s Eat Well @Stanford and One Plate, One Planet programs, our Food Choice Architecture Playbook aims to operationalize best practices and evidence-based solutions that promote a healthier and more sustainable campus food environment.

Food choice architecture encompasses all aspects of how foods are offered and framed in the dining halls, and how these considerations influence food selection. R&DE Stanford Dining utilizes food choice architecture strategies to design health and sustainability into our dining programs, making healthier and more sustainable choices easier, more prominent and more desirable while still offering a wide range of food options.

We work collaboratively with Stanford students and faculty, using our dining halls as living laboratories for behavioral research and providing experiential food systems education, so that we can deliver a transformative food experience that positively impacts the well-being of our community and the health of our planet.
Menu Standards

We recognize that the foods we serve are a reflection of our values and commitments to offer a variety of delicious, healthy, and sustainable options. Our talented culinary team is dedicated to inspiring students with new flavors, enticing recipes and expertly crafted dishes that showcase how exciting, delicious and diverse eating well can be. The availability of foods and their placement in a dining hall setting can shift perceived norms and promote selection of more nutritious and sustainable foods. We utilize these standards and defaults to ensure our core menus promote the health and wellbeing of people and the planet, while still offering an abundance of choice.

**CORE MENUS**

- At least 75% of menu items offered at each meal are vegetarian
- At least 50% of menu items offered at each meal are vegan
- Sustainable seafood is offered as a main entree at least 3 times per week
- Processed beef and pork (e.g. bacon, sausage) are offered no more than 3 times per week
- Beef is offered as a main entree no more than 3 times per week
- At every meal, at least one vegan entree with a plant-based protein source (e.g. beans, legumes, tofu, meat alternative, whole grains, nuts, and/or seeds) is always offered
- When beef is an entree, a plant-forward special or popular plant-forward entree is offered as the alternative
- All mixed dishes containing meat (i.e. stir-fry, sauces, soups) and 50% of meat and poultry entrees are served as a Protein Flip, having at least 30% plant-based ingredients by volume

**PLATED DISHES**

- Plated salads and bowls are vegetarian or vegan, with meat offered separately as an optional addition
- The portion of meat in plated dishes doesn’t exceed 4 oz (3 oz for beef)

**GRILL**

- A plant-based (vegan) burger is always available when burgers are served
- Beef burgers are 30% mushroom by default and offered no more than 3 days per week
- French fries are always baked, not fried, and are offered no more than 3 days per week

**SIDES**

- At least 50% of grains and grain-based foods are whole grain
- At every meal, a chef-crafted vegetable, steamed vegetable, and salad bar are always offered

**CHEF SPECIALS**

- At least 75% of chef specials are aligned with Menus of Change Principles
- Any special that features meat offers a vegan alternative
Beverage Standards

✓ R&DE Stanford Dining does not serve sugary drinks or soda in any of its operations
✓ Water is the most prominent beverage option and all dining halls offer water bottle filling stations, spa water, and unsweetened hot and cold teas
✓ All juice offered in the dining halls is 100% fruit juice
✓ All coffee or other specialty beverages offered in the dining halls are no added sugar or low added sugar
✓ At least 3 non-dairy milk alternatives (i.e. oat, pea, and soy milk) are offered in all dining halls

Performance Bar Standards

✓ At least 90% of Performance Bar offerings are entirely plant-based
✓ A colorful variety of seasonal, organic and local produce to optimize nutrition and sustainability is always offered
✓ Composed vegetable salads do not contain added meat, poultry, egg or cheese -- these toppings may be offered separately as optional additions
✓ At least 3 chef-crafted items featuring beans, legumes, or lentils (hot and cold) are always offered
✓ At least 3 chef-crafted items featuring whole, intact grains (hot and cold) are offered daily
✓ At least 75% of dressings are prepared using healthy fats (i.e. olive, canola, or sesame oil)
Portion Guidelines

Research shows that reducing portion sizes is an effective strategy for promoting more mindful consumption and minimizing food waste. We aim to encourage balanced food choices while offering flexibility for diners to take the amount of food that is right for them.

✓ Display plates are featured on the entree line, following the R&DE Stanford Dining Balanced Plate:
  ○ ½ of plate is vegetables (about 2 cups serving)
  ○ ¼ protein foods (3-4 oz serving)
  ○ ¼ grains/starches (½ cup or 4 oz serving)
✓ Desserts do not exceed these portion sizes:
  ○ Pie or round cakes = 1/10 of pie or cake
  ○ Square desserts = 1.5-inch square
  ○ Scooped desserts = 2-oz scoop
  ○ Cookies = 1 oz
✓ Entrees do not exceed these portion sizes:
  ○ Pizza slice = 1/10 of pizza
  ○ Poultry and pork (plated or in salad/bowl)= 4 oz
  ○ Beef (plated or in salad/bowl) = 3 oz
✓ Standard plate size does not exceed 10 inches
✓ All dining halls are trayless

R&DE Stanford Dining Balanced Plate

![Balanced Plate Diagram](image-url)
Behavioral science demonstrates that increasing accessibility and prominence of healthier and more sustainable foods can promote better food choices. Food options in the dining halls are always presented with healthier, more sustainable items first or as the default option when possible.

✓ When possible, food is offered in the following order, taking into consideration the typical flow of diners through the dining hall:

1. Vegetables and Fruit (First)
   - The salad bar is as close to the dining hall entrance as possible
   - Hand fruit is offered near the entrance and exits of the dining hall
2. Grains and Starches
   - Whole grains are always offered before refined or processed grains
3. Vegan dishes
4. Vegetarian dishes
5. Seafood
6. Poultry
7. Pork
8. Beef or Lamb (Last)

✓ To promote exposure to plant-forward options throughout the dining hall, vegan and vegetarian options are interspersed throughout the servery instead of being limited to a specific area or station

✓ The following ingredients and cooking practices are always the default:
   - Breaded entrees are baked, not fried
   - Hamburger buns are whole-wheat
   - Cooking salt has ⅓ less sodium
   - Ground beef contains 30% mushrooms by weight
Food Labeling & Promotion

LABELING STANDARDS
✓ Printed menu labels identify all ingredients, allergens, dietary traits, and sustainability attributes in a dish at the point of service
✓ Taste-focused language is used to highlight flavorful and delicious attributes of healthy and plant-forward menu items; health-focused language is avoided
✓ Instead of including dietary descriptors (e.g. “vegan” and “vegetarian”) in the name or description of a dish, colored icons assist diners with easily identifying food options that meet their needs and preferences.

MARKETING & PROMOTION
✓ Chefs actively encourage healthy and plant-forward food choices through Tasting Tables, chef specials, and communications with diners
✓ Marketing utilizes dynamic norms messaging to promote the growing popularity of healthy and plant-forward menu items among other students/diners
✓ Signage encourages diners to take only what they can eat to manage portions and help prevent food waste
✓ Plant-forward options are always presented in a way that makes them look delicious and enticing. This includes use of attractive serving dishes, plating techniques, and garnishes to add color and interest.

We know that taste is the most important driver of food choices, so we lead with flavor in all of our marketing while also promoting transparency of ingredients, allergens, preparation, and sourcing practices through our menu labeling program.
R&DE Stanford Dining has a long history of award-winning sustainability leadership, collaborating on many aspects of complex global food systems—from equitable supply chains, climate-smart dining, and regenerative agriculture, to reducing food waste and shifting diets towards plant-forward options.

Our One Plate, One Planet vision captures the full breadth of our pioneering sustainable food program, which represents bold, long-term commitments to climate action and racial equity. It celebrates the power of social consciousness, operational innovation, and individual food choices in promoting sustainable food systems.

We believe that with each plate we serve, and each meal our students eat, we have the opportunity to create a better future for this planet together. Learn more about our Sustainable Food Ethos that guides our purchasing decisions, the positive impact we have through our menu and operations in our Sustainable Food @Stanford By the Numbers infographic, and practical tips for How to Eat Sustainably on Campus.

Have a question about our Food Choice Architecture Playbook? Contact Jackie Bertoldo, Associate Director of Food Choice Architecture & Nutrition for R&DE Stanford Dining at jackiebertoldo@stanford.edu.