### Nutrition Perks of an Earth-Friendly Diet

In April, Bon Appétit cafés celebrate Earth Day by examining how our food choices impact the environment. You can make food choices that help mitigate these environmental impacts. Fortunately, foods that are better for the environment are also often better for our health!

*How are you going to support your well-being and the earth this April?*

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<th>Earth Day Principle and Nutrition Perks</th>
<th>How You’ll Support This Principle</th>
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<td><strong>Use Ingredients Wisely</strong>&lt;br&gt;Not wasting food doesn’t mean eating past the point of fullness. Instead, reach for smaller portions and go back for more if you’re still hungry or split a larger portion into two meals.</td>
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<td><strong>Support Local Food Producers</strong>&lt;br&gt;Buying food with a shorter time from habitat or field to plate decreases potential nutrient losses and increases freshness. Although healthy, tropical fruits and fish flown in from far away are detrimental to the environment.</td>
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<td><strong>Eat Fewer Animal Products</strong>&lt;br&gt;Red meat and full-fat dairy products, such as cheese, are high in saturated fat and calories, which can both lead to unhealthy side effects such as increase heart disease risk.</td>
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<td><strong>Skip Processed and Packaged</strong>&lt;br&gt;Processed and restaurant foods account for 77% of total sodium intake in the U.S. diet, a mineral that most of us consume in excess. Additionally, processed foods are often low in nutrition and high in calories, added sugar, and saturated fats so reach for real, whole foods whenever possible.</td>
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plant-based
meat and dairy alternatives
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Meat and dairy are two of the biggest dietary contributors to the environmental impact of an omnivore’s diet. The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that the meat industry alone generates nearly 1/5 of the man-made greenhouse gas emissions that are accelerating climate change worldwide. Additionally, these foods are typically high in nutrients that most Americans need to reduce, such as saturated fat and sodium, and low in the vitamins, minerals, and fiber that provide health benefits.

Fortunately, there are many meat and dairy alternatives that are easier on the environment, better for your health, and delicious – here are some examples of replacements for typical animal foods.

### Alternatives for Milk, Yogurt, and Ice Cream

There has never been an easier time to find replacements for dairy products made from soy, almond, rice, oat, and hemp. They all have their own unique flavor and texture; don’t be discouraged if one is not the right fit for you. If you enjoy these products regularly, choose those that are unsweetened, fortified with calcium, and be aware that most do not contain the same protein content as dairy milk.

### Alternatives for Cheese

Instead of choosing soy cheeses, which are often highly processed, try using nut cheese varieties that are less processed, fermented tofu products, and nutritional yeast to get your umami on.

### Alternatives for Burgers

Burgers can be just as satisfying made from ingredients such as beans and legumes, whole grains, mushrooms, eggplant, or a combination of these items. Add spices or herbs and finish with toppings such as fresh or fermented vegetables and tasty condiments for added flavor.

### Alternatives for Deli Meat and Sandwiches

Think no sandwich is complete without deli meat? Think again! There are many ways to create a protein-packed sandwich or wrap with plant-based foods. Try using hummus and other bean spreads, fresh or roasted vegetables, pesto, nut butters, seed butters, tofu, and tempeh.

### Alternatives for Various Other Meat Products

There are many items on the market intended to mimic the taste and texture of meat. These can be tasty, but use them sparingly, as they are often high in sodium and low in other nutrients that are available in whole plant-based proteins such as beans and legumes, nuts and seeds, quinoa and other protein-rich whole grains.

“Livestock Impacts on the Environment.” Food and Agriculture Organization.