AMERICA’S PLANT-BASED CRAVING

Meeting needs for flavor and inclusion, plant-based foods are part of a balanced American diet
Alpha Foods was started with the vision of using the power of food to make impactful and positive changes to our health, animal welfare and our planet’s food system. I believe in the power of food to make change; food is an experience that has the power to connect us, nourish us and all too often, also divide us.

As a regular meat eater for my entire life to the point of co-founding Alpha, I was encouraged to make a change to incorporate more plant-based food to my diet after a consultation with a nutritionist. I was never pressured to make drastic changes however, and pursued a more curious approach to more plant-based meals as I had zero clue what that meant. Alpha is on a journey to make plant-based eating accessible to and easy for all, from flexitarians like myself, to vegans and everyone else in the middle, with no judgement to where anyone is on their journey, whether their steps are incremental like mine first were, or big leaps.

Judgement and food stigma are rife in our culture as this report shows and we’re looking for places of inclusivity, connection and comfort – something food and meals have done for us over generations – brought people together. Alpha is committed to making plant-based food accessible to all, with no judgement – whatever their meal mood, wherever they are on their plant-based food journey and wherever they shop for groceries.

Alpha’s Impact Pillars address healthier people, planet and animals, which drive our decisions as a company doing good for the world. These are pillars I believe we can all agree on, in one way or another. I was excited to see some of the findings around plant-based food options meeting people with a broader lifestyle focused on well-being and community engagement, which connect directly to Alpha’s healthier people and healthier planet pillars. Plant-based food eaters are more likely to support local business, minimize waste, support minority-owned business and engage in meditation or mental health exercises. Plant-based food has the power to make change, in more ways than we initially thought, which is incredibly exciting.

Community matters, and at Alpha we are thrilled to be able to share our first thought leadership report in partnership with The Harris Poll, with our community. Whether you’re in the plant-based community, food community, or just information-curious community, we are proud to share America’s Plant-Based Craving with you.

Enjoy,

Cole Orobetz
CEO, Co-Founder
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Americans are fed up with food judgment and stigma
60% of Americans adhere to a certain diet or way of eating – and 91% of those who do say it is restrictive. Two-thirds (65%) admit to altering their intake due to stigma or judgment. Yet most are craving inclusive and flexible options, as 75% say, “I would rather not label my food choices under a certain diet.”

The pendulum swings toward plant-based as Americans seek inclusive options
More than half of Americans “have tried or would like to try a flexitarian diet” (51%), including majorities of Gen Zs (59%) and Millennials (56%). 1 in 3 consider themselves “plant-curious” (35%), including 46% of Gen Zs and 41% of Millennials. Two-thirds say they have tried plant-based foods (66%), including 88% of Gen Zs and 73% of Millennials.

Facing greater dietary stigma, Black & Latino Americans show stronger appetite for plant-based foods
Latino (78%) and Black (74%) Americans are especially likely to have tried plant-based food (vs. 66% of Americans overall). Both groups also report an increased likelihood of trying plant-based foods in a social setting (76% Black, 72% Latino, vs. 62% of Americans overall).

Plant-based eaters are more likely to nourish their bodies, minds, and communities
Plant-based eaters are more likely than other eaters to prioritize their physical health, mental health, and community engagement on a regular basis. Ultimately, they view this as part of a long-term lifestyle as 83% of plant-based food eaters plan to maintain or increase consumption in the next year. 61% agree that “the future of food is plant-based” - as do half of Americans overall (52%).

Americans are looking for low barrier settings to try plant-based foods
88% of Americans would like to try plant-based foods in a social setting, such as at a dinner party, work event, or at a fine dining restaurant. Over half of Gen Zs have tried plant-based foods on a first date (53%), while more than half of men either have tried or would try them at a tailgate (56%). While taste is an initial barrier to plant-based, 63% of those who have tried plant-based say, “I like the flavor of plant-based foods more than I thought I would.”

61% of people feel “the future of food is plant-based”
The majority of Americans today adhere to a certain diet or way of eating (60%), including over 7 in 10 Millennials (73%) and also Gen Zs (71%). Beyond simply providing guidance for dietary choices, these eating styles feel restrictive for 91% of those who follow them. Nearly half of Americans say they track either calories or macronutrients in their food (45%), including a majority of Millennials (52%).

Stigma is also driving dietary decisions, causing two-thirds of Americans (65%) to alter their intake in some way. Many feel ashamed about the foods they eat a majority of the time (37%), while 1 in 4 admit they have missed social events because they were “afraid of being judged for what they were eating” (27%).

Gen Z (82%), women (73%), and Latino (73%) Americans are especially likely to say they have altered their diet due to stigma. While women are most likely to feel guilty for foods they have eaten, Gen Z is more likely to say peer pressure influences their dietary choices. Meanwhile, Millennials (44%), Gen Zs (40%), and Latino (46%) Americans are especially likely to say they have skipped out on social events to avoid judgment. Ultimately, 61% of Americans say, “I feel like every food choice I make is a compromise”—a number that is consistent across demographic groups.

At the same time, Americans are fed up with letting judgment and restriction drive their diets. Three in four agree, “as a society, we are too judgmental about what people eat” (77%) and, “our view of diet as a society is too black and white” (73%). Instead, most are eschewing dietary labels, craving flexibility and inclusivity instead. Ultimately, 75% say, “I would rather not label my food choices under a certain diet.”

**FOOD SHAME AND STIGMA ARE ON THE TABLE**

**EXPERIENCE WITH DIETARY STIGMA**
- Felt guilty about something they ate: 41%
- Eaten something you would not have chosen to in order to be polite: 28%
- Felt judged for what you eat: 27%
- Eaten food in secret to avoid judgment: 23%
- Been embarrassed by something you’re eating: 19%
- Judged others based on what they eat: 18%
- Had to raise a dietary issue in a social situation: 13%

**65% of Americans have altered their diet due to stigma**
- 82% Gen Z | 73% Women | 73% Latino

**61% of Americans say, “I feel like every food choice I make is a compromise.”**
- 37% of Americans feel ashamed of the foods they eat a majority of the time
As Americans move away from diet labels and stigma, many look to embrace a more fluid spectrum of eating. Dietary extremes feel unattainable as similar percentages say, “I could never stop eating meat entirely” (76%) and “I could never follow a 100% vegan diet” (74%). Half of Americans go so far as to say, “a vegan diet feels intimidating” (50%) – including 59% of Gen Z.

More than half “have tried or would like to try a flexitarian diet” (51%), including majorities of Gen Zs (59%) and Millennials (56%). Plant-based foods in particular offer an accessible middle ground to cater to the one in three Americans who are “plant curious.” They also align with Americans’ top two drivers of dietary choice: health benefits (64%) and environmental sustainability (29%).

For many, this curiosity is translating to action: two-thirds of Americans have tried plant-based food, including even higher majorities among those who are Black, Latino, or younger.
Counter to the historically intimidating “all-or-nothing” mentality associated with diets, plant-based foods are viewed as a more approachable option. Americans are much more likely to say, “I eat plant-based foods when I can or on certain occasions” (43%) than “I eat plant-based foods as much as possible and it’s a lifestyle” (15%). Similarly, half of plant-based eaters agree, “I try to swap out plant-based foods for meat every so often” (47%).

In another deviation from the historical associations of healthy foods as “boring,” Americans are open to integrating plant-based foods into more fun, social settings. While plant-based eaters are more likely to say that they have these foods during the week (82%), nearly two-thirds also enjoy them on weekends (61%). Just under 9 in 10 say they would like to try plant-based foods in a social setting (88%), such as at a dinner party, work event, or at a fine dining restaurant. Over half of Gen Zs say they have tried plant-based foods on a first date (53%), while more than half of men either have tried or would try them at a tailgate (56%). The appetite to experiment is particularly strong in contexts where Americans are already looking to expand their horizons: majorities either have tried or would try plant-based at a restaurant (90%) or on vacation / while traveling (85%). Americans are also open to more inclusive social dining occasions as 71% “would attend a ‘bring your own dinner’ (BYOD) party where everyone could bring their own food to eat what they wanted, and still be together.”

Flavor is also propelling the industry forward, as 63% of those who have tried plant-based foods say, “I like the flavor of plant-based foods more than I thought I would.” 33% of Americans “regularly partake in Meatless Monday,” including 46% of Millenials and 48% Latino Americans.

**Americans are craving plant-based foods in social settings as movement gains momentum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have tried this</th>
<th>Would try but have not</th>
<th>NET: HAVE OR WOULD TRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it was integrated into a dish</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>At a dinner party w friends</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At a sit-down restaurant</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On vacation</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When traveling</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At a fast-food restaurant</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At a work event</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>At a gourmet restaurant</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>At a tailgate or sporting event</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a first date</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Social settings include dinner party, work event, at a fast-food, sit-down or gourmet restaurant, tailgate or first date.*
Latino Americans are particularly likely to say they adhere to a diet (71%, vs. 60% Americans overall) -- and they are more likely to say it “always” or “often” feels restrictive (40%, vs. 27% Americans overall). They also report experiencing greater dietary stigma, as 73% say they have altered their diet due to stigma (vs. 65% of Americans overall).

Both Black and Latino Americans are more familiar with the term “diet culture” than Americans overall (71% Latino, 69% Black, vs. 58% Americans overall). Both groups are also more likely to say they feel “ashamed about the foods they eat” a majority of the time (44% Latino, 43% Black, vs. 37% Americans overall).

In response to this heaviness, both groups are leaning into the flexibility plant-based foods provide. Latino Americans are more likely to say they would like to eat less meat (60%, vs. 51% Americans overall), while Black Americans are more likely to consider themselves “plant-curious” (47%, vs. 35% Americans overall).

Latino (78%) and Black (74%) Americans are especially likely to have tried plant-based food (vs. 66% Americans overall). Milk alternatives are especially appealing to Latino Americans, as well as plant-based snacks and meats. Additionally, both groups report increased likelihood of trying plant-based foods in a social setting (76% Black, 72% Latino, vs. 62% Americans overall). Black Americans are especially interested in trying plant-based foods at dinner parties, restaurants, and sporting events.
For those who eat plant-based foods, this dietary choice often feeds a broader effort toward positive well-being and community engagement. Our data shows that plant-based eaters are more likely to prioritize physical health endeavors, such as movement and exercise, as well as mental health and dietary education. They are also more likely to be engaged in their communities by supporting small, local, or minority-owned businesses, participating in social justice movements, and actively working to reduce waste in their own consumption.

Ultimately, they view this as a component of their long-term lifestyle, as 83% of plant-based food eaters plan to maintain or increase consumption in the next year. 61% agree that “the future of food is plant-based” - as do half of Americans overall (52%).

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**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Alpha Foods from August 11-18, 2021, among 2,005 nationally representative U.S. adults ages 18 and older.