## Less Meat, Better Meat, Reduced Ecological Footprint:

Serve less meat overall and choose sustainably produced meat to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

The food system accounts for over 10% of overall energy use in the United States.

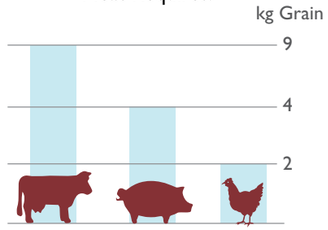
Globally, livestock for meat and dairy production account for 18% of the world's greenhouse gases, more than every single car, train, and plane on the planet. Meat production practices also cut to the heart of other health and environmental impacts.

U.S. food production relies heavily and wastefully on fossil fuels, and red meat production is particularly energy-inefficient.

Cattle, swine, and their waste also release large quantities of methane and nitrous oxide, greenhouse gases far more potent than carbon dioxide.

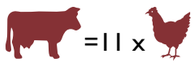
An important response is to lower meat consumption, especially beef. Studies show that vegetarian diets can be half as energy and emissions-intensive as diets dominated by red meat. Choosing more sustainably produced meat and poultry products can also offset impacts. Certified organic and grassfed operations reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil energy use. Their high-quality pasture can also lower methane emissions from cattle rumination. In addition, grassfed operations drastically lower methane emissions from livestock manure, a waste product that has grown ever-larger as production became more concentrated and vast.

**To Produce 1kg of Feedlot Meat Requires:**

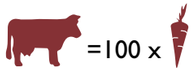



McMichael and Bambrick, Public Health Nutrition, 2007

**Comparison of Greenhouse Gas Emissions**




1 lb beef vs 1 lb chicken




1 lb beef vs 1 lb carrots

New York Times 12/4/08 Rosenthal Article

## Creative Approaches to BALANCED MENUS

Throughout California and across the country, hospitals are working towards a goal of a 20% reduction in meat and poultry procurement, along with an increase in the purchase of sustainable alternatives.

- Review current recipes for options to reduce volume of meat being served.
- Increase vegetable and grain portion sizes while substantially reducing animal protein.
- Design recipes with meat as a complement to a variety of grains and vegetables.
- Offer a diversity of grass-fed meat but less frequently: bison, lamb and goat can all be locally-sourced in California, are typically sustainably produced, and are healthier alternatives to beef.
- Reduce reliance on higher-priced precooked and/or processed meats, such as fajita strips, chicken strips, beef patties, etc.
- Develop recipes using readily available, sustainably produced and less expensive cuts such as ground beef and stew meat. Avoid using small cuts from large animals, such as tri-tip steaks, which are fewer per animal, expensive and more difficult to source in substantial volume from sustainable producers.
- Collaborate with other healthcare facilities to create regional sustainable meat alliances, investigate the possibility of collective purchasing strategies and other efforts to build local, affordable supply of sustainable meat.

BALANCED MENUS presents a marketing and education opportunity for your hospital's sustainable food efforts.

Contact us for assistance in developing table tents, tray materials, brochures and other resources for your facility.

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & RESOURCES

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San Francisco Bay Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility combines the power of community activism with the knowledge and credibility of physicians and other health professionals to promote public policies that support human health.

PSR San Francisco Bay Area Chapter

# BALANCED MENUS

how hospitals can serve the healthiest, most sustainably produced meat to benefit public and environmental health and reduce costs

# What Is BALANCED MENUS?

*Balanced Menus* is a systematic approach to reduce the amount of meat protein in hospital food and a strategic pathway to serving the healthiest, most sustainably produced meat available. Implementation of *Balanced Menus* can offer cost savings as well as concrete public and environmental health benefits.

Most hospitals purchase substantial quantities of meat annually, typically through large distributors who source from the US commodity beef, pork and poultry markets. The upfront cost for these products is low, giving a veneer of affordability to serving meat two to three times a day on patient trays and in cafeterias. **However, the hidden cost of meat produced and distributed via our industrial agricultural system is high**. Industrial meat and poultry production relies on the addition of antibiotics, arsenic, and hormones as well as crowded conditions that pollute air and water. The rising social costs of antibiotic resistance, air and water pollution, and associated impacts to the health of communities are ultimately borne by healthcare systems.

Americans eat three times the amount of meat recommended by the USDA. Hospital food service operations often mirror this trend, offering sizable servings of meat two-three meals per day. The abundance of meat in our food environment directly and negatively impacts the health of Americans. While food choice is distinctly personal, the healthcare community can help reshape this environment. **A reduction in the overall amount of meat served in hospital facilities provides health, social and environmental benefits that are consistent with prevention-based medical practices.** As institutions with considerable buying power, hospitals can demonstrate leadership to the marketplace by reducing the overall quantity of meat and poultry served and through preferential purchasing of sustainably produced meats.

## Increasing Options for Sustainable Meat and Poultry

While as a society we eat significantly more meat than our parents, there is a growing shift in consumer interest to reverse this pattern. **As demand for meat-free options grows, hospital menus evolve as well.** For religious, ethnic and cultural reasons, many facilities have reduced or eliminated meat from their menus. With these changes comes a deeper understanding within the dietetic community of how we can achieve our daily recommended nutrient requirements with new menus based on vegetarian protein and smaller portions of meat.

- Alternatives to industrial poultry and meat are currently available to many consumers through retail outlets and direct markets, and are beginning to penetrate the large institutional food procurement system as well.
- Sustainable meat production bears the full, true cost of production, without the subsidies enjoyed by the industrial system, therefore the cost to institutions may be higher.
- Yet because demand and supply are growing every year, the cost of sustainably produced meat is increasingly within the means of more institutions.

Commitments from hospitals to purchase an incrementally higher percentage of sustainable meat on an annual basis will help create a healthier meat industry & healthier communities.

### Economics of Meat Purchasing

Meat is expensive. Meat and poultry purchases comprise the largest expenditures of a typical food service spending budget outside of labor. Yet preliminary research indicates that when an average-sized, 200-300 bed facility begins to implement a balanced menu that reduces meat and increases grains and vegetables on a very modest scale – savings are seen on the order of $10,000 or more per year.

## Less Meat, Better Meat, Improved Health:

Serve smaller quantities of sustainable meat to promote healthy eating habits.

High consumption of meat fats and processed meats contributes to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, dementia, and some kinds of cancer.

Our meat consumption habits come with a substantial social cost. Industrial meat production is dependent on medically important antibiotics, hormones, fertilizers, pesticides, and inhumane animal husbandry practices. Pollutants are expelled into nearby communities, and high rates of worker injuries are all too common. Ecological and human health damage from these practices are well documented and significant.

There is good news however! Meat, poultry and eggs from pastured animals are lower in overall fat and offer the healthier and preferred ratio of "good fats" to "bad fats." 100% grass-fed beef contains 2-4x the amount of omega-3 fatty acids compared to its grain-fed counterpart. Eggs from pastured chickens contain up to 10 times as many omega-3 fatty acids as eggs from commercially housed hens. Meat from pastured animals also contains far more of other beneficial nutrients such as CLA (conjugated linoleic acid) and Vitamin E. **Pasture-raised meats also have fewer calories per equal size serving.**

### The Power Of Procurement

Health care institutions can use their purchasing power to expand the market for sustainable meat and create public policy support for sustainable production, while at the same time building synergy between food services operations and clinical nutrition efforts. With *Balanced Menus* hospitals can support local farmers and ranchers that produce sustainable meat and poultry.

photo Shannon Spanhake