



## SSAFE CASE STUDY REPORT

Working Toward More Sustainable Eating at Wake Robin

**Chapter:** Wake Robin

**Location:** Shelburne, VT

**Recorder:** Patty Motch

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**Mission:** To foster a realistic awareness of how our eating at Wake Robin impacts the climate and to support the community's movement toward more sustainable options and food choices. We include all aspects of sustainable eating from production and transport to consumption and waste.

### Goals:

- Build momentum among residents so that the Wake Robin kitchens will offer abundant plant-based entrees and side dishes at each lunch and dinner.
- Increase the number of residents who seek plant-based foods.
- Educate residents about the connection between our diet and climate, and stimulate support for fostering plant-based eating in other communities.

**Brief description/characterization of community/campus:** Wake Robin is a non-profit continuing care community serving approximately 320 independently living residents and 80 residents in residential or nursing home care. This project serves all residents who are capable of making personal food choices.

### Methodology:

The Eating for Sustainability Committee, a subcommittee of Wake Robin's Climate Action Taskforce, has used a gradual approach in introducing activities to support its mission and goals.

- Frequent posts in Wake Robin Connects (our daily listserv) that share climate/food information and links to published articles.
- Announcements at our community meeting called "Cup," starting with "Bring your Covered Cup to Cup."
- Showing the Netflix film *You Are What You Eat* over 3 sessions (75 residents in attendance), followed by small group discussions and reporting to the group (50 attendees).
- Compilation and wide dissemination of the themes generated by the small group discussions.
- Creation and display of posters: a map of Vermont showing Wake Robin's local and regional food purveyors, the protein value in commonly eaten animal and plant foods, a graphic representation of the greenhouse gas emissions of commonly eaten protein-rich foods.
- Cup-to-Cup Campaign and challenge (See page 6 of July 2024 SSAFE Newsletter).



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- Continuing dialogue with the Director of Dining Services, working cooperatively to support the expansion of plant-based dining choices.
- Conversation with Dr. Lini Wallenberg, Food and Climate Scientist at the University of Vermont, after her Wake Robin presentation on reducing the carbon footprint of food globally.
- Posting of “Eating for Sustainability” pages on Wake Robin’s internal websites: annotated links to food/climate-related articles, videos, and interactive quizzes. Topics include
  - o How Do Food Choices Affect Climate?
  - o How Do I Reduce My Climate Impact?
  - o Aging Bodies: Eating and Health
  - o Want More? A Deeper Look
  - o Recipes for a Plant-based Diet
- Presentation at Wake Robin’s weekly community meeting of the committee’s projects to date and introduction of the “Eating for Sustainability” pages on the internal Wake Robin websites.
- Meeting of residents to discuss their approaches to plant-forward eating.

**Funding Needed:** Funds needed for posters and copying are available through our residents’ association.

**Involvement or Support of Community Administration:** The subcommittee has worked closely with the Director of Dining Services throughout. The CEO and administration have been supportive.

### Key Challenges:

- An unsuccessful initial attempt to pilot test “one Monday per month at which two entrees would be vegetarian and one would be meat” led us to move slowly.
- Construction and remodeling of the main kitchen and cooking/serving sections of the dining room slowed our progress.
- The vegetarian offering is often covered, not openly displayed, and often at the end of the food line.
- Residents want information about the content of protein and other nutrients in plant-based entrees served at Wake Robin. The Director of Dining says this would require an additional staff person.

### Outcome (Results):

- Chefs report considerably more interest in vegetarian options.
- Residents show greater awareness of climate change consequences of eating choices.
- Anecdotal evidence from observations in the dining room and conversations with residents suggests an increase in plant-forward eating.
- Many more residents carry their own covered cups on and off campus.

### Lessons Learned:

- Ongoing communication and education are key to change at Wake Robin.



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- Working to maintain a positive relationship with dining and recognition of their efforts pays dividends.
- Use of non-threatening language seems more effective than using the term “vegetarian.” Examples include additive ideas such as a half portion of the plant-rich option, not taking away (“even eating less meat weekly helps”), and using terms like “plant rich,” “plant forward.”
- Getting residents on board first with a project that didn’t threaten their diet preferences (Cup to Cup) proved successful.
- A focus on local sourcing of food (chart in dining room) generated much interest.
- It’s a big undertaking. Don’t try to accomplish too much all at once: committee members burn out. Move slowly, change is hard.

### Next Steps or Follow Up:

- Continued education and attention considering resident turnover. Reminders help us all.
- Listserv postings
- Cup (community meeting) presentations
- Multiple approaches such as movie showings
- Plant-rich recipe contest for residents with staff preparing winning recipes.
- Better presentation of plant-based options in the serving area
- Introduction of grain bowls, offering additional protein choices
- Condiment station to spice up offerings
- Consideration of a plant-forward table, inviting new residents to try offerings
- A survey of residents who’ve expressed interest about changes they’ve made in their dining choices
- Maintenance of resources available in both digital and print formats.

**Resources:** “Resources for Eating Sustainably” PDF slides are attached.

Note: Due to the time and effort to create the attached slides, please share only with attribution to Wake Robin and SSAFE. Note the Creative Commons License details and restrictions at this link:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>



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### May 2025 Addendum: Results of the Cup-to-Cup Campaign and Challenge

Wake Robin provides beverages and other foods before its weekly community meeting (called “Cup”)—along with single-use cups, bowls, plates, etc. to hold the items. During Earth Week 2024, Wake Robin’s Cup-to-Cup Campaign, sponsored by the Eating for Sustainability Committee, challenged residents to save at least 5,000 of the plastic-coated cups over the course of one year. Wake Robin residents embraced the Cup-to-Cup Challenge as a way to reduce waste and their individual impact on climate. Occasional reminders by committee members (and invitations to raise our cups by our CEO) led to more and more participation. Not only did residents bring their mugs for coffee and tea, but many also brought their own reusable plates for baked goods; bowls for granola, fruit and yogurt; and even spoons and cloth napkins. They also increased their practice of taking reusable containers to other events. Residents used check lists or email to periodically report the number of items they brought to substitute for the paper and plastic products. During Earth Week 2025, residents celebrated. They had met—even exceeded—the challenge, tallying more than 5,000 single-use items saved from the landfill. The tradition of Cup-to-Cup is now part of the Wake Robin culture—and one of many examples of our commitment to environmental stewardship.







*You care about the planet and you already reduce, recycle and reuse,  
but what you eat could have the biggest impact of all.*

## **Resources for Eating Sustainably**

From the Eating for Sustainability Group  
of the Climate Action Task Force

**Wake Robin**

Vermont's Life Plan Community

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**NOTE:** These resources have links between the Home page and the topics addressed. Click on the underlined title and it will take you there.

It also has links to the annotated Resources—articles, audio stories, quizzes, etc. Again, click on the underlined title or link to access them.

***If you are viewing this in your browser on Uniguest, you must click on the down arrow (download) in the upper right-hand corner to find those live links.***





*You care about the planet and you already reduce, recycle and reuse,  
but what you eat could have the biggest impact of all.*

- Why? How Do Food Choices Affect Climate?
- How Do I Reduce My Climate Impact?
  - Postings to Wake Robin Connects, with links to resources
- Aging Bodies: Eating and Health
- Want More? A Deeper Look
  - Recipes



# Why? How Do Food Choices Affect Climate?

**Your Questions About Food and Climate Change, Answered - The New York Times**

Explains many foods' impact on climate and highlights 4 Takeaways and recipes.

**Greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of food product**

Provides an easy to understand visual explanation of the impact of our food choices



Graphic

**How to Thrive As You Age: This diet swap can cut your carbon footprint and boost longevity**

Advocates a more moderate approach on the impact of food on the environment.



Audio

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# How Do I Reduce My Climate Impact?

**What is a plant-based diet and why should you try it? - Harvard Health**

Definitions of different plant-based eating patterns and 8 ways to get started with specific suggestions and menus for all three meals.

**Healthy Plate, Healthy Planet**

**[https://www.gaplesinstitute.org/sustainable\\_diets/](https://www.gaplesinstitute.org/sustainable_diets/)**

A 10-minute interactive guide shown as a slide presentation for healthy sustainable eating.



**'Not the End of the World' author on tackling climate change: NPR**

Hannah Ritchie's look at what humans are getting right.



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# How Do I Reduce My Climate Impact?

<b><u>How to Become a Vegetarian (or Simply Eat More Plants)</u></b>	How to begin the switch to eating more plant-based foods.	
<b><u>What is Your Foodprint?</u></b>	A chance to see the environmental Foodprint of your personal diet.	? Quiz
<b><u>The Hidden Environmental Costs of Food</u></b>	A new way to expose the cost of what we eat that includes damage to the environment.	



# Aging Bodies: Eating and Health

## Sustainable Healthy Eating As You Age

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X\\_Sl9SLxbzg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_Sl9SLxbzg)

A 3-part 48-minute video:

- 1) Successful aging linked to nutrition;
- 2) Sustainable Food Choices, including protein;
- 3) Dietary patterns that support cognitive and cardiac health, and prevent physical decline.



Video

## How to Thrive As You Age: This diet swap can cut your carbon footprint and boost longevity

Advocates a *moderate* approach on the impact of food on the environment.



Audio

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# Aging Bodies: Eating and Health

## Healthy Plate, Healthy Planet

<https://www.gaplesinstitute.org/sustainable-diets/>

A 10-minute interactive guide shown as a slide presentation for healthy sustainable eating.



Interactive Slides

## Healthy Living Guide 2023-2024

*Elevate Your Plate* section, p. 9-15.

## What is a plant-based diet and why should you try it? - Harvard Health

Definitions: 8 ways to get started with specific suggestions and menus for all three meals.

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# Aging Bodies: Eating and Health

<b><u>Quiz: Test Your Protein Knowledge - The New York Times</u></b>	Short, easy quiz with answers.	? Quiz
<b><u>Canada's Food Guide</u></b>	Tips for healthy eating, including a collection of 30-minute recipes with 10 ingredients or less.	
<b><u>DRI Calculator for Healthcare Professionals from National Agricultural Library</u></b>	Enter basic body information about yourself, e.g., height, weight, age, etc. and discover your USDA minimum daily nutrient requirements.	
<b><u>More...</u></b>		

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# Aging Bodies: Eating and Health

## Protein Content of Common Foods

Johns Hopkins Medicine's list of protein content of commonly eaten foods.

## 13 of the Best Vegetarian and Vegan Protein Sources

Turn to these foods for plant protein

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# Want More? A Deeper Look

## Climate change food calculator: What's your diet's carbon footprint?

What's your diet's carbon footprint? Choose from one of the 34 items in the calculator and note how often you consume it to learn more about your impact on the environment.

## Reducing the carbon footprint of food. . . globally

A presentation at Wake Robin 5/21/24 by Lini Wollenberg, Research Professor, UVM

Presentation Slides

## What is Your Foodprint? - Quiz

What you eat, where it comes from and how it was produced contribute to your Foodprint.



Quiz

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# Recipes

## **What is a plant-based diet and why should you try it? - Harvard Health**

Definitions of different plant-based eating patterns and 8 ways to get started with specific suggestions and menus for all three meals.

## **Canada's Food Guide**

Contains a recipe collection: 30-minute recipes, 10 ingredients or less, and more.

## **New York Times Cooking, The Veggie**

Tanya Sichynsky's weekly newsletter devoted to cooking delicious vegetarian recipes.

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