MENUS OF CHANGE IN 2020

Introduction and Overview

Welcome to our 2020 edition of Menus of Change®, including our 8th Annual Menus of Change Leadership Summit: Virtual Series; our growing collection of online educational resource materials; and our global network of culinary and business leaders, scientific and technical experts, professional colleagues in every sector of our industry, and passionate changemakers—young and old.

Over the 12 months of planning for this year’s summit, our industry has been ravaged by a worldwide public health pandemic and economic crisis. Restaurants and foodservice operations are struggling to reopen (and stay open), regain their footing, and find a financially sustainable way forward. Our customers are eager to reconnect with their favorite restaurants and chef-driven food experiences while still expressing concern, often deep concern, for their personal safety.

At the same time, the urgent imperatives that led The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Department of Nutrition to team up eight years ago to create Menus of Change are still very much with us, and will shape our industry—and our food future—long after this pandemic has receded. The global burden of obesity and chronic diseases is still rising, casting a long shadow over national healthcare costs and future GDP—not to mention the health of our fellow citizens. Scientists are now able to articulate evidence-based parameters of a planetary health diet—one that delivers adequate nutrition and optimal health within planetary boundaries for a population projected to be as high as 10 billion within 30 short years. And yet we have a long way to go to scale existing, very promising innovation in the foodservice industry to help meet the challenge of mitigating climate change, restoring our environment, and securing healthy diets for all.
In 2012, when the CIA and the Harvard Chan School jointly launched *Menus of Change: The Business of Healthy, Sustainable & Delicious Food Choices*, we set out to realize a long-term, practical vision integrating optimal nutrition and public health, environmental stewardship and restoration, and social responsibility concerns within the foodservice industry and the culinary profession—all within a framework where culinary and business insight are central. This year we continue to build on that vision and agenda for change with a special, virtual edition summit staged over six weeks beginning July 22 and running each Wednesday through August 26.

With more than 100 program faculty, the 2020 Menus of Change Summit will be our largest to-date. The summit opens with a session led by Walter Willett, MD, DrPH (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Department of Nutrition), and Daniel Schrag, PhD (Harvard University Center for the Environment), discussing lessons from the pandemic, and how those lessons should inform how we think about the broader challenges and opportunities we face around public health, sustainability and food system change.

Throughout the six-week series, we’ll delve into a whole spectrum of specific session themes, including: critical supply chain issues; consumer insight about the persistence of the plant-forward trend and the shifting food values of our customers (looking beyond near-term safety concerns); intergenerational perspectives on effective climate change communications; racial diversity, equity and the accessibility of healthy foods; the impact of our food choices on our immune systems; sector by sector insights on strategies to drive engagement around organizational change; the view from Wall Street and the investment community; nutrition and other policy changes on the horizon; cities as incubators of sustainable culinary innovation; chefs as collaborators with the public health and environmental communities in food system transformation; and much more.

In addition to the more than 600 chefs and operators participating in this year’s Menus of Change Summit through our virtual platform, we expect thousands of culinary and food industry professionals around the world will tune in via Livestream and Facebook. In addition, all sessions will be recorded.
and available for on-demand viewing. So, if you miss some of the sessions you wanted to join, or to share these timely resources with colleagues for their professional development, we encourage you take advantage of these archived sessions.

Our work in developing and advancing the Menus of Change initiative, including our annual summit, is immeasurably enriched by the ongoing contributions of a wide range of individual subject experts and collaborating organizations, especially the insights and guidance provided by the members of our Menus of Change Scientific and Technical Advisory Council and Business Leadership Council.

A FOCUS ON PLANT-FORWARD MENU INNOVATION

Among our 24 Menus of Change Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Menus, one is of outsized importance: “Leverage globally inspired, plant-forward culinary strategies.” Much of our work the past few years has centered around fleshing out opportunities to inspire innovation tied to this plant-forward concept. This focus reflects the enormous impact of our protein choices, both on planetary health and our personal health. Building on a broad consensus in both the nutrition and environmental/climate science communities, the plant-forward concept stakes out a big tent of dietary and menu strategy that spans the preferences of omnivores seeking to eat less meat and other animal-based foods but not to give them up altogether, vegetarians, and vegans. We define plant-forward as:

“A style of cooking and eating that emphasizes and celebrates, but is not limited to, foods from plant sources—fruits and vegetables (produce), whole grains, legumes (pulses), nuts and seeds, plant oils, and herbs and spices—and reflects evidence-based principles of health and sustainability.”

With this as our reference point, we launched the Global Plant-Forward Culinary Summit, a companion conference series to Menus of Change, in order to highlight plant-forward menu and culinary strategies rooted in traditional food cultures from the Mediterranean and Middle East to Africa and from East and South Asia to Latin America. These traditions point the way to menu innovation and dietary patterns that can be culturally diverse; accessible to a broad range of household budgets; embracing of both comfort foods and culinary adventure; and, above all, full of broad appeal and deliciousness.
Our new Plant-Forward Kitchen website will link you to a variety of resources including the CIA-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Department of Nutrition’s Plant-Forward by the Numbers, a resource of data captured during the months immediately preceding the COVID-19 pandemic. The document maps many of the drivers and the accelerating consumer and business impacts of “plant-forward,” past and future.

This site is also where you’ll find news of our forthcoming CIA Plant-Forward Culinary Arts Education and Certification initiative, now in development in collaboration with the Food Team at Google. Designed to provide a new, from-the-ground-up approach to building flavor when cooking primarily with plant-based ingredients, this curriculum pairs innovative online learning technology with topics ranging from protein in the plant-forward kitchen to flavor dynamics in world cuisines, food choice architecture, nutrition science fundamentals, and approaches to comprehensive food system transformation and planetary health. Watch our Plant-Forward Kitchen website for a late 2020 announcement about launch timing.

When it comes to menu innovation, case studies in success can be a catalyst for inspiration. With that in mind, we teamed up with the EAT Foundation to curate the Global Plant-Forward 50 which shares the varying approaches of 50 chefs from around the world in raising the visibility of plant-sourced foods. In addition, the CIA-QSR Plant-Forward, Fast Casual Watch List and CIA-FSR Plant-Forward, Full-Service Watch List showcase innovation in those sectors.

2020 MENUS OF CHANGE AND RELATED RESOURCES

Over the past eight years, the Menus of Change initiative has engaged thousands of leaders in the foodservice industry around this practical vision for change. Beginning with a solid foundation of evidence in the health and environmental sciences, much of the subsequent focus of the initiative has been to pivot to developing and driving practical strategies for operational change, including highlighting case studies in innovation. Each year we add new resources to support your ambition to effect change in your food purchasing, your menu development, your training programs, and in the larger food system.
Here is an overview of some of those resources:

- **Menus of Change** — The online home for the CIA-Harvard Chan School Menus of Change initiative, including links to past years’ summit materials and general session recordings, and many of the resources listed below.

- **Lessons from the Pandemic** — Critical lessons from the COVID-19 health crisis that can inspire how we think about the future of food and opportunities for the restaurant and foodservice industry.

- **24 Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Menus** — From operations to ingredients and menu design, this is the Menus of Change architecture for innovation and food system transformation, informed by the most current science together with industry insight.

- **Menus of Change Principles Infographic** — A compact, topline summary of the 24 Menus of Change Principles that graces the walls of professional kitchens across the country. A great training tool for your teams.

- **Menus of Change Scientific Issue Briefs** — Authored by members of the Menus of Change Scientific and Technical Advisory Council, these briefs distill the science and provide the foundation for the principles and the priorities of the Menus of Change initiative.

- **Navigating Nutrition Studies: What Builds Strong Evidence on Diet & Health** — A toolkit to help chefs and operators discern issues around research quality, inaccurate perceptions about scientific consensus (or the lack thereof), and media reports that often represent sources of confusion for our operations and among our customers.

- **The Nutrition Source** — For a deeper dive into the latest in nutrition science, dietary guidance, and inspiration for action around better food choices, look no further than this trusted information source from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Department of Nutrition.

- **Plant-Forward Kitchen** — One of the CIA’s newest web platforms which will link you to a variety of resources to support plant-forward menu innovation, staff training, and more.

- **Plant-Forward by the Numbers** — This recently released CIA-Harvard Chan School document presents a pre-COVID-19 snapshot of this consumer juggernaut, and has all the data you’ll need to make the business case for building future menu directions in your organization around these imperatives.

- **Global Plant-Forward Culinary Summit** — A companion conference to Menus of Change, this annual summit focuses on the chefs, operators and culinary insights that can inspire success in adopting plant-forward menu concepts. This year’s virtual summit is now available for on-demand viewing and will get you dialed into flavor inspiration from across the United States, as well as Africa, Greece, India, and Southeast Asia.
What's In a Name: Defining Plant-Forward Diets — Confused about the difference between plant-forward, plant-based, flexitarian, vegetarian, and more? This short series of slides is our take on sorting out the language.

Protein Plays and Protein Flip — These two documents detail the current research consensus on the impact of various protein sources on our personal health and the health of the environment, and offer practical strategies to broaden our portfolio of menu options to appeal to a widening diversity of informed consumer preferences around protein, from “less meat, better meat” to flavor discovery and innovation around plant-based protein, meat/plant blends (e.g., the meat/mushroom burger blend), and more.

Carbohydrate Flip — Now in development and paralleling the CIA’s Protein Flip, The Carbohydrate Flip will detail the latest evidence-based guidance around carbohydrate quality and offer a collection of culinary and menu strategies to advance progress on this critical issue for American foodservice and the reversal of our country’s obesity and diabetes epidemic. Watch for the release of this new Menus of Change resource in late summer.

Videos — Plant-Forward Kitchens and World Cuisines — From the CIA’s Digital Media team, enjoy these culinary videos filmed in a variety of U.S. and global kitchens with ideas from top chefs and regional cuisine experts on designing flavor in the plant-forward kitchen.

Menus of Change Annual Reports (2013-2019) — This year, the Menus of Change editorial team shifted away from producing an annual report and, instead, is focusing on building out targeted editorial resources, such as Plant-Forward by the Numbers. Past Menus of Change Annual Reports which are full of scientific insights, case studies of culinary and business innovation, and more can be found here.

CIA Collaboratives — Part of the impact of the CIA-Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health’s Menus of Change collaboration is realized through three of the CIA’s invitational, industry collaboratives, which collectively provide further insight into both opportunities and strategies for change within specific sub-sectors of our industry. To find out more, check out the Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, the Healthy Menus R & D Collaborative and the Healthy Kids Collaborative.

LEARN. COLLABORATE. INNOVATE.

We invite you to join us, to learn and cook with us, to share your experiences and insights, and to work together to secure a future for our industry that embraces a wider set of imperatives and stakeholders, that thrives economically, is more resilient, and still relentlessly pursues its core promise to deliver memorable hospitality and deliciousness.
Our healthcare system has responded heroically to the pandemic in the face of inadequate supplies and testing material. However, we have been spending far more than any other country on health care, largely ignoring that much of the burden on our system is due to treatment of conditions that are largely preventable. This financial burden has displaced resources that should be invested in disease prevention and actions to reduce climate change.

2. We were late in mobilizing an adequate response to the acute COVID-19 threat despite well-established understanding in the scientific and public health communities about how best to prevent and control infectious disease outbreaks.

As a nation, we were slow-footed in our early—and continuing—response to the pandemic, which was an acute, highly visible event when it first surfaced in China. This despite consensus in the scientific and public health communities that we were vulnerable to such a devastating outbreak, that we barely missed a much more lethal pandemic from SARS, and that we needed to strengthen our preparations and control methods. We were warned in advance about a possible, new pandemic—for years—and yet we ignored those warnings. And when the fire broke out, we waited too long to call the fire department.

This highlights the parallel need for yet more energetic responses to the global burden of chronic disease and projected climate and other planetary health impacts which are longer, slower and less obvious to many in the making, and therefore harder to mobilize concern and action around.

Chefs and foodservice operators should not hold back in acting given the abundance of evidence on the need to change our menus and our food choices. Rather than waiting for increased consumer demand or government policy change, the foodservice industry has a chance to more widely embrace innovation and lead an evolution in consumer preferences that will better secure our future and minimize unwanted business disruption as a result of not anticipating that future.
3. Without regard for politics, death tolls, economic pain, or personal preferences and aversions, infectious disease pandemics—like weather-related disasters and the impacts of the global burden of chronic diseases and climate change—will play out according to fundamental laws of chemistry, biology, and physics.

Many people may not like hearing that some of their food choices will increase their risk for obesity, diabetes or other chronic disease conditions, but a refusal to hear and change will neither stop the course of their disease nor lower their risk of premature mortality.

As a country, we need to depoliticize matters of public health—whether it’s about what constitutes safe behavior during an infectious disease pandemic or strategies to prevent and control chronic disease and environmental degradation. Economic issues are also critical, but should be considered separately and not confused with the science of chemistry, biology, and physics.

4. While an adequate federal and global response is critical to success in pandemic control, nevertheless state, local, and private sector actions in this crisis demonstrate that leadership in the U.S. can arise from many sources.

As with the pandemic, leadership towards a better, healthier, more sustainable food system is emerging across the country, at the state and municipal levels and in the private sector.

Chefs, restaurateurs, and foodservice business leaders are increasingly showing through their innovation that better food choices—built around plant-forward menus and market baskets—can be delicious and appealing. They should collaborate with local and regional government and business leaders to help to scale that innovation.

Consumer attitudes toward increasing plant-forward food choices are trending in the right direction, making it easier for chefs and operators to favor this area of innovation. Some of the pre-COVID-19 data captured by the CIA-Harvard Chan School Plant-Forward by the Numbers describes this shifting business landscape of change.

5. The pandemic exposed many weak links and misplaced priorities in our food system, revealing that for the long-term we don’t have sufficient resilience designed into that system to withstand greater disruption from climate change.

The pandemic has laid bare the inadequacy of long-standing efforts to prioritize and facilitate cheap animal protein production. If meat and other animal protein were to make up a much smaller slice of our food purchasing, these foods could potentially be priced higher so as better manage the health and welfare of sector labor and not externalize environmental and other costs—all while not inflating overall food budgets.
We need to do a much better job of making fruits and vegetables, legumes and nuts, whole grains and other minimally processed, plant-sourced foods more accessible to all, with more widely distributed culinary skill sets about how to make those foods truly appealing to everyone.

Strategies to build resilience in the face of disruption from climate change will demand nothing less. And early, widespread adoption of plant-forward dietary patterns—and restaurant menus—can help prevent, not simply mitigate, the worst predicted impacts of that climate change.

The adverse impacts of climate change to the U.S. and global food system—if we don’t change course—cannot be predicted precisely, but are likely to be severe and include effects of extreme heat, drought, fires, shifting plant disease patterns, and political instability from population displacement.

Especially given the dynamics of the modern age, disease prevention and control—like the imperative to secure sustainable planetary health—is ultimately a global challenge and demands integrated global responses.

An infectious disease pandemic ultimately knows no borders in prevention and control.

Chronic disease is now an urgent, global issue because of the nature of global business, food marketing practices, and lifestyle trends.

Climate change and planetary environmental degradation clearly knows no borders.

All of these must be addressed globally at all levels of government, including inter-governmental cooperation. Similarly, global cooperation among chefs, food system innovators, and forward-thinking business leaders is essential. Further, chefs need to engage policymakers around the world in jointly articulating a goal of including deliciousness in plant-forward food choice advocacy and innovation that is accessible, affordable, and not viewed as elitist.

Many national and international reports in recent years have recognized the connections between food, health, and environment, and in 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres will convene a Food Systems Summit to raise global awareness and secure global commitments and actions that transform food systems to resolve not only hunger, but to reduce diet-related disease and heal the planet.

CONCLUSIONS

This year, we are meeting in highly unusual circumstances. At some unclear time, some uncertain combination of vaccines, new treatments, and adaption will allow us to gather in person once again at the CIA in Hyde Park. I greatly look forward to that time. However, if this only represents getting back to normal—doing what we did before the pandemic—that will be a bad outcome. Our path before the pandemic was leading to a future that would be disastrous for our children and grandchildren: a degraded planet, inhabited by unhealthy populations with gaping inequality and political instability.

We need to make major changes in almost everything that we do to avoid that future. Here we focus on food and food systems because we can make a unique and critical contribution, but we also need to build a green infrastructure, including our energy and transportation systems and buildings, as quickly as we can.

This has to begin with ending our denial of pandemics, the epidemic of obesity and chronic disease, huge social inequalities, and other realities facing our national and global institutions. If we can do that, and we work together to find solutions, I know that we have the knowledge, creativity and skills—including culinary insight and inspiration—that can create a future that is far healthier, more sustainable, and more just than what we have today. This will take time, and that is all the more reason to redouble our efforts now.

— Walter Willett, MD, DrPH, Past Chair, Department of Nutrition, and Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School; Chair, CIA-Harvard Menus of Change Scientific and Technical Advisory Council, and Co-Chair, EAT-Lancet Commission

© 2020 The Culinary Institute of America and President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved.