



How to Accommodate Different Diets for Food Bank Clients

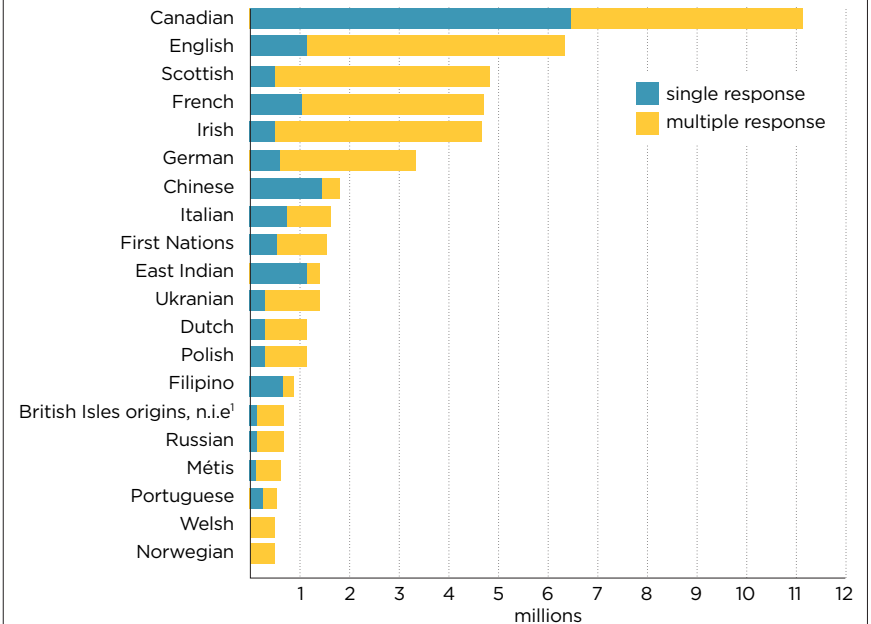




Culturally-specific food needs

Canada is a multicultural country. This diversity of people makes it a wonderful place to live and to learn about other cultures. There are more than 250 different ethnic groups in Canada. These are the top 20 ethnic origins reported by Canadians.

The top 20 ethnic origins reported alone or in combination with other origins (single or multiple response), Canada, 2016



¹ "British Isles origins, n.i.e." includes general responses indicating British Isles origins (e.g. "British", "United Kingdom") as well as more specific responses indicating British Isle origins that have been included elsewhere (e.g., "Celtic").

Note: In this chart, the sum of the ethnic origins is greater than the total population because a person can report more than one ethnic origin in the census questionnaire.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016

Everybody has their own food preferences, no matter where they are from.

On the following pages you will find some information about the staple foods from different geographic regions from all around the world. But remember – do not assume that a food bank client with ancestry from one of these regions will prefer foods that are traditionally associated with that region or culture. Instead, engage in dialogue and meet their needs with the foods that they prefer.

If a person does want foods that are specific to a geographic region, here are some lists to get you started (listed alphabetically by region). The lists are based on the chart above, so they cover the majority of the top 20 ethnic origins in Canada.

Africa

The African continent includes 54 countries with diverse foods, and each country will have its own unique recipes and food preparation techniques. Some common staples found in many of the countries may include:

- **Grains:** Maize (corn), millet, teff, sorghum, wheat
- **Protein:** Chicken, beef, fish, black eyed peas, peanuts
- **Vegetables & fruits:** Cassava, yam, plantain, leafy greens, bananas, coconut, pineapple, mango
- **Extras:** Coconut oil, coffee, tea, spices: cardamon, cloves, cinnamon, cumin, pepper

Here are some common food bank staples that can be offered:

- Couscous and millet
- Corn flour and corn meal
- Chicken, beef
- Peanuts and peanut butter
- Dry or canned black-eyes peas
- Sweet potato, cassava, leafy greens
- Canned pineapple
- Coconut milk
- Coffee and tea
- Spices: cardamon, cloves, cinnamon, cumin, pepper, etc.



East and Southeast Asia

East and Southeast Asia includes China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia and more. Each country has its own cooking techniques, recipes and favourite dishes. Diet staples from this region may include:

- **Grains:** Rice, rice noodles (vermicelli, pho), wheat noodles (egg noodles, ramen, udon), buckwheat noodles (soba), and sweet potato noodles (japchae)
- **Protein:** Tofu, tempeh, eggs, pork, chicken, beef, seafood, various beans
- **Vegetables & fruits:** Leafy greens, bean sprouts, shiitake mushrooms, broccoli, various root vegetables, pineapple, jackfruit, lychee, bananas, mango, durian, apples
- **Extras:** Garlic, ginger, soy sauce, fish sauce, miso, black bean sauce, black tea, green tea

Here are some common food bank staples that can be offered:

- Rice and various noodles
- Dry or canned soybeans, adzuki beans, white beans
- Carrots, mushroom, broccoli, leafy greens
- Apples, bananas
- Tofu, soy milk
- Pork, beef, chicken, eggs
- Black tea or green tea
- Garlic, ginger, soy sauce, fish sauce



Eastern Europe

Eastern Europe includes Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and other countries. Each country has its own cooking techniques, recipes and favourite dishes. Diet staples from this region may include:

- **Grains:** Wheat, rye, barley, millet, buckwheat, dumplings (perogies), noodles
- **Protein:** Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, white beans, cheese, yogurt and kefir (a fermented dairy drink)
- **Vegetables & fruits:** Potatoes, beets, cabbage, cucumber, onion, leafy greens, mushrooms, carrots, apples, pears, plums
- **Extras:** Black tea, coffee, garlic, sauerkraut, dill, paprika, parsley, vegetable oil

Here are some common food bank staples that can be offered:

- Rye or wheat bread
- Buckwheat (kasha), millet, barley
- Potatoes, cabbage, beets, cucumber, carrots
- Apples, pears
- Beef, chicken, eggs, herring
- Cheese, yogurt, kefir
- Black tea, coffee
- Garlic, onion, sauerkraut
- Paprika, parsley
- Vegetable oil



Latin America and South America

This region includes countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Peru, Chile and Mexico, and each country has its own cooking techniques, recipes and favourite dishes. Some of the staple foods from these countries may include:

- **Grains:** Corn, rice, wheat, tortillas, tapioca, tapioca starch, oats
- **Protein:** Beef, pork, chicken, seafood, beans, lentils, peas
- **Vegetables & fruits:** Tomato, corn, avocado, sweet peppers, onion, cassava, okra, plantain, yam, mango, banana, papaya
- **Extras:** Salsa, guacamole, chilli peppers, crema, coffee

Here are some common food bank staples that can be offered:

- Corn flour or corn meal
- Wheat flour, whole wheat flour, tapioca flour, oats
- Tortillas
- Beef, pork, chicken
- Canned or dry pinto and black beans or lentils
- Tomato, corn, peppers, onion, cassava, yam
- Potato, cauliflower, bananas
- Yogurt
- Coffee
- Spices: cumin, coriander, turmeric, ginger, fenugreek, bay leaves, garlic



Mediterranean

There are many countries around the Mediterranean Sea that are geographically situated in Europe, Africa or the Middle East. Mediterranean countries include Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Turkey, Libya, Tunisia, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Monaco, and Spain. Each country has its own cooking techniques, recipes and favourite dishes. Some common staples throughout different countries in the Mediterranean region may include:

- **Grains:** Wheat (bulgur, couscous, farro), rice, pasta, wheat flour, polenta (cornmeal)
- **Protein:** Beans, chickpeas, lentils, fish, nuts, seeds, chicken, cheese, yogurt, eggs
- **Vegetables & fruits:** tomato, broccoli, peppers, cucumber, onion, eggplant, leafy greens, garlic, apples, dates, figs, grapes
- **Extras:** Olive oil, hummus, garlic, oregano, thyme, basil, cumin, coriander, black tea, coffee

Here are some common food bank staples that can be offered:

- Wheat (pita, bulgur, farro, couscous, noodles)
- Rice, bulgur, barley, cornmeal
- Canned or dry beans, chickpeas and lentils
- Nuts and seeds
- Yogurt
- Canned tuna, salmon, sardines, anchovies, mackerel
- Cabbage, eggplant, cucumber and tomato
- Apples
- Olive oil and olives
- Black tea and coffee
- Basil, oregano, thyme, cumin, coriander, pepper



Middle East

Countries in the Middle East include Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Syria and the United Arab Emirates, and each country has its own cooking techniques, recipes and favourite dishes. Some common staples throughout the Middle East may include:

- **Grains:** Wheat (pita, bulgur, couscous, naan bread), rice, barley, noodles, wheat flour
- **Protein:** Chickpeas, lentils, sesame seeds, chicken, lamb, beef, yogurt, fava beans, tahini, nuts, kashk (dairy product)
- **Vegetables & fruits:** tomato, cucumber, onion, eggplant, leafy greens, garlic, zucchini, dates, figs, pomegranate, grapes
- **Extras:** Za'atar spice, olives, hummus, olive oil, turmeric, tomato paste, black tea, cumin, nutmeg, cardamom, turmeric, sumac

Here are some common food bank staples that can be offered:

- Wheat (pita, bulgur, couscous, noodles)
- Rice, bulgur, barley
- Canned or dry chickpeas, lentils and fava bean; canned mixed beans
- Nuts and seeds; tahini
- Yogurt
- Chicken, beef and lamb
- Cabbage, eggplant, cucumber and tomato
- Olive oil and olives
- Black tea
- Cumin, cardamom, turmeric, nutmeg



South Asia

South Asia includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. Each country has its own cooking techniques, recipes and favourite dishes. Diet staples from this region may include:

- **Grains:** Basmati rice, parboiled rice, wheat (for chapati, roti), millet
- **Protein:** Chickpeas, lentils, beans, chicken, fish, yogurt, nuts
- **Vegetables & fruits:** Eggplant, cauliflower, potato, leafy greens, okra, onion, turnips, tamarind, guava, pineapple, banana, mango, grape, apples, mango.
- **Extras:** paneer (cheese), black tea, garlic, curry spices, turmeric, chili powder, cumin, coriander, ginger, fenugreek

Here are some common food bank staples that can be offered:

- Basmati rice or parboiled rice
- White or whole wheat flour for chapati, roti, etc.
- Dry or canned chickpeas, lentils, beans
- Chicken and fish
- Yogurt
- Black tea
- Potatoes, cauliflower, onion, leafy greens, apples, bananas
- Spices – cumin, coriander, turmeric, ginger, fenugreek, chili powder



Western Europe

This area includes the western countries of Europe, including England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany and the Netherlands. Each country has its own cooking techniques, recipes and favourite dishes. Diet staples from this region may include:

- **Grains:** Wheat, rye, noodles, barley, oats (porridge)
- **Protein:** Meat, sausage, fish, poultry, eggs, cheese, yogurt, milk
- **Vegetables & fruits:** Potatoes, carrots, cauliflower, turnips, cabbage, onions, peppers, leeks, berries, apples, pears, plums
- **Extras:** Black tea, coffee, parsley, thyme, chives, mustard

Here are some common food bank staples that can be offered:

- Rye, wheat or potato bread
- Noodles, barley, oats for porridge
- Potatoes, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, onions
- Beef, chicken, eggs, herring
- Cheese, yogurt, milk
- Black tea, coffee
- Parsley, thyme, chives
- Mustard





Indigenous Peoples in Canada

According to the 2020 Feed Ontario Hunger Report, racialized communities are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. The report explains that the high rate of representation of Indigenous people in poverty and food insecure households is the result of systemic racism in Canada and reflects the inequalities and barriers that racialized people face in accessing opportunities, benefits, health care, and social services that are otherwise easily accessible to most Canadians.

Food Banks Canada statistics from the 2016 *HungerCount* report found that the proportion of people identifying as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in rural areas is significantly higher than the national average of people using food banks.

Traditional foods: The traditional diet from living off the land (hunting, fishing and foraging) is very healthy.

It's made up of whole grains, beans, vegetables, berries, fish, seafood and meat. But due to the impact of colonization, this diet is no longer the norm. Instead, more people are accessing ultra-processed convenience foods, which are not as healthy as traditional foods. This altered way of eating has contributed to the rise of obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease in Indigenous communities.

While First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people accounted for 14% of people receiving food from food banks nationally in March 2016, this figure jumps to 29% in small towns and rural areas, and to more than 70% in Northern Canada.

– *HungerCount* 2016

Traditional foods include:

- **Grains:** Bannock (wheat flour), wild rice, barley, oatmeal
- **Protein:** Fish, seafood, caribou, duck, beans, peas, lentils, pemmican
- **Vegetables & fruits:** Berries, leafy greens, corn, potatoes, squash
- **Extras:** Maple syrup

Here are some common food bank staples that can be offered:

- White and whole wheat flour
- Wild rice, barley, oatmeal
- Canned fish: salmon, tuna, sardines
- Canned or dry beans
- Potatoes, corn, squash
- Frozen berries
- Beef jerky

Halal and Kosher Foods

At a food bank, Halal foods may be requested by Muslims. Kosher foods may be requested by Jews.

Halal foods

Halal is the Arabic word for “permissible” and it refers to foods which are prepared according to Islamic law for Muslims. The opposite of halal is haram, which means “forbidden.” Here is a list of some halal and haram foods. If a food bank user follows halal food laws, make sure not to give them any haram foods.

Halal Foods

- Halal meat and poultry
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Grains – pasta, rice, oats, barley, bread, etc.
- Dairy and eggs
- Nuts and seeds
- Fish and seafood – but ask the client specifically. Some people may avoid certain fish with scales or certain seafoods

Haram foods

- Alcohol
- Vanilla extract (alcohol)
- Pork, bacon, ham and any processed food made with pork: salami, pepperoni, sausage, hotdogs
- Lard/shortening (pig fat)
- Gelatin (from pig)
- Rennet in some cheeses
- Blood

Here are some symbols that are used by halal food manufacturers in Canada. If these symbols appear on a food package, it means the food is certified halal.



Kosher foods

Kosher comes from the Hebrew word kashrut, which means “proper fit.” Kosher foods are those that satisfy the requirements of Jewish law. The opposite of kosher is “treif” or “non kosher.” Here is a list of some kosher and treif foods. If a food bank user follows kosher food laws, make sure not to give them any non-kosher foods:

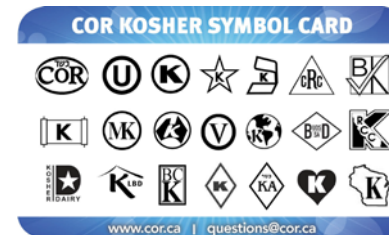
Kosher Foods

- Kosher meat and poultry
- Kosher dairy
- Eggs
- Fish
- Vegetables and fruits
- Nuts and seeds
- Grains – pasta, rice, oats, barley, bread, etc.

Non-Kosher foods

- Pork, bacon, ham
- Lard/shortening (pig fat)
- Gelatin (from pig)
- Rennet in some cheeses
- Seafood
- Milk & meat together (i.e. pepperoni pizza; cheeseburger)

Here are some symbols that are used by kosher food manufacturers in Canada and abroad. If these symbols are on a food package, it means the food is certified kosher.



Comparing Halal and Kosher Foods

While the rules are similar for halal and kosher foods, there are some differences too.

Here's how they compare:

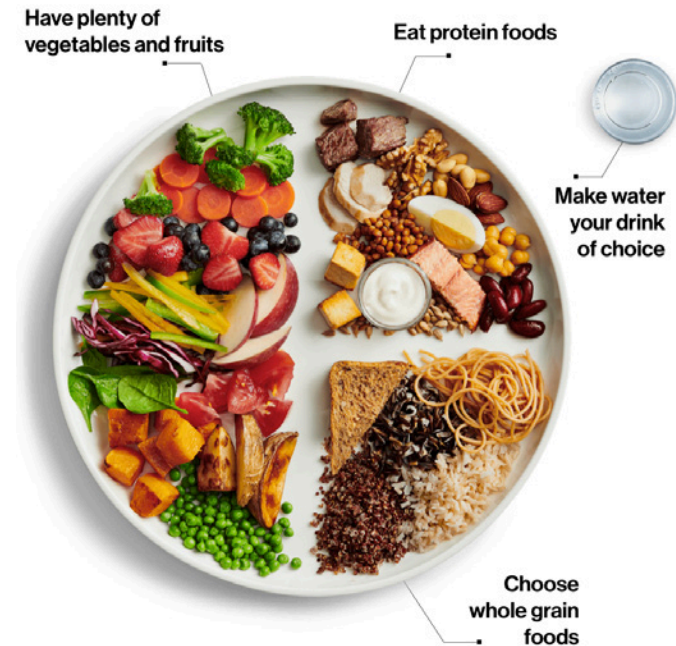
	Halal	Kosher
Origins	Quran	Torah
Slaughterer for meat	Animal must be slaughtered by a Muslim, Christian or Jew	Animal must be slaughtered by a Jew with specialized training
Prayer	Requires prayer to Allah before every slaughter	Does not require prayer before slaughter
Meat and Dairy	Can be consumed together	Cannot be consumed together
Alcohol	Prohibited	Allowed

Important note: Since Halal foods can be slaughtered by Muslims, Christians or Jews, some Muslims will also eat Kosher food (which has been slaughtered by a Jew). Some orthodox Muslims may not follow this rule, so always inquire before providing kosher food to someone who follows halal.



Eating well with Canada's Food Guide

Here's some advice from Canada's Food Guide. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods. When creating your plate, consider these proportions:



- Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit. Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruits are all healthy options.
- Fill a quarter of your plate with protein foods. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often, such as beans, lentils, peas, nuts, seeds, nut butter, tofu and other soy products. Animal-based proteins include meat, poultry, fish, dairy and eggs.
- Choose whole grain foods such as oats, barley, brown rice and whole grains bread or pasta.
- Make water your drink of choice. Replace sugary drinks with water.

Try to limit highly processed foods when you can. Highly processed foods may contain a lot of sugar, salt or saturated fat, which are nutrients that are linked to health problems when eaten in excess.

Health-related food needs

Some food bank clients may have specific dietary needs based on a medical condition, such as celiac disease, heart disease or type 2 diabetes. The following information provides some information about foods that may be suitable.

Of course, remember that you must respect the agency, decisions, and dietary choices of your clients, and let them decide which foods are the right fit for their diet. Someone with an expressed medical condition may still choose different foods for other reasons, and that is their choice for you to respect and honour.

Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease

Type 2 diabetes is diagnosed when blood sugar levels remain too high over time. If not controlled, it can lead to other health problems, such as kidney disease, blindness, nerve damage and cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease is an umbrella term for a cluster of diseases that affect the heart, arteries or blood vessels. It includes peripheral arterial disease, atherosclerosis, stroke, and coronary artery disease (which can lead to a heart attack). There isn't one "right diet" for every person with type 2 diabetes or heart disease, but there are some general rules that may apply. You can start by using the basic plate from Canada's Food Guide to structure meals with ½ plate filled with any vegetables or fruits; 1/4 plate with whole grains and 1/4 plate with protein-rich foods (see page xx). Then, you can work with your health care team or a dietitian to personalize the eating plan to meet your specific needs.



In general, people with type 2 diabetes or heart disease may be following some of this guidance:

- Eat plenty of vegetables
- Choose whole grains (brown rice, oats, pot barley) over refined grains (white rice, pasta, white bread)
- Get enough fibre in the diet
- Choose lean protein like chicken, fish or lean meat over fattier meat like ribs or duck
- Choose healthy fats, such as olive oil or canola oil instead of butter, lard or hard margarine
- Eat a balanced plate with vegetables, grains and protein
- Cut back on sugary, salty, and fatty foods such as soft drinks, candy, chips, ice cream and pastries
- Choose real, whole, unprocessed foods instead of highly processed foods
- Drink water instead of sweet beverages

Here are some guidelines that may work for clients who are interested in nutritious food choices if they have heart disease or type 2 diabetes. Of course, they are also free to choose any foods that they want, apart from these choices.

Instead of	Offer...
White rice	Brown rice
White bread and pasta	Whole grain bread and pasta
Sugary cereal	High fibre cereal
Salty canned veg and beans	No salt added veg and beans
Butter, lard, shortening	Oil
Canned meat	Canned fish
Seasoned pasta and rice	Plain pasta and rice
Chips and pretzels	Popcorn and nuts
Nutella	Peanut butter

Gluten-free diets

Food bank users who have been diagnosed with celiac disease, non-celiac gluten sensitivity or wheat allergy may request a gluten-free food basket. Gluten is a protein that's found in wheat, rye, barley, and any foods made from these grains, such as bread, pasta, crackers and cookies.

All plain fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, lentils, meat, poultry, fish and dairy foods are suitable for people on gluten-free diets, as long as they don't contain traces of wheat. For example, fish sticks or chicken nuggets that are breaded in wheat-based breadcrumbs would not be gluten-free.

Here's a list of grains that contain gluten, and grains that are gluten-free:

Gluten-containing grains:

- Wheat
- Rye
- Barley
- Triticale
- Wheat subtypes: Spelt, kamut, emmer, dinkel, farro, freekeh, couscous, bulgur, wheat berries, durum semolina

Gluten-free grains

- Corn
- Rice
- Quinoa
- Millet
- Sorghum
- Amaranth
- Buckwheat
- Wild rice
- Tapioca

Note: Some oats are gluten-free, but not all. Oats are often grown near wheat and may get contaminated with wheat and gluten. Only offer certified gluten-free oats to people on gluten-free diets.

Gluten and wheat may be found in these products, so read labels carefully:

- Malt
- Barley malt
- Brewer's yeast
- Granola
- Gravy
- Soy sauce
- Flavoured chips
- Energy bars
- Spice mixes



Food allergies

Almost eight percent of Canadians self-report having at least one food allergy. According to Food Allergy Canada, the 10 most common food allergens are:

1. Peanuts
2. Tree nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans, etc.)
3. Milk
4. Egg
5. Wheat
6. Soy
7. Seafood: Fish & Shellfish
8. Sesame
9. Mustard
10. Sulphites

Fortunately, the Government of Canada requires food manufacturers to clearly label products if they contain one of these 10 allergens. You can help people with food allergies create a suitable food basket by reading labels and noting foods that contain their known allergen(s).

If an ingredient list on a product says “contains” or “may contain” their known allergen, do not give them that product.

Important: Food bank baskets for people with food allergies will differ based on what they are allergic to. There is no standard “food allergy basket.”



Vegetarian diets

A vegetarian diet excludes meat, poultry or fish. Another version is a vegan diet, which excludes ALL animal products, including meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, honey and any derivatives. People with Buddhist background may be on a “Buddhist vegetarian diet,” which also excludes pungent spices such as garlic and chives.

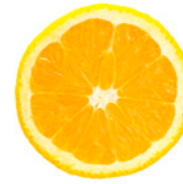
Here are some foods that can be included in a vegan or vegetarian food basket:

- Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit
- Whole grains: oats, brown rice, pot barley, wheat, etc.
- Nuts and seeds
- Nut butters
- Tofu, soybeans, edamame
- Soy milk or other milk alternatives
- Canned, dry or frozen peas, beans and lentils
- Add if vegetarian (not vegan): milk, eggs, cheese, yogurt

To ensure that you do not offer any hidden animal-based foods, here's a quick list of items that should NOT be included:

- Foods made with gelatin: such as Jell-o, marshmallows, gummy candy
- Cheese with rennet or rennin
- Baked beans or refried beans with pork or hotdogs (check label)
- Canned meat
- Canned fish
- Canned soups or stews flavored with anchovies, oyster sauce, fish sauce, Worcestershire sauce

Note: Gelatin is an animal-based protein obtained by boiling skin, tendons, ligaments, and/or bones obtained from cows or pigs. Rennet and rennin are enzymes from the lining of a cow's stomach. Neither are considered “vegetarian.”



Nutrition Questions?

Some provinces offer free advice from dietitians by phone:

In Alberta: Call Alberta Health Services at 8-1-1

In British Columbia: Call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

In Manitoba: Dial-a-Dietitian. Call toll free 1-877-830-2892 or 204-788-8248 in Winnipeg

In Newfoundland and Labrador: Call Dial-a-Dietitian at 8-1-1

In Ontario: Call TeleHealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or TTY 1-866-797-0007

In Saskatchewan: Call Eat Well Saskatchewan at 1-833-966-5541

Thank you to the dietitians from across Canada who reviewed this booklet:

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