

# Santa Clara University

# MEATLESS MONDAYS

# Sustainable Food Initiative



*"A global shift toward a vegan diet is vital to save the world from hunger, fuel poverty and the worst impacts of climate change."*

*-- United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*

## Project Goals:

What we eat may have a bigger impact on the environment than any of our other actions. So what can we do to eat more sustainably? Our project sought to encourage sustainable eating habits at SCU and determine the most effective ways of promoting food sustainability.

Our initial research showed that eating less meat was the most effective way of reducing energy use, water use, and carbon emissions. In fact, the meat and dairy industry is responsible for emitting more CO<sub>2</sub> than every single car, truck, bus, plane, ship, and train in the world combined. It takes about 15lbs of CO<sub>2</sub> just to produce 1lb of beef. Based on this information, we decided to launch a Meatless Mondays campaign on campus. Giving up meat for a day is something everyone can do, and something that has a real impact on the environment.

## Methods:

We began by sending out a survey to all the students in Swig. We asked them how often they ate meat, what kinds of food they usually order from Benson, and how willing they would be to change their diet to become more sustainable. Out of the 390 students in Swig, 125 took the survey. Most of the people who responded were interested in learning how to eat more sustainably, so we were excited to begin Meatless Mondays.

To promote Meatless Mondays, we cooked a sustainable dinner for Swig residents. We made a variety of low carbon, affordable, vegetarian dishes that students could easily prepare, and gave a presentation about the impact students' food choices have on the environment.

For the next three Mondays, we tabled inside and outside Benson, talking to students about Meatless Mondays. We talked to over 100 people, and emailed a follow up survey to everyone who expressed interest in Meatless Mondays.

## Student Response:

Educating people about how to eat sustainably worked! 80% of the students we talked to participated in Meatless Mondays for at least one day. And we found that talking to people directly was much more effective than the Meatless Monday signs in Benson.

69% of students who responded to our survey said that our efforts to promote food sustainability had a strong impact on the way they ate. Only 46% of students said that Bon Appetit's efforts to promote food sustainability changed how they ate.

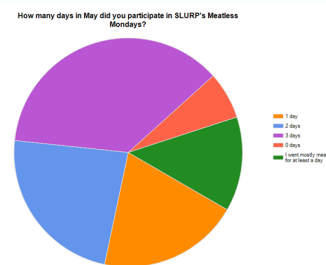


Fig. 1: The majority of students who tried Meatless Mondays went without meat every Monday in May.

## What's Next?

We've shown that students are interested in eating more sustainably, and are open to changing the way they eat if they are educated about more sustainable options. Most of the students we talked to participated in Meatless Mondays at for least one day, and the Swig residents who attended our sustainable dinner were even more likely to participate in Meatless Mondays.

Almost everyone we talked to said they might go meatless again. 45% of people who took our survey said they may participate in Meatless Mondays again sometime in the future, and another 48% of people said they are definitely planning to continue Meatless Mondays.

We received a lot of enthusiasm and positive feedback about the project, and with the information we've collected, we should be able to move forward and plan even more effective ways of promoting food sustainability on campus.