



The Most Vegan-Friendly Dining Facility in the U.S. Army

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March 18 2019

The Guns and Rockets Dining Facility at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, has become the first—and only—U.S. Army facility to offer soldiers plant-based main dishes at every meal.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeremy Patterson, food adviser for the 75th Artillery Brigade and longtime vegan, made the changes after a soldier submitted a comment card requesting more plant-based options for religious reasons. Though the comment card was the catalyst for the menu change, Patterson's push for more plant-based meals was also backed by his own nutritional awareness and desire to help the Army combat heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and other chronic conditions. Forks Over Knives caught up with Officer Patterson to get the dish on his plant-based mission.

How long have you been eating plant-based, and what inspired your transition?

I made the change to a vegan diet about eight years ago. I saw the movie *Food, Inc.*, and it changed my views on what was necessary to survive and thrive in life. I was taught since [childhood] that eating animal by-products was necessary, but I began to learn that this was simply not a fact.

I've listened to doctors such as Kim A. Williams, T. Colin Campbell, Caldwell Esselstyn, Neal Barnard, Michael Greger, and Michael Klaper, to name a few. I learned that I could receive all essential nutrients from plants. Once I made the switch, I felt much better both physically and mentally. ... Being vegan has allowed me to learn how to treat all living beings ... in a way that shows compassion. ... Many vegans look at veganism as a way of life and not just a diet.

What motivated the menu changes at the Guns and Rockets Dining Facility?

Unit readiness is key to the success of any mission. [We hoped that] if we provided healthier options that tasted great ... soldiers would gravitate toward those options. [It's] a way to meet our community's goal of being a healthy army community. Additionally, providing menu options that align with the civilian sector is one way to lure customers to dine at the military facility. These

plant-based dishes tend to be some of the healthier options on the serving line. I believe we can prove to our customers that eating plants is not bland or boring, but a new eating adventure.

What are some of the most popular plant-based dishes being served at Guns and Rockets?

Vegetable enchiladas and tofu stir-fry.

How have people reacted to the new plant-based menu options?

[They've] been received well. ... Some customers only dine on plant-based options, while others enjoy combinations [with meat options]. It's all about providing more options to soldiers.

Many who try the items are shocked that they are 100 percent plant-based. I taught the culinary team how to make chocolate mousse with tofu and they could not believe the texture, taste, and origin. I also taught them how to make tofu scramble, which resembles scrambled eggs. This was another hit amongst the culinary specialists inside the facility. I'm working to funnel more recipes like these to Joint Culinary Center of Excellence at Fort Lee, in an attempt to share them military-wide.

I would hope that customers transition over to eating more plant-based items, as the knowledge that I've gained shows that this suits most [people] best to compete against heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and cancer. The great thing about plant-based items is that they tend to be high in fiber and lower in saturated fat, sodium, and sugar, with zero cholesterol.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Ready to get started? Check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path.