

FOOD FOR THOUGHT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

People won't come if they know the food is vegan or vegetarian. Your members and patrons attend your shelter's events because they support your mission. It's just that simple! They want to help your organization and your efforts for the animals. The activities, entertainment, and fare at your events are side benefits; the heart of the matter is helping animals. Some organizations choose to focus on the event rather than the type of food served. Some casually mention that the offerings are animal-friendly, vegetarian, vegan, or plant-based. Others take it as an opportunity to engage their supporters and explain why they've chosen to adopt an animal-friendly menu (which is also better for the health of their supporters and for the planet). In our experience, most people understand why an organization that helps companion and some farm animals - rabbits, goats, horses, sheep, chickens - chooses not to serve them as food.

Vegan and vegetarian food is bland. On the contrary! Well-prepared food tastes great, regardless of whether it is vegan or not. In fact, animal-friendly foods are becoming so popular that Forbes Magazine identified "high end vegan" fare as the #1 food trend in 2013! And virtually anything can be made animal-friendly: BBQ, Southern, Thai, Italian, Mexican, you name it.

Vegan alternatives to animal products don't taste the same. Okay, this isn't exactly a myth. While some alternatives are shockingly similar to animal products, most have their own taste and texture. There are many brands of veggie hot dogs, chicken nuggets, and burgers, and they all taste and feel different. Have a blind taste test with some of your volunteers and staff and see what they prefer - make it a fun event!

You may want to reach out to vegan-friendly businesses and ask about donations or samples to try. And if you're working with a caterer, restaurant or food truck, don't be shy about requesting a tasting of potential menu items. Most chefs appreciate the opportunity to experiment in the kitchen and want to satisfy their customers. And remember, while you can incorporate plant-based cheeses, dairy and meats into your offerings, you also can opt for veggies in their pure form too, as in eggplant 'parmesan' or portobello burgers.

Food for Thought and Animal Place are vegan advocates. Animal Place promotes a plant-based diet and vegan lifestyle because we rescue and advocate on behalf of farmed animals. It would make little sense for a farmed animal rescue to save a cow and then advocate eating cows, right? As an animal protection agency, you are held to a higher standard, a higher ethic. *Food for Thought* was developed to encourage and facilitate the aligning of your organization's ethics with your organization's actions through a board-approved policy change.

What about feeding the dogs and cats at my shelter animal products? *Food for Thought* is NOT about changing the menu policy of the rescued dogs and cats (or other animals) at your shelter.

What if someone does complain? We would ask, what about all the attendees that don't complain? This majority tends to reflect your happy customer base. But if someone does make a suggestion, use it as constructive criticism, not as a reason to alter a policy that is, at its heart, in the best interest of the animals you rescue and protect. Ask your current caterer about plant-based menu options and if they can create a special menu for your event.