



NACAS Plant-Rich Champion Stories

Villanova Dining Services is Building Plant-Rich Dining Through Smart Swaps, Chef Leadership, and Data-Driven Design

At Villanova University, plant-rich dining is becoming a core expression of campus values—rooted in operational excellence, sustainability, and a commitment to great food. With a \$46 million dining program across 20 locations, Villanova serves a community that genuinely prefers eating on campus. When Director of Dining Services Andrew Camuso joined the university, he saw an opportunity to **rebuild momentum around plant-rich dining** and align it with Villanova's sustainability mission.

Drawing from earlier experience on the West Coast, Andrew partnered with Greener by Default (GBD) to reintroduce plant-rich strategies in a way that felt practical for a self-operated program. "You don't have to overhaul every dining hall at once. **You can start small and still make a big impact.**" Andrew explains. Today, Villanova's plant-rich approach is embedded in the culinary backbone of dining: chefs collaborate through monthly meetings, friendly competitions, and a shared pride in creating flavorful, plant-forward offerings. Director of Culinary Chef Chris Wiseely oversees a unified three-week menu cycle with plant-based rationing built into every station, ensuring consistency and innovation.

Progress has emerged through (sometimes invisible) **high-impact operational shifts**. A campus-wide move to plant-based mayo eliminated an estimated 68,000 eggs in a single year, instantly reducing carbon impact of 20% without students noticing the change. New plant-based cookies received more praise than the previous version. Breakfast burritos and other menu items



Villanova is normalizing plant-rich dining as part of the student experience.

use "tasty titles" that celebrate flavor first, making chefs flex their culinary muscles and helping students discover plant-based dishes organically. As Andrew puts it, "We're not forcing anyone into a certain diet. We're **nudging, educating, and offering great food** that happens to be plant-rich."

Behind the scenes, **Villanova is strengthening the business case for plant-rich dining**. Tools like Leanpath help track waste and inform the redesign of menus to reduce both cost and environmental impact. Local sourcing partnerships, such as the monthly spotlight with nearby farms, support both sustainability metrics and menu appeal. As Andrew explains, the "green ROI" is easy to communicate when small price increases (like a few cents per cookie) bring measurable carbon reductions and support institutional goals.



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For Andrew, one of the partnership's greatest strengths is that **Greener By Default keeps the work moving.** In a fast-paced dining



A monthly spotlight featuring local farmers builds connection and menu appeal.

environment where priorities shift daily, Greener By Default provides data, sourcing support, ongoing guidance, and accountability that helps Villanova maintain momentum. The result is **a dining program that now normalizes plant-rich food as part of everyday life:** from athletes looking for nutrient-dense meals to freshmen discovering new flavors in their first semester.

Villanova's journey shows how plant-rich dining thrives when it is integrated into the craft of cooking, supported by data, aligned with values, and built through manageable, meaningful steps.

We are excited about the next steps Villanova will take!