

The Foundations of Plant-Based Vitality

Why plant-based eating isn't about what you give up, but what you gain

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Welcome,

I'm Caterina, a Nutritionist, Biology Researcher and passionate about Ecology and Conservation

I grew up in the hills of Bergamo, learning to read the seasons, tend the land, and recognise wild plants long before I ever opened a nutrition textbook. That early education — alongside a Bachelor's in Biology and two Master's degrees — taught me one thing above all: our bodies are designed to be nourished by what the earth offers. Science and tradition, it turns out, have always been telling the same story.

This guide distils the foundational framework I use with my private clients. It will give you a clear, practical starting point. What it won't do is replace a personalised approach, because your body, your history, and your relationship with food are unique. That's what we do together in a consultation.

For now, let's begin.



The Real Question Isn't "Will I Get Enough Protein?"

If you're reading this, you're likely curious about plant-based nutrition — and probably a little worried. *Will I get enough protein? Will I be hungry? Will I feel deprived?*

Let's reframe that immediately.

The standard Western diet is built on subtraction: cut the calories, cut the fat, cut the carbs. No wonder it feels like punishment.

Plant-based nutrition, done mindfully, is about *addition*. Adding vibrant colours, diverse fibres, and powerful phytonutrients that your body has been quietly craving for years. The goal isn't restriction. It's abundance.

Here are the three foundational pillars I start with — every time.

Pillar 1 — The Macronutrient Mindset Shift

Most people imagine a plant-based plate as just a bowl of salad. That's exactly how it fails. A sustainable plant-based plate is built on four anchors: protein, healthy fats, fibre diversity and complex carbohydrates.



Protein — the variety principle

The most common question I hear is: *"But where do you get your protein?"* The honest answer is: everywhere, in layers. Your body doesn't need a single heroic protein source; it thrives on variety. Legumes, tofu, tempeh, edamame, whole grains, and seeds, eaten across the day, naturally provide a complete amino acid profile.

A quick comparison worth knowing: 100g of cooked lentils delivers around 9 grams of protein, 8g of gut-nourishing fibre, plus iron, magnesium and folate. It does things beef simply cannot.

Fats — the upgrade, not the elimination

Plant-based doesn't mean fat-free. Your brain is roughly 60% fat — it needs quality Omega-3s to keep your mood stable and your thinking sharp. Rather than relying on fish, we look to ground flaxseed, chia seeds, hemp hearts, and walnuts as everyday sources.

Fibre — the unsung hero

Most people eating a Western diet consume far less fibre than their bodies need. When you shift toward plants, this changes dramatically — and your gut will thank you. Fibre feeds your microbiome, the vast community of bacteria living in your intestine that influences everything from your immune system to your mood. It slows digestion, stabilises blood sugar, and keeps you genuinely full between meals. Unlike protein and fat, fibre is found exclusively in plants — which means every legume, whole grain, vegetable, and piece of fruit you add to your plate is quietly doing work that no supplement can fully replicate.

Carbohydrates — the engine, not the enemy

Complex carbohydrates — sweet potatoes, whole grains, quinoa, oats, beans — are the premium fuel your cells need to produce sustained energy. They are not the problem. They are, quite literally, the engine.

Pillar 2 — The Rainbow Rule

Forget counting calories for a moment. I ask my clients to count colours instead.

Plants contain phytonutrients — natural compounds that protect your cells from ageing, inflammation, and disease. Each colour signals a different group of these compounds, doing different jobs in your body.

Red (*tomatoes, red peppers, watermelon*)

Rich in lycopene — supports heart health and helps protect the skin.



Orange & Yellow (*carrots, squash, sweet potatoes*)

Rich in beta-carotene — essential for vision, immune function, and cell repair.

Green (*spinach, kale, broccoli, Swiss chard*)

Packed with chlorophyll, iron, calcium and B-vitamins — key for muscle and bone health and mental clarity.

Purple & Blue (*blueberries, aubergine, red cabbage*)

Contain anthocyanins — potent brain-protective compounds that support memory and focus.



White & Brown (*garlic, onions, mushrooms, cauliflower*)

Contain allicin, a powerful anti-inflammatory and gut-healing properties.

Your 3-day practice: Before lunch or dinner, simply look at your plate. Do you have at least four colours? If not, ask yourself: *what one colourful vegetable could I add to this?* Don't overthink portions yet. Just start seeing colour.

Pillar 3 — The Easy Swap Checklist

We are not overhauling your life overnight. We are making small, manageable shifts that build momentum. Take this and stick it on your fridge.

Morning

- Swap cow's milk for oat or soy milk in your coffee or tea
- Instead of sugary cereal, try overnight oats with chia seeds and berries

Lunch

- Swap deli meat for a hummus and roasted vegetable stack on wholegrain bread
- Add a handful of fresh spinach to your soup, wrap, or grain bowl

Dinner

- Replace half your usual meat portion with roasted chickpeas or lentils
- Fill at least half your plate with steamed or roasted vegetables

Small changes, done consistently, build a completely different relationship with food over time.

A word on the Mediterranean diet

It's worth saying clearly: a well-structured, traditional Mediterranean diet, rich in vegetables, legumes, whole grains, olive oil, and seasonal produce, already embodies many of the principles in this guide.

It is widely recognised as one of the most balanced and health-supportive dietary patterns in the world, and it includes meat and fish in moderate, mindful amounts.

I am not here to tell you that omnivores are wrong.

What I do believe, both scientifically and personally, is that the more plant-forward your plate, the more your body — and the planet — benefits. If a fully plant-based lifestyle feels like too big a leap right now, that's completely fine. Starting with one plant-based meal a day is already a meaningful, conscious step.

And in my experience, it's often the step that changes everything.

.. and B12?

B12 is the one nutrient that a plant-based diet cannot reliably provide through food alone.

B12 is produced by microorganisms in soil and water, and while animals accumulate it in their tissues, plants do not. If you are eating predominantly or fully plant-based, supplementation is not optional — it is essential.

The good news is that a simple, inexpensive daily or weekly supplement covers your needs completely. I always recommend checking your levels through a blood test before starting, so you know exactly where you stand. This is one of the first things we look at together in a consultation.

This Is the Blueprint — Not the Full Plan

This guide gives you a powerful, honest starting point. But it is, by design, the general version.

In a 1:1 consultation, we go much further. We look at your specific context — your energy levels, your digestion, your relationship with food, your lifestyle and goals. We build something that actually fits *you*, not a generic template.

If something in these pages sparked a sense of *"yes, this is what I've been missing"* — let's talk.

→ **Book your free 15-minute Clarity Call** via the website or send me an email

We'll look at where you are now, identify what's holding you back, and map out a clear path forward. No pressure. Just clarity.

Looking forward to meeting you,

Caterina



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