

*One of the most common questions parents ask about our camp menu is “how will my child get enough protein if there is very little meat served.” We asked board certified pediatrician, Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, camp doctor and long time Ramahnik Dr. Ali Levine to address this concern.*

Ramah in the Rockies believes that the food served at camp should reflect our social and environmental values. We teach campers to be environmental stewards, to practice tikkun olam by respecting and nurturing our natural places and to care for others. One of the most significant ways that we can impact these causes as a community is through our diet. The United Nations Environment Programme has stated that a “global shift away from meat, dairy and eggs is crucial to save the planet from world hunger, fuel poverty and the worst impacts of climate change.”

While a primarily vegetarian menu may be different from what your child typically eats at home, it is safe and healthy for any growing child.

**“Why do you consider frequent meat meals to be bad for the environment?”**

### **Greenhouse gasses**

The meat industry produces about 18% of worldwide greenhouse gasses - including carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. That’s more than the entire world wide transportation industry. If every person ate 1 less serving of chicken per week, that would be equivalent to taking 500,000 cars off the road.

### **Fossil Fuel Consumption**

Producing 1 calorie of animal protein takes about 11 times the fossil fuel as producing 1 calorie of plant protein.

### **Water**

Nearly half of all water used in the United States goes to producing animal protein for food. Producing 1 lb of meat takes about 2,400 gallons of water versus 1lb of wheat takes about 25 gallons. You would save more water by not eating 1lb of meat than by not taking a shower for 6 months!

### **Land**

About 30% of the earth’s land mass is used for raising animals for food. The equivalent of 7 football fields per minute are bulldozed to make room for more farm animals. This has contributed to the destruction of millions and millions of precious natural areas including the rainforest.

**“But my child needs more protein than a vegetarian diet can provide.”**

## Protein

What is protein? The functional units of muscle tissue are protein fibers, and enzymes are also considered proteins. Amino acids are organic compounds that link together to form proteins. An essential amino acid is one which the human body cannot produce on its own, and must be obtained from diet. All essential amino acids are easily obtained from plant sources.

### Protein from vegetables is scientifically higher quality than protein from animals

Plant foods that provide protein — which include all grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, and vegetables — contain all of the essential amino acids that are needed by humans. The largest epidemiological study to date on human nutrition wrote: “There is a mountain of compelling research showing that plant protein allows for slow but steady synthesis of new proteins, and is the healthiest type of protein.” The myth that we only can get complete proteins from animal sources seems ironic, when the very animals we eat for protein are themselves herbivores. If the science doesn’t speak for itself, there are also many vegetarian and vegan athletes who demonstrate peak performance on plant based diets. And not to worry, there is plenty of dairy and egg protein at camp for those who prefer.

### It’s easy to get enough protein

A joint panel of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations carefully examined protein requirements at various stages in life. It is recommended that people consume 0.80 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day. A camper weighing 100 pounds needs to consume approximately 36 grams of protein per day.

### What would a typical menu be that would provide enough protein at camp?

For the 100lb camper in the above example, here are a few examples of how easy it is to get that 36g of daily protein (and more!) at camp:

TYPICAL CAMP FOODS	Grams of Protein
1 cup oatmeal or granola	6g
1 hard boiled egg	6g
1/2c cottage cheese	14g
1c milk or nondairy milk	8g
1c yogurt	13g
1c melon or banana	2g
1c tofu	9g
1c beans	14g

<b>1c pasta</b>	<b>7g</b>
<b>1c rice</b>	<b>6g</b>
<b>1 ear of corn on the cob</b>	<b>3g</b>
<b>1 slice whole wheat bread</b>	<b>4g</b>
<b>2 tbsp peanut butter</b>	<b>8g</b>

**“But my child won’t eat that!”**

Everyone is a little bit out of their comfort zone at camp. Sleeping in a tent without a bathroom, camping in the wilderness, rafting down a river, riding a mountain bike, making new friends - these new and challenging experiences are what camp is all about. The food offerings at camp will be an adjustment for some - but not to worry - our staff is hard at work planning kid friendly meals and snacks. There is always a wide variety available. The quinoa salad and granola are amazing - but so are the pizza and brownies :) If difficulty being flexible with foods is a barrier to attending camp, please reach out to our camp wellness team.