

PURIS: pea protein to feed the plant-based boom

CASE STUDY | Apr 20, 2022

As the largest producer of pea protein in North America, PURIS serves a market that's thriving as more people adopt vegan, vegetarian, and flexitarian diets. Its meat-free products boast nutritional benefits and genuine eco-credentials to help elevate plant-based dining for conscious consumers.

AUTHORS

Jacqueline Salomé

LOCATIONS:
UNITED STATES

SECTORS:
EATING AND DRINKING
FOOD
DIETS



EXPERTS

Sabina Vyas

HIGHLIGHTS

- 01** PURIS offers pea protein-infused meat and dairy alternatives that are made using a sustainable and regenerative farming model
- 02** Plant-based products are appealing to a growing number of omnivores, with the health and environmental benefits among the biggest draws
- 03** The inspirational potential of social media videos and influencers on home cooking offers new paths for plant-based brands to reach potential customers

DATA

- **29%** of American adults eat meatless products at least once per month or more, rising to **40%** among those aged 18-44
- **58%** of Americans believe that plant-based diets represent a fundamental change in how people eat
- **37%** of Americans who regularly eat meatless products are driven by environmental motivations, while **33%** are driven by ethical factors

SCOPE

PURIS is not only the largest producer of pea protein in North America but is also seen as somewhat of a trailblazer in the expanding plant-based food sector, with Fast Company naming it as one of the most innovative food companies of 2021. [1] Offering products that mimic the taste and texture of meaty comfort foods – think nuggets, chicken breasts, breaded burgers, taco 'meat', and lasagna filling – PURIS is feeding into a major plant-based eating boom. "Consumers purchased more plant-based foods than ever before in 2021, and the US market is now valued at \$7.4 billion," says Sabina Vyas, the senior director of impact strategies at the Plant Based Foods Association. [2] But it's not just vegetarians and vegans responsible for this uptick – in 2020, 36% of adults nationwide identified as flexitarian because they regularly had vegan or vegetarian food between meat- or poultry-based meals. [3]

By creating nutritionally equivalent versions of conventional food and drink – like dairy-free milk, yogurt, cream cheese, protein powders, and energy bars – PURIS' varied range makes it easy for people to weave meat-free products into their regular home cooking while meeting the health and sustainability goals that drive them toward plant-based eating. According to a 2020 survey of adults who claimed to be eating plant-based food more often, 65% attributed their decision to the health benefits, 48% were motivated by environmental impact, and 26% cited animal welfare. [4]

The adaptability of pea protein is also part of a plan to make food production more sustainable. Recognizing that animal protein alone can't provide enough nutrition to serve the surging global population, PURIS' goal is to "sustainably nourish ten billion people by 2050." The company is doing this through a regenerative, non-GMO food supply system,

in which its exclusive high-protein pea seed is grown by a network of US farmers who extract 100% of the nutrition from each plant without any waste.



Plants can offer a sustainable solution for the planet's protein needs

PURIS (2022)

CONTEXT

OMNIVORES GO PART-TIME PLANT-BASED

With 29% of American adults saying they eat meat alternatives at least once per month or more, rising to 40% among those aged 18-44, it's clear that plant-based options have appeal beyond vegetarians and vegans. [5] Searches for terms like 'plant-based' and 'meatless' rose in 2020 as lockdowns spurred interest in healthy home-cooked meals, with brands such as Impossible Foods and Alpha Foods seeing considerable growth. [6] Beyond Meat's Beyond Sausage was the tenth best-selling new food or beverage item that year, and 36 of the top 100 best-sellers were plant-based. [7] The success of such products doesn't appear to be a passing fad, with 58% of Americans believing that plant-based diets represent a fundamental change in how people eat. [4]

OPTIMIZED HEALTHY EATING

"When it comes to consumer motivation for choosing plant-based meats, taste paired with health is key," says Vyas. [2] Plant-based eating is largely driven by wellbeing concerns, with 47% of all Americans saying that meatless products are healthier than meat products. [5] Yet while people perceive such items as healthy, nearly two-thirds of plant-based eaters want to see more meat alternatives made from whole foods like PURIS' pea protein. [7] As health-motivated consumers increasingly expect multiple benefits packed into one product for fast and optimized eating, brands like PURIS and Good Catch are making their alt-meat and seafood products as nutrient-packed and easy to prepare as possible.

EATING WITH THE PLANET IN MIND

Research from YouGov suggests that 37% of Americans who regularly eat meatless products are driven by environmental motivations, while 33% are driven by ethical factors. [5] Sustainability is becoming increasingly central to everyday choices, with 77% of Americans expressing concern about the environmental impact of products they buy. As a positive sign for the food industry, however, 78% say food and grocery brands are successfully demonstrating their commitment to the planet. [8] This is partly due to the likes of Oatly being very vocal about sustainability, using their packaging as a 'billboard' for climate information – a marketing strategy that can increase sales by up to 25%. [9] Regenerative agriculture is also becoming a new marker of eco-friendliness, backed by brands like PURIS, Alter Eco, and Milkadamia. [10]



47% of Americans agree that meatless products are healthier than meat products

@purisfoods | Instagram (2021)

INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

TARGETING FLEXITARIANS

As flexitarians make up the majority of plant-based eaters, brands may appeal to these consumers with meat-free replicas of comfort foods they're used to. "We've seen retailers increase their plant-based food sales by integrating plant-based foods with their animal-based counterparts on grocery shelves," says Vyas, which aligns with the fact that 43% of Instacart customers who buy plant-based meat also buy conventional meat. [2][6] But what exactly attracts flexitarians? "Descriptive and appetizing names motivate consumers to choose plant-based foods," adds Vyas, citing playful names like Atlanta's infamous fast food joint Slutty Vegan. [2]

REIMAGING PLANT-BASED CUISINE

Considering that six in ten plant-based consumers would eat more meat alternatives if they were less processed, experiments with new protein sources, textures, and tastes can help brands show a commitment to creating products that are as natural as possible. Half of plant-based consumers are interested in using more nuts and seeds as a protein source, while 43% want to use more legumes like PURIS' pea protein, and 42% want to see more grains like quinoa and oats in products. [7] Big Mountain Foods is setting an example for the sector by making veggie grounds from superfood-packed cauliflower and lion's mane mushrooms.

VEGETARIAN, BUT MAKE IT VIRAL

Plant-based foodstuffs are proving popular on social media, with #vegandiet and #plantbaseddiet among the top 15 diet trends on TikTok in 2021. [11] As 44% of Americans tried making a social media food trend in 2021 while 36% said social media changed how they approached home cooking, plant-based brands have an opportunity to reach more potential consumers through viral videos and influencers, giving flexitarians inspiration and encouragement to use new mock meat and dairy products, like the example set by Earth's Own outreach on TikTok and Instagram. [12]

RELATED



Plant-based demand pushes supermarkets to innovate

• NOV 18, 2021

Multiple major UK supermarkets are launching ranges of own-brand plant-based food and



Why is veganism booming among Latinx communities?

REPORT • APR 13, 2022

Countering the stereotype of Hispanic cuisine being meat-heavy, a host of chefs and influencers are



'Designer fats' elevate foods for plant-based diners

• MAR 21, 2022

In an attempt to encourage plant-based diets, start-up Yali Bio has developed new types of fat that help



Slutty Vegan: playful plant-based fast food

CASE STUDY • AUG 11, 2020

While the US has its fair share of plant-based spots that focus on 'clean' eating, with its flavorful

SOURCES

1. Fast Company (March 2021)
2. Interview with Sabina Vyas conducted by the author
3. Packaged Facts (November 2020)
4. FoodNavigator-USA (July 2020)
5. YouGov (June 2021)
6. Instacart (May 2021)
7. IFT (August 2021)
8. GreenPrint (March 2021)
9. World Resources Institute (February 2022)
10. Forbes (December 2020)
11. The Vegan Kind (September 2021)
12. Instacart (December 2021)

Want to know more?

Canvas8 are a leading behavioural insight practice. Working across media, communication and product design, we harness a range of research methods to reveal practical insights into what audiences really think and do.

EXPLORE THE PLATFORM

Unrivalled resource of 29,000+ articles on global consumer behaviour, available exclusively to members.

Your account manager:

karenm@canvas8.com

BECOME A MEMBER

Sales opt here for the reader.

Dominic Rowe | Group Commercial Director

dominic@canvas8.com

BESPOKE SOLUTIONS

From ethnographic research to strategic planning workshops, we offer a range of solutions tailored to enhance your understanding and inspire creativity.

James Cunningham | Group Head of Strategic Partnerships

james@canvas8.com