

One necessary piece of reducing our carbon footprint may be tough for Montanans to swallow: We need to eat less beef.

That's because meat production – and especially beef production – has an outsize impact on the environment.

Here's how National Public Radio's ["Life Kit"](#) podcast explained the problem in a recent broadcast:

"It requires a lot of land to raise cattle — and globally, many forests are being cleared to make room for those animals. Deforestation releases lots of heat-trapping carbon dioxide that had been stored in the trees into the environment. And cows themselves release a lot of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, [in the form of burps.](#)"

But the solution doesn't require eliminating beef consumption, according to Richard Waite, a senior research associate at the World Resources Institute.

Waite said Americans could have a significant impact by simply reducing their meat consumption by half. Instead of eating the equivalent of three burgers a week, we could eat 1.5 – something as simple as instituting "meatless Mondays."

Such a reduction "would actually make it possible to feed 10 billion people by 2050 without any further deforestation," Waite said. That's a big step toward providing a healthier future for hungry families worldwide, *while* taking action to stop the planet's warming.

So how do we make the transition? NPR's "Life Kit" provided a wealth of information in its broadcast, available for reading or listening [at this link](#).

"I always tell people to start by adding to the familiar foods that they're already making," [Tracye McQuirter](#), a public health nutritionist and author, told the podcast. "Having stir-fry? Swap in plant-based proteins for meat — try adding tofu, cashews, almonds, mushrooms or edamame."

She also provided a couple of easy, delicious recipes, one of which we're republishing here, the other available [at the link](#).

Vegetable Pot Pie

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons water or extra-virgin olive oil

1 yellow onion, diced

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

½ cup finely chopped mushrooms

1/2 (13.5-ounce) can light or regular coconut milk (or more, if desired)

1 tablespoon whole wheat or oat flour

3 tablespoons nutritional yeast

2 teaspoons sea salt

1 teaspoon thyme

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

2 cups frozen mixed vegetables (carrots, corn, peas, and green beans)

1 (13.5-ounce) can or carton of chickpeas, drained

2 (9-inch) frozen prepared whole-grain pie crusts, thawed

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375°F.

In a large soup pot, heat the water or oil over medium heat. Stir in the onions and garlic, and sauté until the onions are translucent, about 3 minutes. Add mushrooms and sauté for another 3

minutes. Add the milk, flour, nutritional yeast, salt, thyme, and cayenne, and mix until thoroughly combined. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring often. Place the vegetable mixture in a large bowl and stir in frozen vegetables and chickpeas. Stir in black pepper, taste, and adjust seasonings, as desired.

Spoon the filling into the bottom pie crust. Cover the filling with the top pie crust, cut away the excess crust, and crimp the edges of the crusts together to seal. Make three small slits in the top center. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until crust turns golden brown. Let cool for about 10 minutes before serving. The pot pie can be stored in the freezer in an airtight container for up to 3 months.

Makes 6-8 servings.

Do you have a meatless recipe to share with our First United Methodist congregation? Email it to Green Team member Sherry Devlin at sherrydevlin@gmail.com and we'll include it in a future article. Thank you!