A NEW WAY OF EATING
There’s a relatively new term buzzing around the food world that you may or may not have heard of, plant forward. What does that mean you ask? Plant forward focuses on more vegetable centric dishes with meat playing more of a supporting role. Think blended burgers, stir-fry’s or grain bowls where meat is almost like a condiment. Flavors are bold and it’s all about the dish’s deliciousness whether it happens to be vegan or vegetarian, or not. Diners aren’t interested in completely removing meat from their diets so embracing a diet that is mostly plants with some meat here and there provides a comfortable middle ground.

THE CHALLENGE WITH RED MEAT
Conventional animal agriculture is resource intense and less than stellar for the environment. Ruminant animals release methane gas into the atmosphere which is about twenty five times more intense than carbon dioxide. Let’s face it, our country’s enormous appetite for beef is not so great for our health and the health of our planet. While most of us eat enough protein overall, they type of protein foods we are choosing could use some improvement. Shifting to legumes and other plant proteins can add important nutrients and reduce saturated fat. According to the NRDC, beef is approximately 34 times more carbon intensive than beans and legumes, pound for pound. You don’t have to completely cut meat from your diet to improve your health or your environmental footprint.

HOW TO EAT MORE ‘PLANT FORWARD’
Chefs are not only swapping out red meat for other animal proteins but also creating insanely delicious plant forward menus that can be better for our waistlines and the environment. Load up your plate with more vegetables, fruit, whole grains and legumes. More plants on your plate tends to mean more nutrients and fewer calories...a win, win for health. There are also great options for diners that still want to include meat in their diets. The ‘Switch It Up’ campaign takes the basic burger and replaces it with healthier, delicious burgers that don’t include red meat, like grilled turkey burgers or blackened Portobello burgers. Want to reduce your meat intake but not sure how to get started? Start out slow and consider skipping meat in your meal every now and then. Our ‘Be a Flexitarian’ campaign encourages diners to skip meat once a week and offers flexibility and delicious plant forward dishes.

Reference:
https://www.nrdc.org/experts/sujatha-jahagirdar/less-beef-less-carbon
Written by Julia Jordan and Jennifer M. Roberts, MS, RD.