

CAMPUS DINING



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University Foodservice
Professionals!**

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Keeping Students On Campus for Dining

There are competing options available near colleges and universities for offsite dining. Food delivery apps and restaurants that offer late delivery near colleges and universities can create competitive challenges. Below are several tips on keeping students on campus.

- Place dining options in different locations for convenience and speed.
- Offer to-go packaging to enable students to take food to class, a meeting, or their dorm.
- Allow students to order and pay for takeout or delivery using a mobile app.
- Establish meal plans at various price points to attract students who live on and off campus.
- Offer meal options for people with allergies, plant-based diets, and religious or cultural dietary restrictions.

Smart Food Technology On Campus

Implementing innovative technology on campus is not just a win; it's a power move for universities and students. Smart food technology, with its fast and efficient service, is helping to overcome labor shortages and provides a seamless dining experience for students.

Many universities are turning to technologies such as self-driving delivery robots, smart food lockers, self-ordering kiosks, food apps, and electric, ventless cooking equipment for strategic campus placement.



To take it a step further, many universities are partnering with Grubhub On Site, making it easy for managers to add and operate these new tech services and for students to place mobile orders on the same familiar Grubhub app.

Source: GrubHub On Site, On-Campus Dining Trends to Pay Attention To



Campus Dining Differentiators

Sustainability and the Environment

Environmental responsibility and sustainability top the list of student and university concerns. Students want to be empowered to make choices based on climate impact.

Sodexo started initiatives like the Sustainable Food Barometer and commitments to plant-forward campus menus.

The Sustainable Food Barometer is a comprehensive study examining attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable eating. It provides valuable insights into the preferences of the current generation of college students.

According to the findings, 69% of U.S. students are interested in consuming more sustainably on campus, and universities are taking action.

Many schools are switching to biodegradable or reusable to-go containers to reduce landfill contributions and satisfy students' desire for eco-friendly dining.

Several schools are providing more transparency on how their menu items impact the environment by including labels on individual menu items illustrating their respective carbon footprints and highlighting dishes that have less of an environmental impact.

Universities are not just talking the talk but walking the walk. Chartwells Higher Ed and Aramark, along with some universities have all taken tangible steps to promote sustainable dining. They have added climate-impact labels to menu items, designated items with a lower climate impact, and introduced the World Resources Institute's Cool Food Meals badge to highlight their commitment to sustainability.

Sources:

[Sodexo](#), Empowering Students to Embrace Sustainable Eating, [Chartwells Higher Education](#), [Aramark](#)

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Food Trends Impacting On Campus Dining

Custom, global, sustainable, and delicious are key ingredients behind Gen Z's cravings. Although burgers and pizza will not disappear, there are significant food trends to pay attention to.

Plant-based Food Choices

The plant-based wave continues to take the industry by storm, particularly among the college demographic.

According to research by Chartwells Higher Ed, nearly 80% of Gen Z consumers eat plant-based meals weekly. In addition, six in ten Gen Zers are looking to boost their intake of plant-based foods.

Recognizing the growing interest in plant-based foods, major foodservice vendors like Sodexo and Aramark are proactively adjusting their menus. Sodexo's college and university division, for instance, aims to have 42% of its menu items plant-based by 2025, while Aramark plans to reach 44% of plant-based offerings in residential dining by the same year.

Entirely plant-based eateries are starting to pop up at leading universities across the country.

“The future of food is all about what students are craving now. Gen Z is hungry for that viral TikTok recipe. That authentic global delicacy. That juicy, plant-based sandwich.” —Sodexo

Cuisine with Authenticity

Students are hungry for food that feels real. Authenticity, particularly in international offerings, continues to be in demand. Many operations are tapping into the cultural traditions of their chefs and customers, asking them for recipe ideas and feedback to provide more authentic global options.

Custom-made Dishes

Students are looking for customizable meal options. Made-to-order meal options, authentic

chef-prepared global cuisine, and meals prepared from scratch with whole foods are all very popular among college students.

“Flexibility and versatility is key to a successful campus foodservice program. Students want more tech, apps, and to-go options. But they also want dining with socialization and flexible dining hours.” —the Foodservice Director

Source: [Foodservice Director](#)



Staying On Top of Student Ideals

Inside Higher Ed and College Pulse did a nationally representative survey of 1,200 four- and two-year college students to gain more insight into students' views on particular issues. Here are some results showing what students want regarding the preferences surveyed.

- More variety and quality of flavors.
- Fewer ultra-processed foods.
- Local ingredients, organic ingredients, and low-sugar foods.
- Hours of operation to include early mornings and late nights.
- Convenient food service locations throughout the campus.
- Ability to use dining points or dollars across campus.
- Detailed labeling of ingredients to assist with dietary restrictions.
- Food delivery to locations on campus.

Source: [Inside Higher Ed](#)

Ideas and Insights on Menu Items

Chartwells Higher Education provided insights on food to consider including on campus, based on top student trends.

While plant-based meat has been rising in popularity for some time, **plant-based seafood** is also on the rise, with the market size estimated to reach \$1.3 billion by 2031.

Functional foods will become staples in students' wellness routines.

Snacks are no longer just for hunger but also ways to promote improved mood regulation and assist with factors like sleep, focus, and energy. With vitamins and ingredients like oat bran fiber, soy protein, and fish oil fatty acids, food is now providing physiological benefits to consumers.

Cravings for comfort food.

Modern food culture is not just about taste and health, but also about emotions and memories. It's turning back the clock to bring back nostalgic childhood foods. These flavors of the past not only provide comfort but also create a strong emotional connection, reminding us of simpler times and cherished moments.

Fermented drinks for gut health.

Drinks like kombucha and probiotic waters are still gaining popularity as consumers focus more on digestive health and the other benefits that fermented drinks provide. 66% of consumers who drink kombucha do so for the probiotics, highlighting the importance of gut health and overall wellness.

Chaos cuisine and unique cooking "smashups" will rise in popularity.

Chefs and consumers alike are embracing chaos cooking or combining classic recipes or cuisines. Dishes like Wonton Nacho Bowls with Orange Chicken and Vegetables, Spicy Street Corn Macaroni and Cheese, and Tandoori Spaghetti are just a few of the many possibilities.

Source: [Chartwells Higher Education](#)



“Food holds significant importance when it comes to building strong bonds within your campus community.” —Fooda

New food and concept innovations to meet the cravings of students.

Have you heard of Boba Lifestyle?

Boba, a.k.a. bubble tea – is taking college campuses by storm with its flavors and social media-ready aesthetics.

Boba is a mix of tea, milk, and soft-yet-chewy tapioca pearls. It's so popular that students across the U.S. are saying it's not just a drink...it's a way of life.

When Sodexo organized a Boba pop-up event last fall, campuses sold out in record time, and students (along with faculty and staff) lined up for seconds. Because of its popularity, it will be back, but with a new twist: Boba Floats.

Sodexo also created Food Hall: Foodiverse to meet Gen Z's craving for authentic experiences and custom options. It features Sodexo's best culinary creations, which are chef-crafted and customized for every student.

Source: [Sodexo](#)



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Hats off to college foodservice teams that make it all happen!

How are College Foodservice Teams Keeping Up with the Demand?

Managing college campus foodservice is a complex task, fraught with challenges. It requires constant adaptation to evolving demands and trends, all while grappling with issues like labor shortages and rising food costs.

College foodservice teams are demonstrating remarkable ingenuity in their approach. They effectively cross-train workers, provide flex hours, make the most of their ingredients, and implement initiatives that focus on reducing food waste and energy efficiency, a testament to their resourcefulness.

Many universities are leveraging the power of technology and innovative equipment to enhance their foodservice. These tools enable automation, self-service for students, and the establishment of foodservice points across the campus, offering unparalleled convenience.

FOUR ACTIONABLE TAKEAWAYS

- 1.** Stay on top of and incorporate the latest foodservice equipment innovations. Foodservice equipment manufacturers are continuously developing new and improved equipment to provide more solutions and opportunities for success.
- 2.** Incorporate more electric, ventless cooking equipment to enhance flexibility and enable easy setup of kitchens, pop-up food stations, and food courts across the campus. This not only offers convenience but also paves the way for exciting new culinary possibilities.
- 3.** Enhance contactless food-to-go services through campus apps, hot food lockers, food vending applications, and kiosks. Some universities have started implementing food delivery robots with advanced sensors, GPS, navigational cameras, and scanners.
- 4.** Partner with industry leaders, including on-site restaurants, on-site delivery services, and campus culinary innovation experts.

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It's In The Ingredients

Easy ways to turn favorite classic meals into healthy meals.

By incorporating these simple ingredient swaps, health or diet-conscious students can enjoy their favorite comfort foods without the guilt. Be sure to list the ingredients on your labels.

Swap Sour Cream with Full-Fat Yogurt (Traditional or Greek): Based on your recipe, consider the type of yogurt to use. Greek yogurt offers a texture similar to sour cream, while traditional yogurt imparts a taste reminiscent of the original ingredient.

Swap Salt with Herbs and Spices: Spices not only enhance flavor but also provide a plethora of antioxidants and micronutrients. To maximize their taste potential, consider toasting your spices with dry heat or frying them in olive oil. This method helps to release the aromatic compounds in the spices, enhancing their flavor and making your dishes more delicious.

Swap Butter (in Cooking) with Olive Oil: Opt for olive oil as a healthier alternative, considering factors such as flavor profile, smoke point, and unsaturated fat content. Choose the appropriate oil based on your cooking method to achieve optimal results.

Swap Butter (in Baking) with Applesauce: Replace butter with unsweetened applesauce in baking recipes for a lighter, healthier option. Applesauce provides the moisture to bind dry ingredients together while adding soluble fiber to your baked goods. With a simple 1:1 ratio swap, you can enjoy moist, flavorful treats without sacrificing taste or texture.

Swap Heavy Cream with Evaporated Milk or Coconut Cream: Reduce the fat and calorie content of your dishes by substituting heavy cream with evaporated milk or coconut cream. Evaporated milk offers a consistency similar to heavy cream but with half the calories and fat, while coconut cream adds a delightful tropical twist to your recipes while providing a lighter alternative to heavy cream.

Higher Learning Deserves Higher Standards

Drive Foot Traffic, Engagement, and Sales on Campus

Keep Students in the Dining Halls

We can help encourage students to spend more money on food in dining halls rather than going elsewhere to eat by providing the opportunity to serve more types of meals via an array of fresh food merchandisers and display cases.



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How are trends, concepts, and food innovations discovered by campus partners?

Sodexo is one of the leaders in researching and creating new culinary trends and innovations for campuses. Below is an example of what they do in their discovery process.

Follow the Students

Sodexo embarks on an exciting adventure, exploring new culinary experiences like that new Korean taco place, that Brazilian food truck, and that Thai boat noodle shop. The goal is to immerse in the up-and-coming flavors, then curate the top tastes and bring them to your campus.

Listen to Campuses

Sodexo believes that the journey to discover what's next in campus dining is a collaborative one. They pay attention to the insights of operators and the voice of Gen Z. This collective feedback ensures that new culinary innovations are a win for both the student and the university.



Gather Data

Data collection is critical in determining the success of culinary and concept innovations. It inspires new ideas and ways to enhance successful ones.

The Sodexo team also collects real-time feedback from students, asking them what experiences they want and which pop-up event they want brought back to their campus. Going straight to the source—students—helps to ensure that every pop-up is a home run.

Source: [Sodexo](#)

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