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Earth Week Event at C-Street Highlights Sustainable Vegan Menu

Sophia Marcinek, Volunteer Reporter

College dining is notoriously a point of discontentment among university students. Finding options that such a wide range of students will enjoy can be difficult for universities, so dietary restrictions on top of the already present challenge of enjoying eating on campus seems to add an extra layer of stress to students and staff alike.

First-year Criminal Justice major, Ana Carpenter, is a vegetarian but has only experienced some issues dining on campus.

“Being vegetarian limits my choices of what I can and can’t eat so I have to get creative, but at Seattle University it is much easier than most people think it would be,” Carpenter said.

This earth month, Seattle U took extra steps to include more options when it comes to dietary restrictions throughout Earth Week. The campus dining hall had a one-day, no-waste vegan menu and another one-day vegan menu. On both days, different options were offered, exploring new ways to create inclusive options for students. These menus included pumpkin seed basil hummus, chard and spring pea risotto, as well as a no-bake vegan walnut brownie.

Campus Executive Chef Andrew Gaynor, has been working with Compass Group, the primary provider for on campus dining, for 15 years. Gaynor helps make many of the decisions when it comes to new menus at Seattle U.

“We’ve [compass group] been working with the sustainability team about trying to expand our vegan footprint so this [Earth day menu] is kind of the first step in that,” Gaynor said.

One particular dining station, Thrive Without Nine, is one of the only options to eat for some students with more severe allergies. This allergy-sensitive food station avoids 9 common allergens, and up until the last quarter of the year was only open on the weekends.

“We did just get feedback that the Resident Hall Association (RHA) shared with us last week about the fact that thrive hasn’t been open on the weekends. So, starting this Saturday [April 24th 2021], thrive reopens on the weekends.” Gaynor said.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way that on campus dining works. Many students are not on campus and that means limited hours and options when it comes to food. David Cobb, the Chef de Cuisine at Seattle U, talked about the disconnect between the students and staff.

“It’s definitely been a challenge not only to see your students on campus, but also our feedback mechanisms where years previously, we would sit down and meet with our RHA and hear feedback on a constant basis,” said Cobb.



Jordie Simpson

Beautiful vegan food options ready to be served.

Cobb is a staple in the campus dining hall community, wanting to befriend all of the Seattle U students on campus. Cobb empathized that if students have suggestions or worries about dining, that he is always open to talk and listen to students.

First-Year nursing major Kaylin Loo dines on campus frequently. At Seattle U, first and second-year students are mandated to live on campus, which means they utilize their dining plan almost everyday.

"I am impressed with the quality of food at Seattle U. Coming in I didn't know what to expect because I had heard stories about college food, but at Seattle U I find myself picking the vegetarian and allergen friendly options over any other food," Loo said.

Food options on campus, especially the allergen friendly options, are not limited to the specific students who need them, but are utilized by other students on campus as well. This allows students who are not traditionally exposed to these options to expand their knowledge of these different allergen-friendly foods.

Seattle U's Cherry Street Market makes an effort to try and be as inclusive as possible to as many students as possible.

"By having events like this [Earth Day menu] on campus it makes me feel more confident in having my needs met, especially with dietary restrictions" Carpenter said.

For more information on dining on campus, wellness, and what Cherry Street Market does to accommodate students, visit their website. Seattle U provides meetings with a dietitian, extensive online menus, more on a promise of sustainability and a multitude of other resources available to all students.