

Sustainability Report

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A note from BU Dining

Moving the Needle on Sustainable Dining

Last year was a milestone for our sustainability programs as we expanded existing initiatives, collaborated with collegiate and industry partners nationwide and beyond, increased our local, sustainable, and diverse purchasing by introducing high-quality products that enhance our menus, engaged with the BU community, and more.

This work is a team effort. Every day, our team of over 575 associates integrates sustainability initiatives across our 28 locations on the Charles River Campus. Engaging with students is a cornerstone of our approach, and we are deeply grateful for the invaluable contributions of student Zero Waste Guides, Food Waste Tracking Champions, interns, and collaborative student groups. Their involvement is pivotal to the success and growth of our program.

This report highlights the breadth of our sustainability efforts—from sourcing and waste prevention to diversion, efficient operations, community engagement, and more. To learn more, visit: www.bu.edu/dining/sustainability/



Lexie Raczka, Sustainability Director

**Looking ahead,
we will continue
to innovate to
tackle
sustainability
challenges
around waste,
procurement,
emissions, and
more.**

By the Numbers

Each year, BU Dining serves more than 7 million meals designed to positively impact the environment and the wellness of the BU community. We do this by serving fresh, wholesome foods and by promoting ecologically sound, socially responsible agriculture and food production.



21%

of food and beverages
sourced from local and/or
sustainable sources



948 TONS

of food waste diverted to
composting and
anaerobic digestion

7 MILLION
meals served each year



36

Weigh the
Waste events
held in the
dining halls

194K

Choose to Reuse
containers issued



8 CERTIFIED

Green Restaurants
across campus

**8,500
POUNDS**

of food donated to local
food recovery partners



Choose to Reuse

Fostering a Culture of Reuse

Choose to Reuse, our reusable to-go container program, saw significant growth during the 2023–2024 academic year, both in the number of participating locations and the amount of waste reduced. We issued **over 194,000 Choose to Reuse containers with an impressive 96% return rate.**

The program also contributed to a nearly 20% increase in “for here” orders—served on reusable dishware—resulting in an overall rise in reusable usage of more than 114%.

In its first year, Choose to Reuse attracted considerable attention. We presented the program at four conferences and hosted tours and calls with dozens of colleges, universities, and other stakeholders from across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The program was also featured in the Post-Landfill Action Network’s Reusable To-Go Manual and a Topanga.io case study.



In October 2023, we achieved the major milestone of issuing the 100,000th Choose to Reuse container





Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles for local and sustainable sourcing **reflect our commitment to environmentally sustainable and socially responsible food systems**. These principles recognize products with a strong local impact and/or 'best in class' third-party sustainability certifications. **In FY24, more than 21% of our food and beverage purchases were local and/or sustainable – an 18% increase from the year prior.**

Local

We work directly with local farmers, ranchers, and processors. By sourcing locally, we support the local food system and economy while helping to preserve farmland.

Our goal is to purchase products that are grown, harvested, caught, raised, produced, or processed within 250 miles of our campus. We prioritize businesses that are both local (within 250 miles) and independently or cooperatively owned. These standards encompass products with a local farm impact—those containing ingredients sourced from farms within the local radius—and a local business impact, meaning they come from local or cooperatively owned businesses within the same radius.

Local sourcing excludes products made by publicly traded or multinational companies, even if they have facilities within 250 miles of our campus.

Sustainable

We are aligned with AASHE STARS' list of recognized third-party certifications for **sustainable agriculture, sustainable seafood, fair trade/labor, and humane animal care** to ensure best-in-class sustainability accounting.

Diverse

In addition to local and sustainable sourcing, we are committed to sourcing from minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, LGBT-owned, small, or disadvantaged businesses. **Last year, 6.5% of our purchases were from diverse suppliers.**

Additionally, we source from a variety of B Corps, which exhibit transparent commitments and practices regarding social and environmental performance. Some of these businesses include Cabot, Stonyfield, Ben & Jerry's, Silk, and more.

Local Vendor Partners

Last year we worked with dozens of local vendors to source products across a wide-variety of food categories, including:

Baked Goods

- Bake-N-Joy – North Andover, MA
- Beigel's Bakery – Brooklyn, NY
- Brix Sugar Bakery – Malden, MA
- Calise & Sons Bakery – Lincoln, RI
- David's Cookies – Cedar Grove, NJ
- Fantini Bakery – Haverhill, MA
- Iggy's Bread – Cambridge, MA
- Original Pizza of Boston – Lincoln, RI
- Piantedosi Baking Co – Malden, MA

Dairy

- Cabot Creamery – Waitsfield, VT
- Gifford's Ice Cream – Skowhegan, ME
- Grafton Village – Grafton, VT
- Great Hill Dairy – Marion, MA
- HP Hood – Lynnfield, MA
- Narragansett Creamery – Providence, RI

Grocery/Other

- 88 Acres – Canton, MA
- Blount Fine Foods – Fall River, MA
- Cedar's – Ward Hill, MA
- Grandy Oats – Hiram, ME
- Josephs Pasta – Haverhill, MA
- Ken's Foods – Marlborough, MA
- Kettle Cuisine – Lynn, MA
- Lily's Fresh Pasta – Everett, MA
- Tortilleria Mi Niña – Brockton, MA
- Westminster Bakers Co – Rutland, VT

Meats & Poultry

- Bianco & Sons Sausage – Medford, MA
- Kayem – Chelsea, MA
- Murray's Chicken – South Fallsburg, NY
- North Country Smokehouse – Claremont, NH
- Old Neighborhood Foods – Lynn, MA

Produce

- Brookdale Fruit Farm – Hollis, NH
- Carlson Orchards – Harvard, MA
- Czajkowski Farm – Hadley, MA
- Foggy Notion Farm – Johnston, RI
- JP Sullivan – Ayer, MA
- Little Leaf Farms – Devens, MA
- Mokrzecki Farm – Hadley, MA
- Plainville Farm – Hadley, MA
- RI Mushroom Company – West Kingston, RI
- Twin Oaks Farm – Hadley, MA
- Ward's Berry Farm, Sharon, MA

Seafood

- Cape Ann Lobstermen – Gloucester, MA
- Ducktrap River of Maine – Belfast, ME
- Foley Fish – Boston, MA
- Rocky Neck Fish Co. – Boston, MA

Menus of Change

University Research Collaborative

We were excited to grow our participation in MCURC last year. BU Dining Sustainability Intern, Andrea Catania, served as the Co-Manager of the [MCURC Student Fellows Program](#), the team attended the 2023 All-Member Meeting at Stanford University, and we participated in our first MCURC research project.

We joined eight other institutions in [MCURC's Repurpose with a Purpose](#) project, looking at the environmental, social, and economic impacts of creative utilization of otherwise wasted foods.

As a part of the project, we developed pickled vegetable slaw and pineapple vinaigrette recipes for our residential dining halls, both of which use vegetable trimmings. We also assessed the benefits of using fruit trim to flavor water.



TRUE MADE
FOODS

**WTF IS THIS
NEW KETCHUP?**

This is REAL Ketchup

True Made Foods.
Made from True Ingredients.

PITMASTER
MADE FROM TRUE INGREDIENTS

P **VETERAN OWNED** **30**

In Fall 2023, we introduced True Made Foods condiments in the residential dining halls, in alignment with the [Menus of Change Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Menus](#). These condiments – ketchup, yellow mustard, honey mustard, and BBQ sauce – are filled with flavor without any added sugar.

True Made Foods is a veteran-owned business, so this initiative also supports our goal of increasing purchases from diverse vendors.

Food Waste Prevention

While diverting food waste to composting and anaerobic digestion has environmental benefits, preventing it from being wasted in the first place is even better! We follow the [EPA's Wasted Food Scale](#) to reduce pre-consumer and post-consumer food waste across campus.

Weigh the Waste

In the 2023–2024 academic year, we conducted 36 Weigh-the-Waste events where student guides engaged peers, sorted plates, offered waste reduction tips, and gathered feedback. This feedback allows us to make changes portion sizes, serving practices, recipes, and more to help reduce waste in the future. The average **edible food waste** was approximately 1.5oz (about the weight of 17 pennies), a 50% reduction from 2018–2019.



Build Your Own Burgers

Last year, we redesigned the grill station in the dining halls, moving from assembled burgers to a self-serve build-your-own format. Doing this allows students to easily customize what they want, and has the added benefit of minimizing wasted food.

As a result of this change, we nearly eliminated uneaten burger buns from the plate waste stream!

Minimizing Overproduction

We employ a variety of practices to minimize overproduction resulting in un-served food in our operations including:

- Adjusting production volumes based on the weather, popularity of menu items, and other factors.
- Cooking in small batches and to order, especially during non-peak periods, to minimize the amount overproduction.
- Tracking waste to monitor how much overproduction is generated and create plans for reduction.

Coolfood Meals

It can be difficult to decide how to factor sustainability into daily food choices. Our partnership with Coolfood Meals puts low-carbon meals front and center.

In Spring 2024, we launched Coolfood Meals in partnership with the World Resources Institute.

This program replaced our previous Climate Friendly Dining initiative, and identifies nutritious menu items that have a lower carbon footprint.

We introduced 271 Coolfood Meals recipes on the menu including:

- Indian-Spiced Chicken Wrap
- Cream of Spinach Soup
- Sausage Mushroom Breakfast Bowl
- Cajun Tofu
- Sweet Potato & Corn Flatbread
- Channa Masala
- General Tso's Chicken

Coolfood Meals
have 38% less
carbon than the
average meal!



Sustainability in Catering

Each year, our Catering on the Charles, Questrom Catering, and VIP Catering teams cater thousands of events. Catering poses unique challenges and opportunities related to sustainability. We are proud of the efforts we have accomplished thus far and eager to expand upon them and develop new initiatives and programs in the future.

Single-Use Materials

We continue to improve the sustainability of single-use materials used for catering. We employ wooden utensils, fiber plates, and compostable coffee cups, all of which are accepted in the University's food waste stream, and aluminum cups and bottles, which are infinitely recyclable.



Keeping in Green

The Duan Family Center for Computing & Data Sciences' Zero Waste target pushes us to innovate and pilot new ways of catering to ensure sustainability is front and center.

We have eliminated boxed lunches from the building to reduce packaging. In Spring 2024 we launched new service styles that incentivize reuse over disposables, allowing a department to use their own reusable dishware for a lunch meeting or request melamine or china dishware as a part of the order.

Staff Training

Last year, we introduced enhanced sustainability training for our hourly associates, managers, and student employees. These sessions provided an overview of our sustainability goals and commitments, covered waste-related regulations applicable to our operations, and included practical guidance on waste sorting and other key topics.

The highlight of the training was a waste-sorting challenge, featuring a variety of materials that participants might encounter during an event.

Celebrating Earth Day 365

In celebration of BU's Earth Day 365 programming, we hosted/co-hosted four different events or activities for members of the BU Community.

- Dining Sustainability Scavenger Hunt: Students had the opportunity to earn points by completing different sustainability challenges like enjoying a Coolfood Meal, picking up litter, properly sorting waste, participating in Choose to Reuse, and answering questions based on our sustainability webpage. Nearly 90 students participated and the grand prize winner received a bicycle!
- Scraps to Scrumptious Demo with Food Studies: Campus Culinary Director, Chef Bee, led a demo on how to repurpose leftovers and vegetable trimmings into gnocchi and pesto.
- Behind-the-Scenes Dining Tour for Sustainability Liaisons: Sustainability Director, Lexie Raczka, led a group of Sustainability Liaisons on a behind-the-scenes tour of the West Campus Dining Hall, highlighting efforts around food donation, waste tracking and diversion, low-carbon menus, and more.
- Restaurant Night with a Surprise Sustainable Twist: We hosted a multi-course, plated, plant-based dinner in celebration of Earth Month at West Campus. At the end of the meal, students learned that Chef Armand and Chef Brian crafted a menu that was nearly entirely comprised of repurposed ingredients!





Certified Green

We worked with the [Green Restaurant Association](#) to certify **Fuller's Pub** as our eighth **Certified Green Restaurant on campus**. Fuller's Pub is a 3-star certified location, earning more than 197 points across seven categories.

Certified Green Restaurants across campus



Fuller's Pub

- Bay State Underground ★★★★★
- Fuller's Pub ★★★
- GSU Food Hall ★★★
- Law School Cafe ★★★
- Marciano Commons ★★★★★
- Warren Towers ★★★
- West Campus ★★★★★
- Granby Commons ★★★

Energy	46.22
Water	24.41
Waste	52.00
Disposables	33.26
Chemicals	12.50
Food	24.00
Education	5.50
Total GreenPoints™	197.89

Farmers' Market & CSA

We partnered with the Urban Farming Institute to offer a hyper-local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program to more than two-dozen community members throughout the summer and early fall.

The Boston University Farmers Market was back by popular demand, and featured local women-owned and minority-owned businesses. Vendors included MADHRASI, Marshalls Farm Stand, Supply Bulk Foods, and The Science Boutique.

In addition to visiting our vendors, each week, members of the BU Community stopped by the BU Dining tent to try their hand at our trivia wheel and learn more about BU Dining's sustainability initiatives. We also hosted other BU partners throughout the market season: BU Sustainability, Sargent Choice Nutrition Center, and BU Community Gardens.



Student Engagement

There are many ways for students interested in sustainability to get involved in BU Dining's sustainability efforts.

Each semester, there are typically around a dozen student positions to support our programs and initiatives. Whether it be leading our Weigh the Waste events, supporting food waste tracking, promoting and supporting Choose to Reuse, assisting with data collection and analysis, or engaging with MCURC.

There are also opportunities for student groups to collaborate with us for sustainability-focused special events. Last year, we partnered with the BU Student Government F.E.A.S.T. Committee for a panel event during Earth Month.

Additionally, BU Dining has worked with a number of courses as a client for sustainability projects or as a guest speaker.



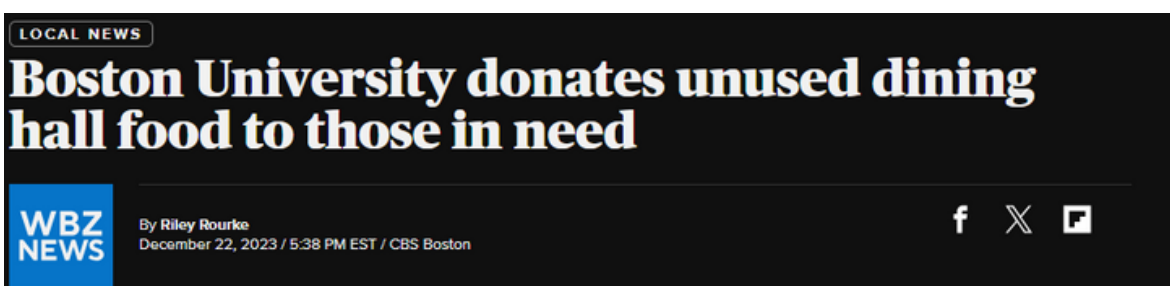
Community Impact

Last year, members of the BU Dining team volunteered for a number of local community organizations, including: Boys & Girls Club of Boston, Community Servings, and Urban Farming Institute.

The team also hosted a holiday toy drive for Toys for Tots and contributed to the BU Community Service Center's spring food drive.

Between July 2023 and June 2024, we were able to recover and donate more than 8,500lbs of food – equivalent to about 7,080 meals – primarily through working with Food For Free, but also partnering with BU's Student Food Rescue Program.

Additionally, we partnered with Urban Farming Institute, a mission-based urban farming organization, for our CSA program, supporting access to fresh, healthy, culturally relevant produce in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan.



Top Left: Members of the BU Dining team volunteered at the Urban Farming Institute in Mattapan.

Top Right: Members of the BU Dining team packed meals at Community Servings.

Bottom: BU Dining's partnership with Food For Free for end of semester food donations was featured in the local news.

2024–2025 Programming & Initiatives

Our work is not slowing down, below is a list of just some of the projects and initiatives we're tackling this year to minimize waste, increase sustainable procurement, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and more.

- Introduce new local, sustainable, and diverse vendors across campus: Craic Sauce, Boston Food Hub, Three Fins Coffee, Teatulia Tea, Equator Coffees, Jim's Organic Coffee, and more
- Recertify West Campus with the Green Restaurant Association
- Host the MCURC All-Member Meeting with attendees from campuses and industry partners across the United States and beyond
- Introduce loyalty and rewards programs for Choose to Reuse, including 'Caught Green Handed' and monthly participation challenges
- Develop enhanced sustainability training materials for the BU Dining team
- Participate in the MCURC FoodWISE project, providing enhanced food waste training for our team and encouraging folks to submit ideas on how we can reduce waste further
- Pilot a plate-waste AI camera at Marciano Commons to understand the types of foods most commonly wasted on students' plates
- Pilot new pre-consumer waste tracking technology at West Campus to improve data quality and utilization and also increase efficiency
- Pilot Oscar Sort waste sorting technology at waste stations in the GSU and at Saxbys
- Launch leftover catering notification platform in partnership with BU SPARK! to increase food security and minimize wasted food



Thank you to our
partners for their vital
support. Together we
are achieving our
sustainability goals
and fostering positive
change.

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