

Sustainability Report

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A Note from BU Dining

Working Together to Achieve Success

The positive impact and reach of BU Dining Services' sustainability efforts continue to grow year over year.

This work is a team effort. Every day, our team of more than 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 contributions of our student interns and employees, and other student collaborators. Their involvement is pivotal to the success and growth of our program.

Last year, we shared our sustainability efforts presenting at conferences and on webinars, as well as, hosting representatives from more than 60 colleges and universities across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Japan.

This report highlights the breadth of our sustainability efforts – from sourcing and waste prevention to diversion, efficient operations, community engagement, and more – between July 2024 and June 2025. To learn more, visit: www.bu.edu/dining/sustainability/



Lexie Raczka, Sustainability Director

The success of our efforts is because of collective impact. Small changes that impact diners during all meal periods every day add up to substantial change.

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.



23%

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



7 MILLION
meals served each year



30

Weigh the Waste events held in our dining halls

1,250 TONS

of food waste diverted to animal feed, composting and anaerobic digestion

153K

Choose to Reuse containers issued



8 CERTIFIED

Green Restaurants across campus

3,100 POUNDS

of food donated to local food recovery partners





Our Ingredients



Sourcing 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 FY25, more than 23% of our food and beverage purchases were local and/or sustainable – a nearly 10% increase over the previous year.**

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, 6.6% of our purchases were from diverse suppliers** such as Three Fins Coffee Roasters, Equator Coffees, Lilly's Fresh Pasta, and True Made Foods.

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 others.

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
- Jim's Organic Coffee – West Wareham, MA
- Josephs Pasta – Haverhill, MA
- Ken's Foods – Marlborough, MA
- Kettle Cuisine – Lynn, MA
- Lily's Fresh Pasta – Everett, MA
- Three Fins Coffee Roasters – West Dennis, 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

- Bardwell Farm – Hatfield, MA
- Barnwood Valley Farms – Hadley, MA
- Bolton Orchards – Bolton, MA
- Brookdale Fruit Farm – Hollis, NH
- Clark Organic Farm – Carlisle, MA
- Czajkowski Farm – Hadley, MA
- Kitchen Garden Farm – Sunderland, MA
- Pell Family Farm – Somers, CT
- Plainville Farm – Hadley, MA
- Ward's Berry Farm – Sharon, MA
- Wellspring Harvest – Springfield, MA

Seafood

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

Meet our Partners



Craic Sauce grows over 1,500 pepper plants in Lowell, MA, producing 2,000 bottles weekly—all while staying local. Fueled by "the craic"—the joy of connection, curiosity, and shared experiences. Craic Sauce is available at El Comal, Fuller's Pub, The Coop, Warren Towers, and West Campus.



Jim's Organic Coffee roasts ethically sourced and sustainably grown coffee in West Wareham, MA, all while supporting projects that give back to the communities where the coffee is sourced. Jim's Organic Coffee is served at Marciano Commons, Warren Towers, and West Campus.



Hudson Valley Fisheries sustainably raises Steelhead trout in a land-based, closed, and controlled environment that minimizes impacts related to water use, waste, and greenhouse gas emissions. Steelhead trout is on the menu at Marciano Commons, Warren Towers, and West Campus.



Cape Ann Lobstermen, located in Gloucester, MA was founded to protect both the community and fishermen. For the second year in a row we partnered with Cape Ann Lobstermen to source all of the lobsters for BU's Annual Lobster Night.



Boston Food Hub is a non-profit food hub part of the Boston Area Gleaners. Boston Food Hub sells produce from small farms primarily in Massachusetts, at prices set by and paid to the farms. Additional revenue supports Boston Area Gleaners' work to provide access to fresh, local produce to food insecure communities. In FY25, we sourced over 84,000 lbs of produce from Boston Food Hub.



Kettle Cuisine produces clean-label, scratch-made soups in Lynn, MA. Kettle Cuisine soups are available at Marciano Commons, Urban Table, Rhett's Diner, Warren Towers, and West Campus.



menu

STARTER

*Cucumber fennel gazpacho
Frozen cherry
Toasted coconut
Chives*

FIRST COURSE

*Beet carpaccio with chili crisp,
lemon gel, arugula salad,
radishes, goat cheese*

SECOND COURSE

*English pea arancini,
smoked mushrooms, vegan sausage,
spring onion puree*

THIRD COURSE

*Cheese ravioli, ratatouille, carrot
puree, blistered vine tomatoes,
crispy leeks, chive oil*

DESSERT

*Apple turnover, grape nut ice
cream, salted caramel*

*Please inform your server if you or a member of
your party has an allergen.*

Menuing



Planet-Friendly Menu Offerings

Beyond the ingredients we source, the menu items we offer have a substantial role in our environmental impact, especially regarding greenhouse gas emissions. The vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions associated with our operations are from our food purchases, which are primarily food. Through menu engineering, we strive to offer an array of lower-impact options, meeting students where they are so regardless of someone's personal preferences or dietary restrictions, there are options for them.

Coolfood Meals

It can be difficult to decide how to factor sustainability into daily food choices. Our partnership with [Coolfood Meals](#) and the [World Resources Institute](#) puts low-carbon meals front and center. Coolfood Meals meet both environmental and nutritional standards, and can include vegan and vegetarian offerings as well as recipes with animal proteins like poultry and seafood.

Last year, hundreds of recipes on our menu were Coolfood Meals.

Meatless Offerings

Vegan and vegetarian options are abundant across campus, especially in the residential dining halls where the dedicated vegan stations are just the beginning of where vegan menu items are available.

Last year, 24% of menu items were vegan and 32% were vegetarian.



Repurposed Ingredients

Last year we continued to expand upon our participation in the MCURC Repurpose with a Purpose pilot by integrating repurposing efforts into our operations, with recipes like chicken croquettes and pickled vegetable slaw.

Repurposing ingredients not only prevents waste but also minimizes greenhouse gas emissions.

Waste Minimization



Progress Towards Zero Waste

BU Dining has been involved in BU's Zero Waste Plan since its development. In the four years since it was released, we have established countless programs and practices in line with The Zero Waste Hierarchy to minimize and divert waste from the trash stream. Last year we saw substantial reductions in waste compared to the FY19 baseline used in the Zero Waste Plan.

We also implemented Oscar Sort in the GSU Food hall to help minimize waste-stream contamination and increase recycling and food waste diversion.



Initiative	Tons of Waste Prevented
New system for cooking oil delivery and diversion in the GSU, eliminating the need for oil jibs.	0.36
Reductions in post-consumer food waste as a result of increased student awareness and operational changes related to Weigh the Waste events	124.73
Sourcing scratch-made soups through Kettle Cuisine for the residential dining halls to better minimize overproduction.	8.58
Reducing the use of single-use packaging as a result of Choose to Reuse; 90% of orders at participating locations requested reusables.	7.68
Using reusable shipping containers for Pepsi deliveries.	11.51
Repurposing equipment from closed locations to other locations on campus.	1.28

Minimizing Wasted Food

While diverting food waste to animal feed, 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 2024–2025 academic year, we conducted 30 “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 2.2oz (about the weight of 27 dimes)**, a **38% reduction from 2018–2019**.



StreamLine

Last year we piloted StreamLine, a new food waste tracking technology that is integrated with our menu management platform, at West Campus.

As a result, we saw more than a 150% increase in waste transactions as well as substantial reductions in overproduction of frequently served menu items like oatmeal and rice.

Due to the success of the pilot, StreamLine has been implemented at all dining halls as well as the GSU Food Hall.

Leftover Alerts

BU Dining and Catering on the Charles partnered with BU Spark! to develop a notification platform to let students know about surplus food at the end of catered events.

With approval of the event host, Catering Event Managers post details about available food, which is then shared via email with students who have signed up for the program. This effort both minimizes wasted food at the end of events and provides access to free food, supporting students experiencing food insecurity.

Choose to Reuse

Choose to Reuse, our reusable to-go container program, saw significant growth during the 2024–2025 academic year, both in the number of participating locations and the amount of waste reduced. Last year we sent out over **153,000 Choose to Reuse containers** with an impressive **96% return rate**.

We celebrated the 200,000th Choose to Reuse container sent out early in Fall 2024 with a golden ticket giveaway and launched regular rewards including “Caught Green Handed” which students spotted around campus with a Choose to Reuse container and a monthly loyalty program.

Perhaps most impactful, **over two-thirds** of students surveyed reported that they **opt for reusables when dining off campus** as a result of the Choose to Reuse program, proving that the program is not only reducing waste on campus, but creating a culture of reuse within the Boston University community.

CHOOSE TO REUSE PROGRAM IMPACTS

February 2023 – June 2025



WASTE DIVERTED 33,580 lbs



WATER SAVED 232,809 gal



GHG AVOIDED 242,543 lbs

data provided by Topanga.io



Jillian M., BU Class of 2027,
Chooses to Reuse because
“I like tossing my salad in
the container! It’s perfect!”



Ryder M., BU Class of 2027,
Chooses to Reuse because
there is “no need to create
excess waste since it’s so easy
and convenient to order and
return the boxes.”



**Jonathan H., BU Class of
2027,** Chooses to Reuse to
“save money and
[because it’s] super easy!”

A woman with sunglasses and a colorful beaded necklace is smiling and talking to a person whose back is to the camera. They are at an outdoor event under a red canopy. In the background, there is a large wheel with sustainability questions and a sign for a survey.

Collaboration, Campus Engagement, & Community Impact

What's the correct waste stream for a food wrapper (granola wrapper, chip bag, candy wrapper)?

Name 2 ways to request a reusable cup/ mug when ordering at a campus Starbucks location?

WUSTL
SUSTAINABILITY
Lexie Racsko
SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR

Influence the
Campus Dining?

Our 8 Week,
Integrated Study!

Science and Cognitive
(T.E.C.H.):
Impacts of Technology
on University Students



taste
don't
waste

Menus of Change

University Research Collaborative

The opportunity to collaborate with colleagues from across the United States, and beyond, through MCURC is invaluable. Last year, we began co-leading regular calls for sustainability professionals in MCURC, providing an opportunity to share best practices and lessons learned as well as ask questions of others.

We participated in MCURC's FoodWISE pilot, which included three weeks of daily training during pre-shift huddles on different topics related to food waste as well as a competition for team members to submit ideas on how we could further reduce wasted food in our operations.

We also supported the development of the Repurpose with a Purpose toolkit and presented on the pilot during a ReFED webinar.



Boston University was honored to host the 11th Annual MCURC All-Member Meeting in September, 2024. We welcomed over 180 MCURC members, sponsors, and partners to campus for an inspiring two-day meeting.

Celebrating Earth Month

In celebration of BU's Earth Day 365 programming, we hosted more than a dozen different events and activities for members of the BU Community to engage with our sustainability efforts.

- We hosted three sustainably-themed Restaurant Night events in our residential dining halls. Chefs were each given a theme – plant-forward, repurposed, and local and sustainably sourced – and challenged to craft an elevated, multi-course plated meal fitting the theme. The dinners were so popular they reached capacity before doors even opened!

"I loved this experience. I never thought that fine dining could be brought to a school campus. Boy oh boy was I wrong. This was as good as any restaurant I've been to."

– BU Student

- We partnered with many of our local vendors, such as Cabot, Craic Sauce, Jim's Organic Coffee, and Kettle Cuisine, for a variety of pop-up events and specials in our residential dining halls and retail locations.
- For the second year in a row, we hosted a virtual sustainability scavenger hunt through Scavify with tasks such as participating in Choose to Reuse, finding information about our sustainability efforts on our website, eating a plant-based meal, and picking up litter on or around campus.



Campus 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 supporting our programs and initiatives. Whether it be leading Weigh the Waste events, promoting and supporting Choose to Reuse, assisting with data collection and analysis, or engaging in other aspects of our sustainability efforts.

We regularly support student projects related to our sustainability practices and programs and partner with campus departments, such as BU Sustainability and the Sargent Choice Nutrition Center, and student groups, such as the FEAST Senate Committee, on events and other programming.

Additionally, last year we partnered with BU Spark! to develop the notification system for leftover food at catered events and spoke to Sargent College's Foodservice Management Class about our sustainability efforts.



Community Impact

Last year, members of the BU Dining team volunteered for a number of local community organizations, including: Catie's Closet, Cradles to Crayons, and Gaining Ground.

The team also hosted a holiday toy drive for Toys for Tots and collected over 130 toys!

Between July 2024 and June 2025, we were able to recover and donate more than 3,100 lbs of food – equivalent to about 3,700 meals – primarily through working with Food For Free, but also partnering with the Massachusetts Chapter of Rescuing Leftover Cuisine and BU's Student Food Rescue Program.





Celebrating Success & Looking Ahead

Recognition

Boston University Dining Services was recognized as a leader in sustainability through numerous awards and/or certifications for:

- MassRecycle University Award in part recognizing BU Dining's waste reduction efforts
- NACUFS Gold DEI & Social Justice Award for BU Dining's efforts spanning sourcing and procurement, employee training and resources, campus partnerships, and inclusive menus
- SCS Global Services' Starbucks' Greener Stores Certification recognizing the environmental practices in place at all three Starbucks locations on campus
- Green Restaurant Association 4-Star Certification for West Campus



 The Fresh Food Co. at West Campus	
Energy	62.64
Water	28.02
Waste	90.84
Disposables	32.50
Chemicals	25.42
Food	60.75
Building	0.00
Education	7.50
Total GreenPoints™	307.67
Environmental Steps	48

2025–2026 Programming & Initiatives

Our approach to sustainability knows no bounds; we continue to push ourselves to expand our reach and implement new initiatives to increase local and sustainable sourcing, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste, and more. Below is a list of just some of the projects and initiatives we're tackling this year.

- Partner with Too Good To Go to offer reduced price Surprise Bags at retail and residential dining locations across campus.
- Implement StreamLine waste tracking at all dining halls and the GSU Food Hall.
- Expand upon existing sourcing partnerships, particularly with Boston Food Hub, and introduce new local and sustainable vendors to our portfolio.
- Replace Taste Don't Waste with Pick Your Portion, allowing students to request a half-sized or double portion at participating stations in the dining halls.
- Work with BU Spark! to transition the leftover catering notification system to an app and rebrand it – *Free Bites* coming soon!
- Introduce 50CUT blended burgers at the grill station in the dining halls.
- Include sustainability metrics in the annual performance evaluation process for all managers and supervisors.



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

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