



BUYING THE BEST

A guide to cost-effective Real Food procurement

Local, sustainable, fair, humane real food is what students want, and it is where the food industry is headed. This is a guide to imagine what is possible, and take manageable steps in maximizing the impact of Real Food procurement in your Dining program.

START SMALL

This is about taking manageable, incremental steps forward and building relationships along the way. Offering just one new product one time can initiate a relationship that leads to much more.

CALCULATE!

The Real Food Calculator yields important, helpful information about current procurement & easy places to start sourcing new Real Food products. Ongoing Calculator assessments are the best way to track and report progress.

WE LOVE HOMEMADE

Making products in-house can reduce costs and give local and seasonal items special attention.

Many dining programs make homemade salad dressings to use local herbs and reduce sodium.

Yale University Dining saves money making their own hummus, flavored cream cheeses, veggie burgers, and salad mix -- they source local head lettuce, which is fresher and goes farther because it is not compressed like bagged mixes.

Wheaton College Dining makes yogurt & sour cream from local milk.

Wesleyan College Dining makes pesto when basil is fresh & cheaper.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE EXPERTS

FARMERS know local products best and are connected to each other. At University of Massachusetts Amherst, a local farmer connected Dining Services to a larger community of producers who collaborated to adequately supply the dining hall. To minimize costs and streamline sourcing, the original farmer contact became a distributor for the entire group of producers.

DISTRIBUTORS understand what is available & are often eager to increase their local and sustainable offerings. Through a strong relationship with their primary distributor, UC Davis Dining gains greater, quicker access to local & seasonal food at good price points, and educates local producers about how to enter their vendor system to be able to sell products to their program.

STUDENTS know what they like, what they care about, and what their peers want and care about. When included in procurement decisions, students can also become great spokespeople for new real food options.

STAFF know what students are eating, and have great ideas about products, preparation, and what can work in the kitchen for real food preparation.



TALK IT UP

More & more colleges are gaining accolades for their local and sustainable dining programs.

Kenyon College celebrates its strong local purchasing program as a booster of town-gown relations -- there are many local farmers they have kept in business because of college purchasing. Tell these stories!

EDUCATE

Every label or sign about Real Food procurement practices is an investment in student understanding & support.

Students want information and will help create it & provide it through classes & student jobs.

Beware of greenwashing -- students are savvy and can see through meaningless labels such as "natural" or even "fresh."

Tastings are a fun way to try-out new products, feature local producers, & engage students.

THANKS to the following leaders in campus real food procurement for their contributions --

Sustainability Manager Dani Lee, UC Davis Dining Services --- Sustainability Manager Rachel Dutton and Sustainability Coordinator Meg Little, University of Massachusetts-Amherst --- Sustainability Coordinator Caylin McKee and General Manager Melissa Zelazny, University of Vermont Dining Services --- Director Bob Volpi, Williams College Dining Services --- Farm to College Coordinator Ian Finch, University of Montana Dining Services --- Chef Stu Comen - Yale University Dining --- Sarah Piper - Fellow, Bon Appétit Management Co.

MAXIMIZE THE MENU

University of Montana intentionally schedules simpler menu items when kitchen space is needed for processing and preserving local products when they are in-season and most affordable & available.

After increasing sustainable food options, Yale Dining reduced portion sizes -- students wanted to sample smaller amounts of more dishes. Smaller cuts of meat also reduced costs.

Instead of "salmon with spinach" (for example), Yale Dining menus say "local fish with fresh vegetable" so they can source & use the freshest and best-priced products.

Using finely-shredded cheese on pizzas uses less but covers more pizza, allowing many programs to save money & use local cheese. Case Western Dining switched to pastured pork through cost savings of using fine-shred cheese.



INCLUDE BEVERAGES

Bon Appetit Mgmt Co. features homemade agua fresca beverages in many dining locations, using local fruit & herbs, as a soda alternative.

....& BAKERY

In-house bakeries save costs for dining programs. They also provide great opportunities to integrate local grain, as well as squash, pumpkins, zucchini, and fruit.

....& DESSERT!

Williams College maximizes its local dairy purchasing in the in-house ice cream parlor -- 30+ flavors daily, many using local fruit!

GET THE GOOD STUFF

Good relationships with farmers & distributors = information about good sources & pricing.

University of Vermont gets a good price on local potatoes, eggs, and other products that are too small or odd-shaped, as well as cuts of cheese that don't work for other markets.

Carleton & Colorado Colleges get good prices on local, humanely-raised meat by sourcing whole animals.



REDUCE WASTE

Effective real food procurement is coupled with cost-saving waste management and composting.

UC Davis reduced waste 40% after implementing trayless dining.

For U Mass Amherst, composting is cheaper than sending waste to a landfill.

Williams College spends nothing on disposable paper goods -- even picnics use plates and silverware.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Farm to School Network has an invaluable database of national and state-specific case studies and guides to everything from specific product sourcing to program evaluation. www.farmtoschool.org/publications.php

See the **Real Food Calculator** for real food procurement assessment, and robust research about the many standards & certifications it includes. <http://calculator.realfoodchallenge.org/>

FREEZE!

With the local Center for Integrated Food Technology, Oberlin College freezes fresh local produce for year-round availability. That's right, local fruit smoothies in February, in Ohio!

CREATE THE SPACE

University of Montana is developing a food aggregation hub in an old storage building to create adequate space for preserving and storing local products when they are at their best price and freshness. Thoughtful labelling & storage of real food products reduces waste and ensures real food is prioritized and maximized in the menu.

MAKE IT OFFICIAL

Staff and student work positions for real food procurement, sustainability, or marketing maximize the impact of your program.

Through intentional promotion & real production, the U Mass Permaculture Initiative grew from a campus garden idea to a program with 4 full-time staff, a 12-member student committee, & thousands of volunteers who work in the gardens & promote real food procurement & programs on-campus. The program has gained national recognition & awards.

Want to share your great tip? Email katie@realfoodchallenge.org