

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY FOOD SERVICES

CAMPUS DINING

Today

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Trends IN CUISINE, DESIGN, & Beyond

SUSTAINABLE SUPERFOOD

THE EMERGING SCIENCE OF
NEURO-NUTRITION

THE FUTURE IS ON THE MENU

featuring



CAMPUS DINING *Today*

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On the cover: Students sample the wakame Wellington and Atlantic lo mein dishes at the "Under the Sea Showdown" at Boston College last year. (Photo courtesy of Boston College Dining Services)



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THE EMERGING SCIENCE OF NEURO-NUTRITION

SUNY Geneseo is pioneering neuro-nutrition in campus dining, using science-backed foods to boost student focus, mood, and mental resilience. By integrating brain-friendly ingredients and education into everyday meals, they're turning dining halls into powerful tools for student success and well-being.

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THE FUTURE IS ON THE MENU

Ohio University is redefining campus dining with a bold blend of sustainability, global flavors, and tech-driven personalization that meets the evolving expectations of today's students. By embracing plant-forward menus, ethical sourcing, and innovative dining spaces, they're setting a new standard for nourishing both body and community in higher education.



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DESIGNED FOR THE FUTURE

The University of Michigan is breaking new ground with its first all-electric dining facility, designed to lead in sustainability, staff efficiency, and student experience. Set to open in 2026, this cutting-edge dining hall combines eco-friendly innovation with thoughtful design to redefine the future of campus dining.



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NACUFS learning resources equip foodservice professionals for what's now—and next with flexible, personalized development through live events, on-demand courses, and a robust platform that supports continuous growth.

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FROM KITCHEN TO CAREER

Campus dining isn't just about serving meals—it's a hands-on training ground where students build real-world skills, from leadership and time management to empathy and adaptability. Through mentorship, collaboration, and evolving technology, these roles transform student jobs into pathways to lifelong professional success.



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HIGH-TECH CHANGES FOR A GREENER CAMPUS

Overflowing bins and food waste are daily reminders of the sustainability challenges on campus—but the University of Guelph is turning the tide through innovative reuse programs and smart waste-tracking technologies. Their data-driven approach proves that small changes in campus dining can lead to big environmental impacts and a culture shift toward sustainability.



Ramen on the *Run*

HOW OHIO STATE'S SPECIAL PACKAGING MADE NOODLES CAMPUS-FRIENDLY

Debbie Wakefield
marketing specialist,
The Ohio State University
Office of Student Life,
Dining Services

It's no secret that college students love eating ramen. The Ohio State University has taken this collegiate staple to new heights. Ohio State Student Life Dining Services offers gourmet ramen bowls that students can easily enjoy anywhere on campus, thanks to innovative packaging designed specifically for on-the-go ramen.

Leaders in Ohio State Dining Services knew that for a ramen-to-go concept to be successful, the packaging would need to be just right.

Previously, ramen noodles and broth were placed in a plain brown paper bag that was awkward to hold and put the broth at risk of spilling.

To brainstorm an innovative solution to better packaging carryout ramen, Ohio State approached the vendor Sushi Avenue for help.

Jordan Lisowski, vice president of operations of Sushi Avenue, said they both realized that the packaging was going to be just as important as the food.

"We knew that keeping the broth and noodles together for an extended period of time would end up with the customer having soggy, overcooked noodles," Lisowski explained.

Drawing on their experience opening the fast-casual restaurant concept, One Two Three Sushi, Sushi Avenue adapted their custom packaging to meet the needs of busy college students.

The innovative packaging holds a bowl for noodles, vegetables, and toppings, with a lidded container of ramen broth stacked on top. This creates a better end result product for the customer, ensuring that the noodles and toppings remain fresh, and the



Student employees at Oxley's To Go, like Alana Zhang (partially shown), wrap the carryout container around the ramen bowl and broth, securely stapling it shut along with the customer ticket. This process takes less than 15 seconds, leading to faster student pickup times. (Photo by Debbie Wakefield, The Ohio State University)

I liked the packaging from the first time I saw it.

-AMIRAH BONNER,
A FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

broth stays sealed and hot until the moment of consumption. This thoughtful approach has been well received by students, staff, and faculty alike.

Dining services opened Oxley's To Go in the spring semester of 2022 as a quick service location near academic buildings in the center of Ohio State's campus.

Student employees wrap the carryout container around the bowl and broth, securely stapling it shut along with the customer pick-up ticket. This process takes less than 15 seconds, leading to faster ticket times. The efficiency of this system has been a key factor in its success, allowing students to order their ramen, then quickly grab their meal and go.

Students pick up their ramen from alphabetized in-store racks, using a comfortable handle, securely holding everything needed to later assemble their meal.

Amirah Bonner, a first-year student from Cleveland studying primary education, said the packaging is a smart idea and makes it convenient to carry her ramen across campus.

"I liked the packaging from the first time I saw it," Bonner said.

Lisa Bannister, operations manager for Oxley's To Go, likes how easy the packaging is for her team. She said that she usually only has to show a student employee how to assemble the packaging one time and after that, they have it.

The innovative packaging holds a bowl for noodles, vegetables, and toppings, with a lidded container of ramen broth stacked on top.



Oxley's To Go student employee Sandy Yang packages ramen noodles and toppings separately from the broth through a creative packaging design that allows students to enjoy hot ramen anywhere on campus without spills, soggy noodles or awkward carrying. (Photo by Debbie Wakefield, The Ohio State University)

"It's an easy concept to grasp. They pull it over the bowl, fold the handle and staple the ticket," Bannister said. "It's not like a pizza box that has a lot of complicated folds. This one is pretty intuitive to assemble."

Bannister said that students like the unique container and how it's different from anything else on campus.

"I can always tell when anyone has been to Oxley's To Go and ordered one of my five ramen bowls because I see them carrying the unique container," Bannister said. The distinct design of the packaging has become a recognizable feature on Ohio State's campus, making it easy to spot fellow ramen enthusiasts.

The creative packaging design allows students to enjoy hot ramen anywhere on campus without spills, soggy noodles or awkward carrying.

The packaging is important because to-go orders make up a significant portion of Oxley's orders. In the spring 2025 semester, Oxley's sold 4,288 carryout ramen bowls. Over 76 percent of their orders were customer pick-ups using the custom packaging. The rest of the business consisted of delivery orders, using the campus food delivery robots. The most popular ramen bowl was pork belly, comprising 36 percent of orders. The second most popular was beef at 19 percent. No matter the type of ramen, students can rest easy knowing the noodles won't get soggy, overcooked, or spilled.

Ohio State's innovative ramen-to-go packaging is setting a trend in both package design and student pick-up options on college campuses. §

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