

Shape it up: tips you can follow for a healthier campus diet

Rushing up and down the streets, I often have days when I wonder how I will find the time to eat. This is when it becomes easy for students to turn to fast food. Once you stop living close by or have awkward time gaps between classes, fast food is available at almost every on-campus eatery.

There's no doubt that the university tries to make healthier food readily available. Some cafes have organic foods ready to go and Greenhouse allows students to make almost any kind of fresh salad they can think of. But I have to wonder, why is there so much fast food available? For many students, it's difficult to choose an expensive salad from Greenhouse over a meal from Taco Bell.

To solve the problem of finding healthy food on campus without having to eat salad daily, I do three things: take advantage of meal options I previously disregarded, completely ignore any fast food place and get creative in the dining halls.

First, I take advantage of meal options I had previously disregarded at on-campus restaurants. Being both a vegetarian and interested in a fair-trade diet has made it somewhat challenging to arrange an eating plan while living on campus. With limited options, food gets old fast. I looked closely at menus to see what options I overlooked. On campus, I eat oatmeal and fresh fruit instead of getting smoothies. I try the soup at Greenhouse instead of salad. If I have time in the morning I use an extra swipe and pack a lunch. By including this, I now have something new to eat each day, and I can go an entire school week without repeating a lunch.

As I create a pattern of eateries to maintain a healthy diet without losing interest in the food, it is clear I cannot include every on-campus restaurant in my plan.

This is where my second solution comes in. I have learned to completely ignore fast food. If I linger in front of Panda Express or Sbarro too long, temptation takes over. I started ignoring these places in the middle of fall quarter, and now I can walk by them without a thought. The only way I know to accomplish this is willpower. Of course, that does not mean in any way that you should never allow yourself the occasional visit to these restaurants. Everyone deserves a treat sometimes. I know I can never give up animal-style fries completely.

Finally, I have learned to get creative in dining halls. This can't easily be done outside a dining hall, so it isn't exactly an "on-the-go" solution to eating on campus. Just the same, it can help make meals less boring. I often take a veggie patty and make a wrap out of it, and I use the salad bar to throw on any other toppings I want. I use the microwave to heat up whatever I want in it. If you are a meat lover, you can put the bacon bits from the salad bar or slice a grilled chicken breast to put in soup or pasta.

When living on a college campus, it can be difficult to find a way to eat what you like and what's good for you while trying to avoid a repetitive diet. There are a limited number of options available and the dominance of fast food can be hard to ignore. But if you try out as many places as you can, use willpower and turn on your creativity, you can certainly design your own healthy meal plan that won't feel as if you eat the same thing every day.

What does "it" in paragraph 7 refer to ("Just the same, it can help...")?

1. Finding a perfect solution to eating on campus.
2. Cooking your own meals.
3. Creativity in a dining hall.
4. Eating outside of dining halls.