

UMass Dining Withdrawals

I studied in Cairo last fall and I loved my campus: it was gorgeous, brand new and in the middle of the desert. However, there were two downers. The cafeteria's options were limited and I had to rely on food vouchers. I was not happy with vouchers and the school's food choices were lackluster compared to the UMass dining commons. I had issues to face since I loved the UMass dining commons and missed my buffet options.

On Halloween, I remember my mind going from costumes to UMass once I realized I was missing lobster night at the Oak Room. After classes, if I wanted a single cup of coffee, I had to go to Cilantro or Cinnabun and pay for an expensive coffee or latte instead of just getting a quick "cup of Joe" from the cafeteria. At these moments, I really missed UMass Dining and these moments occurred more frequently towards the end of the semester as I spent even more time in the newly built campus's cafeteria. Like a mall food court, it had fast food restaurants, limited menus, and, yes, expensive prices. There were two McDonalds, but no buffet style all-you-can-eat options. The semester ended and my longing for UMass Dining's food and convenience helped me leave my beloved school in Egypt.

When spring semester started, I was excited to eat at the dining commons again. I lingered for hours, tried many types of foods, refilled my coffee, and made my own stir fry in the Oak Room. Heck, after a semester of buying quick meals and eating in a noisy place where it was hard to talk to friends or study and with that expensive latte, I made sure to notice and enjoy the fixings of UMass dining.

Our dining services have it going on for a lot of reasons and I'm writing this piece to call attention to that. I promise anyone that he or she will experience "The UMass Dining Withdrawals" too once they buy a meal plan at another college whose food plans emphasize efficiency and brand attraction over variety, information about food sources, consideration for different tastes and diets—plus, pizzazz.



At UMass, lobster on Halloween is no joke, the sushi is all you can eat, "Frost Your Own Cupcake" is frequent, the soft and hard ice cream are on tap, and the vegan chocolate cakes fool the omnivorous crowds. Omelets are made to order, as are grilled and deli sandwiches and chicken or salmon (yes salmon) Caesar salads.

Sadly, I'm leaving UMass and won't need a meal plan any longer. So now I'm planning for the "withdrawals" again. I know what I'll miss the most about UMass Dining, besides Mr. Lee, is its originality and the great food it serves. I'll miss sitting with friends for leisurely hours and strangers during busy peak times. I've noticed all little changes the dining commons have made like the herb garden at Worcester Dining Common and the tray-less initiative (I'll wonder how that works out).

Take it from me: everyone who goes to college usually considers buying a meal plan. When I was on exchange, I had no

choice but to purchase one and I would have gotten rid of it if I could have.

At UMass, having a meal plan is valuable because of the food but also because of the experiences that come with the food. The collective experience is one not to be missed.



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