UConn Dining Halls: 100 words

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Whether you're an incoming first year trying the University of Connecticut's eight dining halls for the first time, a returning student living in a new dorm or looking for somewhere fresh to eat, deciding where to dine on the UConn campus can be a tough task.

Here are 100 words on each UConn dining hall with some tips, tricks and advice on the highlights and drawbacks of each location across campus.

Connecticut Hall

Connecticut Hall is the newest dining hall at UConn, and the lines prove it. With the space still looking new and fresh a few years into operation, the queues at the majority of stations can get long quickly. Popular food options tend to run out even quicker. The convenient location near both Downtown Storrs and the center of campus only adds to the congestion. An earlier trip to Connecticut Hall tends to be slightly quieter and, for some, more enjoyable. The music playing throughout the space and large windows overlooking Mirror Lake help to make the space feel more peaceful.

Gelfenbien Commons

Also known as Towers, this dining hall shares its main flaw with the residence halls of the same name. Tucked in the corner of campus by Horsebarn Hill and the water towers, Towers is a bit removed from the rest of campus. Thus, this dining hall can be a trek to get to from the center of campus, especially during the winter. The food options, including kosher and halal offerings, help to make up for the distance. Action bars like the mac and cheese and stir fry bars are popular, with the outdoor patio being a nice bonus on sunny days.

McMahon

McMahon is unique for several reasons, most notably the fact that the majority of dishes are plated for you by chefs. Best known for offering international cuisine, McMahon is a popular lunch spot due to its location in the middle of campus and directly across from the Student Recreation Center, though lines tend not to get too long, thanks to the preplated options. McMahon also stands out for its brick pizza oven, producing what is widely considered the best pizza of any dining hall at UConn, and wider selection of ice cream flavors than most other dining halls.

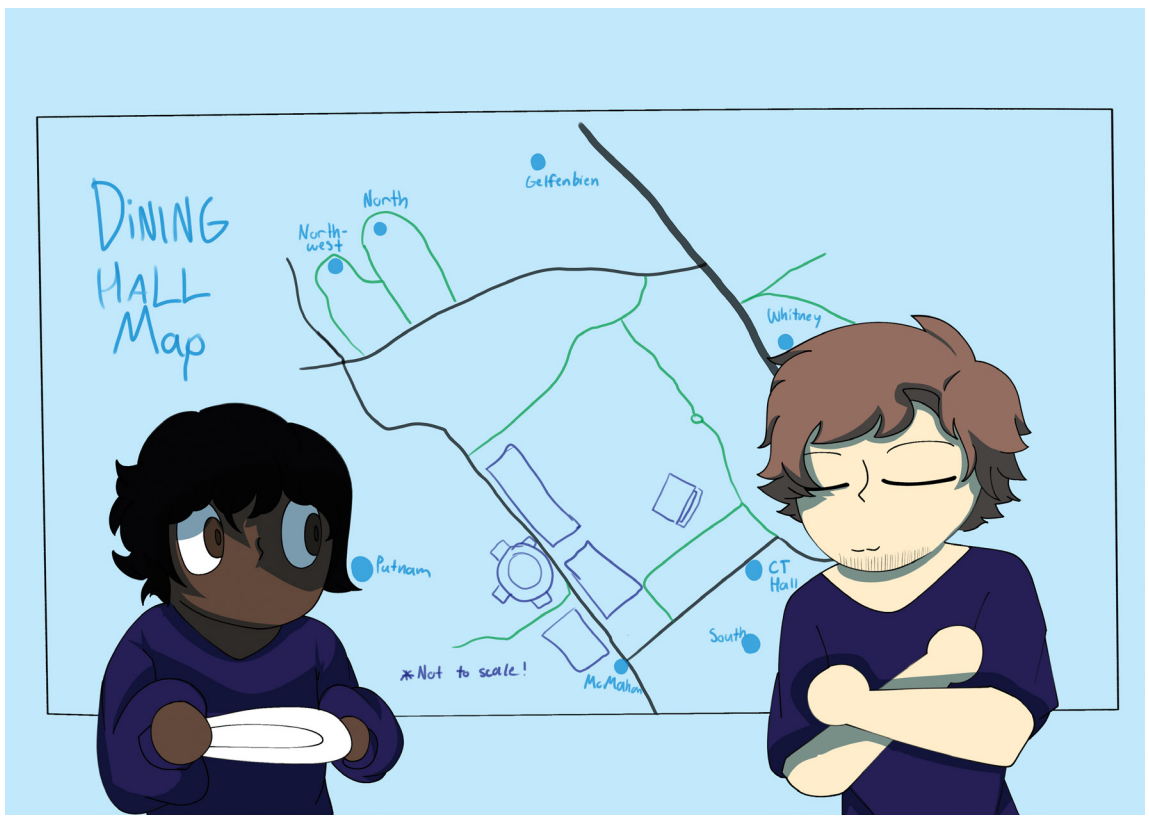


ILLUSTRATION BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

North

People either love or hate North; there's seemingly no in-between. Reality is likely somewhere in the middle, and the polarization more a product of overreaction than any actual food-related opinions. The truth is that the food here is just fine. The atmosphere is subpar and it's mainly utilized by freshmen living in the nearby halls, but the food gets the job done. A safe haven for picky eaters, highlights include a weekly ice cream bar on Wednesday nights, a daily action bar and the consistent offering of dining hall staples like grilled cheese and pizza.

Northwest

North's next-door neighbor, the four extra letters tacked on at the end of its name are accompanied by slight improvements across the board. The interior is a tad nicer, the food quality is a step up and it's open until 10 p.m. five nights a week as one of two late-night locations on campus. Northwest can get busy, both with North critics flocking over for refuge and the late-night crowd funneling in as other dining halls close for the evening. Still, ample seating and strong quality of the food makes Northwest an adequate option at any time of day.

Putnam

Tucked behind Werth Tower, Putnam receives steady traffic from the surrounding nearby residence halls as well as the Hilltop Apartments. Characterized by the action bar downstairs that offers omelets in the morning and a rotating menu at dinner during the weekdays, options may include a teriyaki, grilled cheese or pasta bar on any given night. Putnam is the only UConn dining hall with multiple floors. The waits, especially for the action station, can get frustratingly long at night, but there is plenty of seating across the two floors to accommodate the crowd. The smoothie bar at breakfast is another highlight.

South

UConn's other late-night option, South, has one of the widest selections of any dining hall, combining staples with three to four rotating options every night. Selections may include everything from a Belgian waffle bar to General Tso's chicken. Located next to Connecticut Hall, South can get busy, but the waits are generally shorter than its newer counterpart. The lines usually move quickly as well, though seating can be hard to find. For early morning risers with an affinity for breakfast, South is also the first dining hall to open on the weekends. Soop Doop, a UConn legend, is another highlight.

Whitney

Whitney can be very hit or miss. Smaller than most dining halls, the space has the feel of a cafe. Some will swear by Whitney and its relaxed atmosphere, but others avoid it due to the lack of menu options. With the menu consisting occasionally of only one to two real options, the best practice with Whitney is to check the menu prior to visiting. That's especially true with the closest nearby dining halls, Gelfenbien and Connecticut, being about a 10-minute walk away. The vibe may be the best on campus if you can find something you want to eat.

Demystifying Downtown:

Where to grab a bite

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For students at the University of Connecticut's main campus in Storrs, there is no shortage of things to do and places to go. Downtown Storrs, located just off-campus, has grown into a small food hub and is easily accessible on foot or through HuskyGo campus shuttles.

Whether you are escaping the dining hall, looking for somewhere to take your parents or simply realizing that you haven't eaten since lunch, this guide to eating downtown may just have an answer.

For When Parents Visit

My longstanding recommendation for when families visit campus is the Dog Lane Cafe, conveniently located on the corner of Dog Lane and Storrs Road.

There's a little something for everyone: sandwich specialties, soups, burgers, smoothies, "bottomless" coffee and locally-bottled Hosmer Mountain Sodas — amongst many, many other options. My pick right now is the artisan grilled cheese with apples and caramelized onions — yummy! It's a spacious place, and if the weather's nice, take advantage of the outdoor seating.

Another good spot to consider bringing your folks is the Bagel Zone Cafe and Grill in the lower level of University Plaza.

They live up to their slogan, "not just a bagel shop," with deli-style sandwiches, baked goods, snacks and coffee — plus unique items like "The Waffler," a breakfast sandwich with waffles for buns, and the "Big Mother-Clucker," a crispy fried chicken and egg sandwich. Not to mention their bagels, with all the classic toppings and cream cheese mixes.

Casual Fare

It can be said that pizza is the king of comfort food. If you agree, you may want to experience Blaze Pizza, located on Royce Circle, featuring assembly-line ordering. You can build your own "fast-fired" pie or enjoy cheesy bread and salads. Don't sleep on the cinnamon dessert pizza either.

Another spirited choice is Square Peg Pizzeria, a local chain with a location on Dog Lane. They offer many pie varieties and Italian favorites, like pasta dishes, bruschetta and calamari. Also featured is a full bar and favorites like nachos and wings — perfect for enjoying a UConn Huskies game on one of the large-screen TVs mounted throughout the restaurant.

A rite of passage for many students is the enjoyment of their first calzone from DP Dough, located in the lower level of University Plaza. There are many "zones" to choose from, many with fun names, like the "Twilight Zone" and the "Parking Zone." You can even go build-your-own with the "Construction Zone." DP Dough also delivers and is open extra late.

If any place is a certified UConn classic, Huskies Restaurant and Bar can claim that title. Their new downtown location, on the corner of Royce Circle and Wilbur Cross Way, is spacious with American fare like burgers, fries and wings.

Gansett Wraps, on Storrs Road next to Storrs Commons, also can't be beat for quick bites and fresh, made-to-order wraps. They're also a local chain based in Rhode Island.

Global Tastes

Maybe you'd prefer a more formal environment or would like to explore international cuisine.

Kathmandu Kitchen and Bar, on Wilbur Cross Way, is worth exploring, featuring traditional Indian and Nepali food such as biryani, pakora, tandoori and more. Little Aladdin, in the upper level of University Plaza, offers Middle Eastern and Mediterranean flavors like falafel, shawarma and kebabs, plus sandwiches and wraps.

For a more "laid-back" atmosphere, why not try Tokyo Ramen, offering Japanese ramen noodles, or Spice Venue, specializing in Indian cuisine — both also located in University Plaza. Daddy's Noodle Bar, on Storrs Road next to the Dog Lane Cafe, is also regarded for their ramen and Vietnamese pho.

Tea More Cafe and Eatjoy, located on Wilbur Cross Way and Royce Circle, respectively, are our quick-service joints. They feature "bubble tea" and traditional dishes.

New on the Block

There's nothing quite like a local eatery.

You can check out Haven Hot Chicken at the corner of Storrs Road and South Eagleville Road. Founded by a UConn grad, they offer spicy Southern-style chicken sandwiches, wraps, mac and cheese and banana pudding.

A couple of eateries are fairly new to campus, too. Check out Dog House Subs, an offshoot of Huskies specializing in sub sandwiches, and two spots next to each other in Storrs Commons: Guac 'n Grill, a halal-certified sit-down Mexican spot, and Nikki's Dog House, a Quiet Corner-based hot doggery.

Chain Restaurants

If familiar food is what you're after, a couple of chain restaurants have your back.

You can catch breakfast, coffee or a snack at Dunkin' Donuts, located next to Chase Bank on Storrs Road, and Starbucks, with two locations — one in Storrs Commons and a kiosk within Price Chopper.

Maybe you'd prefer to grab a seat at spots like Subway or Mooyah Burgers, Fries and Shakes, both located at Betsy Paterson Square, and Moe's Southwest Grill on Storrs Road near Buckley Hall.

If you've got a late-night craving, a visit to Domino's Pizza in Storrs Commons might just be the cure. They also deliver, including to UConn residence halls.

Side note: If you're looking for the "golden arches," the closest McDonald's location is in Mansfield near the East Brook Mall on Route 195. It's about a 15-minute drive from campus, but accessible via WRTD bus route 674. Maybe McDelivery is in your future.

For a Sweet Treat

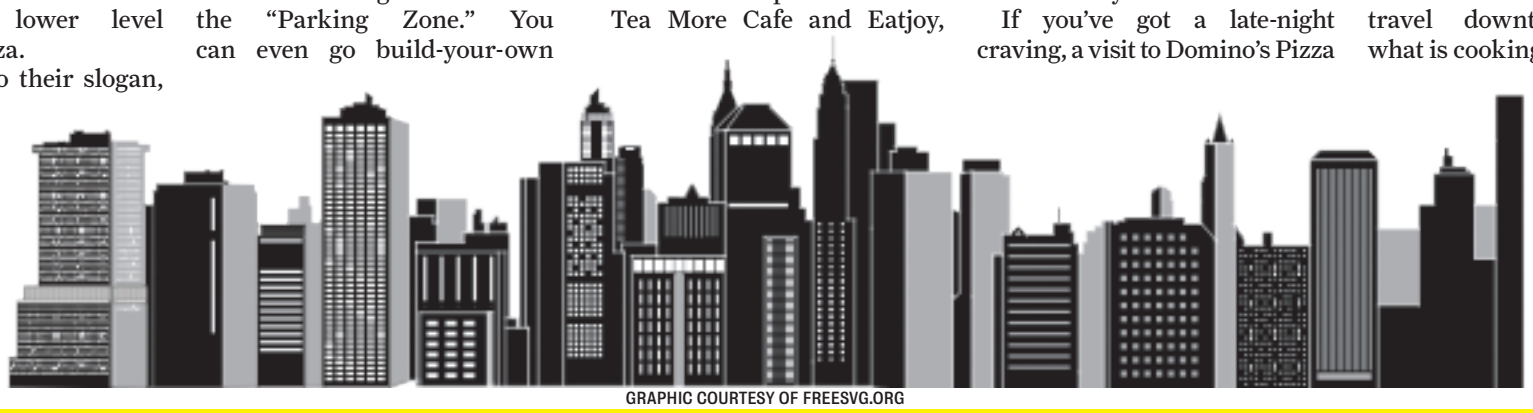
For dessert, nothing beats Insomnia Cookies on Dog Lane. Found exclusively near college campuses, Insomnia serves up warm cookies and other baked treats and also features a special late-night delivery service. "Insomnia" is right!

If you're looking for something healthier, Playa Bowls next to Moe's is a good choice, with smoothies, "super-fruit" bowls and juices.

Now, it's not technically located downtown, but the UConn Dairy Bar is a must-visit, especially for new students. They've got every flavor you can think of, plus seasonal choices like the student-designed "Senior Scoop". It's worth the trip! The Dairy Bar is located at 17 Manter Road near the Young Building and the Bio-Science Complex.

Hungry Huskies No More

Hopefully our guide helped demystify the downtown food scene. I think the variety is a welcome luxury. Go forth, travel downtown and see what is cooking!



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