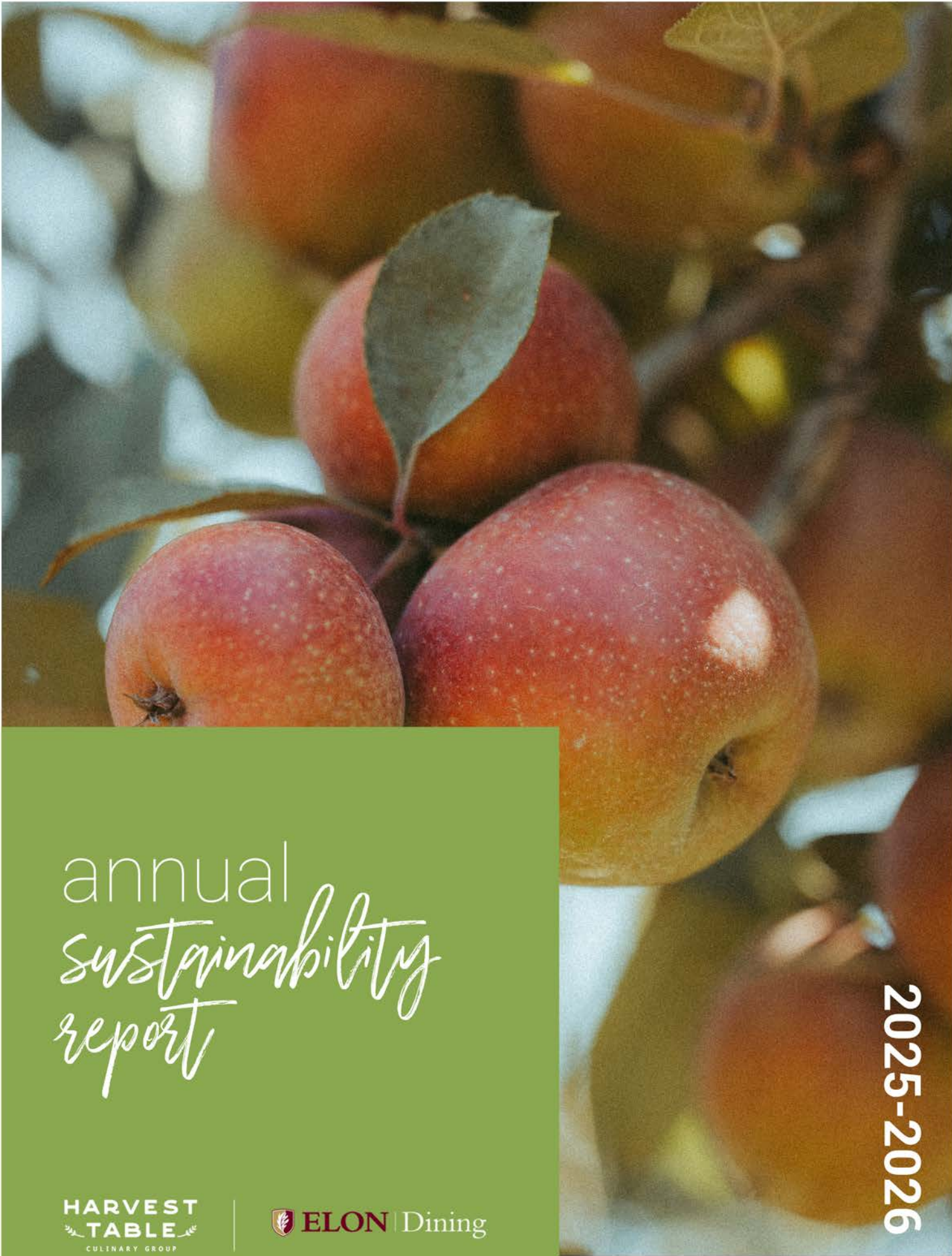




annual
sustainability
report

2025-2026

a note *from* Elon Dining

Sustainability is a team effort, and Elon Dining has worked collaboratively with Elon University to grow towards our sustainability targets each year.

It all starts in our community. Our team, comprised of over 300 employees, including a dedicated manager and culinary team of more than 20, takes pride in working with our North Carolina local food system along with third party certified suppliers across the country to ensure we are sourcing our food responsibly and with intention. Our sustainability efforts don't stop there. We work hard to utilize reusables and compostable materials in our restaurants, reduce food waste as much as possible, ensure that our facilities follow sustainable practices, and align ourselves with the goals of our campus and community.

This report covers the vast sustainability efforts we worked towards between July 2025 and June 2026. Thank you to our team and partners who have put in the time and care to push us towards our sustainability goals. Together, we can create meaningful and impactful change.



Leslie Bosse, Sustainability Manager



Elon Dining Team

program highlights

Sustainability Manager

Since 2017, Elon Dining has had a Sustainability Coordinator or Manager in place to lead sustainability initiatives, set goals for environmental responsibility, and host events on campus.

North Carolina & Local Purchasing

We prioritize local purchasing within 150 miles of campus or within the state of North Carolina and highlight local products whenever we can on our menus, in our convenience stores, and served at events like Farm Table dinners.

Composting

We provide front-of-house composting for guests along with signage that clarifies which bin to sort waste into. All food waste in the back-of-house is also composted in residential locations. Retail locations use compostable packaging, and when single-use is necessary, residential locations always use compostables.

Vegan, Vegetarian, and Plant-Forward Offerings

We aim to promote and highlight plant-forward options and always provide a vegan or vegetarian offering in all dining locations. Our website has a filter to find vegan or vegetarian options on our menus.

Coolfood Meals

Low carbon menu options such as Coolfood Meals, which are certified by the World Resources Institute, are noted on our menus with the Coolfood icon for guests looking for eco-friendly options.

Green Boxes

We do not offer single-use products in residential dining halls unless there is a particular circumstance that requires it. Diners who want to take residential food to-go utilize a reusable green box system rather than a single-use product.

Leanpath

Each of our residential dining halls have Leanpath food waste trackers to monitor all of our pre-consumer food waste. Lakeside Dining Hall also has a post-consumer tracker that is used to weigh all post-consumer plate waste.

Loy Farm

Elon has their very own farm on campus called Loy Farm. Elon Dining partners with Loy Farm to bring hyperlocal produce into our dining halls, as well as hosting our Farm Table dinners out on our farm to highlight the work that the team at Loy does.

Waste Messaging

Using signage and social media, we promote programs called "Just Try It," "Pick Your Portion," and "Choose to Reuse" to encourage guests to reduce their food waste and single-use product waste.

Recycling

We recycle cardboard as well as plastic, paper, glass, and aluminum in our locations. Regular waste sorting training is provided to team members. Additionally, used fryer oil is converted to biodiesel fuel by FiltaFry.

2025-2026 *progress*

1

Make progress towards goals set by the Elon University 2025 Sustainability Master Plan.

Elon Dining ended the 25-26 school year with an average 26% local spend, 38% plant based spend, and 19% 3rd party certified spend in residential and catering operations. Elon Dining also increased marketing of our local and sustainable seafood program, launched new sustainability initiatives for food waste reduction, and built on our local and seasonal menu offerings in accordance with the goals in the master plan.

2

Work towards increasing sustainability practices in catering.

Catering processes were analyzed and a need for smaller portions of sauces, dressings, and toppings was established. To make progress towards this concern, smaller bowls and jars were purchased and utilized for these products on catering lines which reduced the waste of these items.

3

Furthering waste diversion on campus with single use products.

Compostable products continued to be utilized in retail, catering and residential (when applicable) operations. In the 2025-2026 school year, there were no instances of contamination that led to fines or complications with the compost hauler.

4

Prevent food waste and create food accessibility through Too Good To Go.

In it's innagural year, Too Good To Go was launched in Acorn Coffee Shop, Fountain Market, and Steepd, saving over 470 meals from waste with an overall rating of 4.5 stars from customers.

2026-2027 *goals*

1

Make progress towards goals set by the Elon University 2025 Sustainability Master Plan.

Continue to work towards sustainable spend targets in local, plant based, and third party categories, as well as bringing a new initiative to campus and marketing it to emphasize sustainable efforts in the dining program.

2

Work towards increasing sustainability practices in catering.

Continue efforts for food waste reduction in an events and catering setting, specifically analyzing food waste returned to the kitchen post-event and tracking that information.

3

Increase acceptability of plant-based dining.

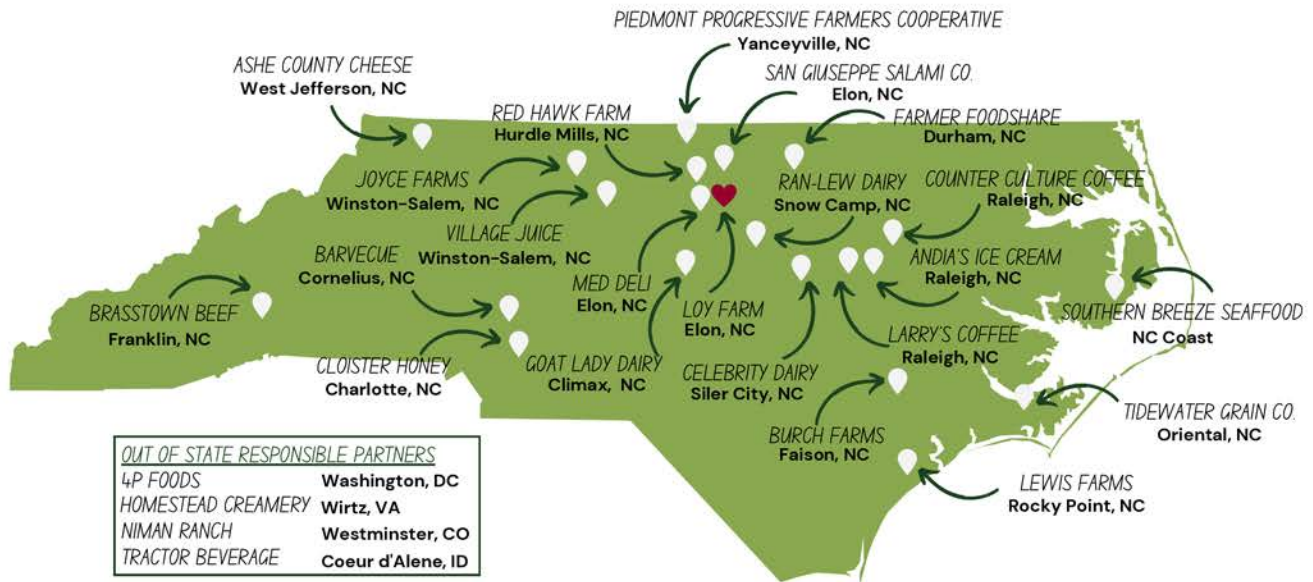
Find ways to celebrate creative, delicious, and appetizing plant based dishes on our menus that encourage plant-based and non plant-based guests alike to try and enjoy plant-based cuisine.

4

Reduce use of single-use packaging for desserts.

Review and reset dessert recipes to prevent the waste of single-use products to package dessert offerings in residential and catering settings.

responsible *sourcing*



Elon Dining understands the importance of buying local because it supports our local economy, builds the community, and brings fresher products to our table. We also support responsible sourcing practices, which to us means sourcing environmentally friendly, humane, and socially impactful products. Our local and responsible partners are incredibly integral to our practices and are a fundamental part of our sustainability story.

Want to learn more
about our partners?

Perry Lowe Orchard

Located in Western North Carolina, Perry Lowe Orchard grows dozens of varieties of apples as well as crafting them into beloved apple products like apple cider, sparking apple cider, and apple chips. Their fresh-picked apples are available in the residential dining halls and apple products are available for sale in Fountain Market.



Southern Breeze Seafood

This year, to build on our partnership with Captain John of Southern Breeze Seafood, Elon Dining extended our purchases from just catfish and shrimp to include bycatch from the fishing process as well. Bycatch fish are fish that were not intended to be caught during the fishing process but were accidentally collected and were unable to be returned to the ocean. Oftentimes, these fish don't typically have a market for sale due to their appearance or acceptability. Elon Dining purchases these fish which are edible and delicious to utilize in our residential restaurants and at pop ups throughout the year, providing an outlet for Captain John to sell his incidental catches and creating a culture of unique and interesting dishes served at Elon University.



Counter Culture Coffee

Counter Culture Coffee is the foundation for Acorn Coffee Shop. Their locally roasted, Certified Organic, and Certified B Corp beans are the basis for Acorn's espresso, hot coffee, and iced coffee, bringing fresh, flavorful drinks to the campus community.



Celebrity Dairy

Located just 30 miles away from Elon University, Celebrity Dairy is the home of 100 Alpine and Saanen goats that produce goats milk for various flavors goat cheese, goat cheese gelato, and goat cheese fudge. This year, Celebrity Dairy was invited out to visit campus for their first ever Elon Dining Earth Fest, to which they brought goats for students to pet, hold, and feed, including baby goats that were as young as seven days old.



Farmer Foodshare

Based in the North Carolina Triangle, Farmer Foodshare is a community-focused food hub that is on a mission to create an equitable food system. This year, Elon Dining increased commitments to purchase Grade B produce from Farmer Foodshare after touring local farms in Western North Carolina that experienced damages from Hurricane Helene in 2024. Farmer Foodshare came to campus for a tour during the State Fair Takeover at McEwen Dining Hall to see their apples in action at a dipped apple station, and the Elon Dining team went out to visit Farmer Foodshare for their annual fall reception.



farmTours

In Summer 2025, Elon Dining toured four of our local farm partners. Starting at Red Hawk Farm, the dining team was able to see where our herbs and lettuces are grown and made further commitments to bring in tomatoes, cucumbers, and other seasonal produce from this Elon alumnus owned farm.

In partnership with Farmer Foodshare, Elon Dining was also able to tour three produce farms in Western North Carolina (Perry Lowe Orchards, Deal Orchard, Old Mountain Berry Patch). Due to the extreme damage from Hurricane Helene in 2024, there was a high prevalence of Grade B produce—produce that is perfectly usable and delicious, but due to visible imperfections from hail damage, was not “pretty” enough to sell as Grade A produce. In response, Elon Dining committed to purchasing varieties of apples, peaches, and pears from the farms through Farmer Foodshare, providing an outlet for the local farms having trouble selling product, strengthening the collaborative relationship with small farms, and bringing a new source of fresh, delicious, local produce to Elon University. Through these tours, Elon Dining also got to taste test packaged goods made at the farms including apple chips and sparkling apple cider, which were so delicious that Elon Dining worked with Farmer Foodshare to stock these products. Now, Elon Dining features apple chips and both sparkling and still apple cider in campus convenience stores and at catered events.



What's in Season

Local produce is at it's best when it's in season. "What's in Season," a new initiative in the 2025-26 school year, drives availability and awareness of seasonal produce in the residential dining halls. All What's in Season produce is sourced through Farmer Foodshare, a local North Carolina focused food hub to bring the freshest possible product to campus. What's in Season features were highlighted on social media as well as on chalkboards and screens in the dining halls.

Stand-Alone Produce

At Lakeside Dining Hall, What's in Season rotated fresh produce through the salad bar each month highlighting components like spinach, lettuce mix, and green bell peppers. At McEwen Dining Hall, What's in Season was featured as a roasted vegetable option to go with the mezze and salad bars.

Seasonal Pizza

At Clohan Dining Hall, What's in Season was featured on a speciality seasonal pizza. Each month, a new pizza was created and served as the Wednesday specialty pizza for lunch and dinner. The rotation for the pizza was highly anticipated and each month, students were able to look forward to tasting something unique and delicious featuring ingredients like sweet potatoes, apples, peaches, strawberries, and more.



coolfood meals



Coolfood Meals, a program of the World Resources Institute, certifies low carbon footprint and nutritionally balanced recipes that are featured in our dining locations dispersed throughout our menus. At Elon Dining, Coolfoods are also served at weekly takeovers rotating through the dining halls.

This year, Elon Dining also partnered with HealthEU Day in Spring 2026 to showcase Coolfood meals throughout our dining halls as nutritionally balanced, low carbon footprint options that align with the goals of HealthEU.



OLPD Session- Understanding the Impact of Your Food

This year, Leslie, the Elon Dining Sustainability Manager, partnered with the Office of Leadership and Professional Development to offer a lunch-and-learn session for Elon faculty and staff about understanding the impact of the food system, navigating sustainable claims, and how to make responsible choices when buying or ordering food at home or on campus.

Presentation

The presentation covered where our food comes from, local sourcing claims, third party certification claims, how to spot greenwashing, the carbon and resource impact of our food, where food goes when it is wasted, and what attendees could do both on and off campus to make an impact.

Lunch

The menu consisted of Coolfood approved vegan recipes, highlighting that a low-carbon and nutritionally balanced diet can be delicious and enticing. Recipe cards were provided for attendees to take home so they could replicate the meal.

Activities

Three games were developed to play on an interchangagble game board: Detective Greenwash, Protein Power, and Emission Eats. Attendees were broken into groups and given game boards and instructions to play each of the games, furthering the education on themes from the presentation.

Attendees were also given sustainable shopping pocket guides providing guidance for discerning which icons and phrases on packaging are greenwashing and which are not as well as tips and tricks for shopping practices. They were also given a sustainable pantry staples guide highlighting key options to keep in your pantry and freezer for day to day eating.



community engagement

Elon Dining hosts pop ups throughout the school year highlighting sustainability initiatives across campus.

2025-2026 Pop Up Highlights:

- Welcome Home Cookout- Scrappy Cookies
- Zucchini Boats
- Dessert Charcuterie
- End of Season Skewers
- Dirt Cups
- Sustainable Seas Kelp Pho
- More Than Milk
- Be Sweet to the Planet Cupcakes
- Sample the Local Charcuterie
- Bee Sustainable



Elon Dining also partners with several organizations on campus and in the local community for sustainability projects.

Our Partner Organizations:

- Elon University Office of Sustainability
- Elon University Waste Reduction & Recycling Manager
- Elon University Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity Education (CREDE)
- Elon University ECO Reps
- Elon University Campus Kitchen
- Allied Churches of Alamance County
- Kernodle Center for Civic Life
- Alamance Community College



earth month

Earth Month Events

Earth Month is a very important time for Elon Dining. In April 2026, we hosted numerous sustainability themed events during Earth Week to celebrate our care and respect for the planet.

Sustainable Dirty Sodas

Sustainability Manager Leslie served up three takes on the trending dirty soda featuring plant based and Certified Organic ingredients for a sustainable spin on the beverage. The base was made with Tractor Beverage, Elon Dining's Certified Organic soda alternative, flavored with house made scrappy syrups, and topped with coconut cream or vegan heavy cream.



In a Pickle

The Elon community got a taste of just how versatile pickling can be with the "In a Pickle" tasting during Earth Week. Guests learned about the sustainable benefits of pickling and were able to try both local and scrappy pickled vegetables. Options included pickled watermelon and pickled watermelon rind, classic dill pickles, spicy dill pickle spears, pickled strawberries (including the tops), pickled asparagus, and pickled radishes.



Garden Party

Celebrated annually at McEwen, Garden Party takes over the entire dining hall with small plates featuring fresh, seasonal, and local produce. This year, Elon Dining partnered with the Eco Reps to give out homemade flowers from recycled egg cartons from the dining halls to guests as they arrived for the plant-forward meal. The dining hall was decorated with repurposed sauce can vases filled with local flowers.



"Coolest Event on the Planet"

The sixth annual Earth Fest celebration was out of this world, featuring space-themed marketing highlighting over a dozen local partners and waste reduction and prevention cooking techniques that brought sustainability to the forefront of the minds of the campus community. In partnership with the Office of Sustainability, Earth Fest brought in over 1,200 guests that were able to enjoy nine tents filled with food celebrating over 25 local partners.

Local Partners List:

- Accidental Baker Crackers
- Andia's Ice Cream
- Ashe County Cheese
- Bondi's Bakery
- Blue Ridge Apiaries
- ByWay Farms
- Celebrity Dairy
- Cottle Organics
- Counter Culture Coffee
- Fresh Pik Produce
- Gill & Spore
- Joyce Farms
- L&M Companies
- Loy Farm
- Lusty Monk Mustard
- Mediterranean Deli
- Neomonde
- Pine Knot Farms
- Piedmont Progressive Farmers Cooperative
- Ran-Lew Dairy
- San Giuseppe
- Southern Breeze Seafood
- Spicewalla
- Tidewater Grains
- Wise Farm
- Yah's Best



HTCG Building Community Day 2026

Each year, Harvest Table Culinary Group participates in Building Community Day where we set out to make a difference in our local communities. This year at Elon Dining, we partnered with the Kernodle Center for Civic Life, Elon Buddies, and Alamance Community College for a two-part teaching kitchen event for adult students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Bagel Prepping and Donation

Our Executive Pastry Chef Liz taught Elon Dining managers how to prepare bagel dough, shape the bagels, boil, top, and bake them to prepare the managers to help lead the teaching kitchen for the ACC students. All bagels made during the training, totalling to 13 hotel pans full of bagels, were donated to Allied Churches of Alamance County.



Teaching Kitchen

Chef Liz and the Elon Dining manager team taught adult students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, along with their Elon Buddies, how to make their own bagels. Students were able to take home their freshly made bagels along with their new skills.



waste diversion and *prevention*

Around 1/3 of our food around the world goes to waste. Elon Dining is committed to reducing our waste including food waste and single-use products.

We aim to follow the zero waste hierarchy in our initiatives to prevent waste first, reduce when we can, divert it when something has to be wasted, and do our best to find another alternative if it can't be diverted.



Waste Diversion Initiatives

- Pre- and post-consumer food waste from all residential kitchens is composted, which decreases our landfill footprint.
- In the 2025-2026 school year, Elon Dining diverted 426,181 pounds of organic material from the landfill to be composted.
- Pre-consumer plastic, paper, cardboard, and aluminum are recycled and in partnership with Elon University, post-consumer recycling is also made available.

Leanpath

Through training and improvements in technology, this year, Elon Dining's tracking utilizing the Galley menu intergration into Leanpath went from 17% of wasted food tracked by menu item to 62% of items tracked utilizing the integration. This much more accurately represents the proportion of waste being created through completed menu items compared to trim and prep waste in the kitchens.

Data from Leanpath this year helped to drive waste reduction in desserts (specificially breakfast pastries), soups, and the overall breakfast menu. Overproduction continues to be the largest contributor to waste and therefore the most targeted concern addressed in monthly Leanpath meetings.





Plate Waste Reduction

Just Try It and Pick Your Portion have been successful ways for Elon Dining to encourage guests to reduce plate waste. This year, Pick Your Portion even got a shout-out on social media when an Elon student brought up Pick Your Portion as one of the notable sustainability initiatives at Elon University.

Babylon Farms

Elon Dining has two Babylon Farms units housed in McEwen Dining Hall. We harvested herbs and flowers this year that were utilized as garnish on dishes and decor in the dining hall.



Check out our impact!



Green Restaurant Association

Many of our locations are registered with the Green Restaurant Association, demonstrating that the location has made sustainability efforts in each of the following categories: energy, water, waste, reusables and disposables, chemicals and pollution, food, buildings and furnishings, and education and transparency. This year, Clohan and Lakeside maintained a Level One certification while McEwen maintained 3-Star certification.

Choose to Reuse

This year, we continued to accept reusable cups at retail locations and offered a \$0.30 discount at Acorn Coffee Shop for reusing an Acorn branded reusable cup.



WASTE REDUCTION HIGHLIGHT

ReusePass with Topanga.io

Since its launch in Fall 2023, ReusePass has increased return accountability for green boxes and prevented the purchase of hundreds of additional reusable containers to support lost assets. See the impact from ReusePass in residential dining halls in 2025-2026 below.

Here's what we've
accomplished with
ReusePass!



return rate



over 905
new signups



33,069
all time loops



average loops
per week



lbs of GHG and
CO2 emissions
avoided



gallons of
water saved



lbs of waste
avoided



7,915
containers
diverted from
landfill



WASTE REDUCTION HIGHLIGHT

Too Good To Go

Launched in Summer 2025 in a pilot program and launched officially on campus in Fall 2025, Too Good To Go has completely changed waste prevention for Elon Dining. Too Good To Go, an app open to the public, allows Elon Dining to list "Surprise Bags" for purchase filled with food that will expire if not sold at the end of service at a discounted rate. This program creates an outlet for food that would have been otherwise wasted which prevents food waste, provides an affordable food option for community members in need, and drives additional revenue rather than wasting the food completely.

Too Good To Go was offered at Acorn Coffee Shop, Steepd, and Fountain Market for the 2025-26 school year. See our impact below.



470

meals saved



1.27

metric tons of CO2
emissions avoided



547

"favorited" our
locations



37,646

impressions

diversity, equity, *inclusion*

Sustainability Manager Leslie Bosse and Chef de Cuisine Ebony Thompson serve as the People Champions of Elon Dining. In this role, they educate and support staff with diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Snack & Share was started in December 2024 in as an active learning experience and opportunity for building campus community and visibility with DEI topics. The People Champions partnered with Elon's Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity Education (CREDE) and active student groups on campus to select topics and bring in subject matter experts to work with the Dining team and share about what they do to support the Elon community. Ten Elon Dining employees, each representing a different location, are invited to each event to keep the setting intimate but still capture a wide audience.

September 2025	Hispanic Heritage Month with CREDE and El Centro serving arroz con pollo, tres leches, and pao de queijo
October 2025	Community Building with Chef Ebony and Leslie serving tomato soup, butternut squash soup, mini grilled cheese, and focaccia
November 2025	Native American Heritage Month with NASA (Native American Student Association) serving frybread, ground beef chili with toppings, and New Zealand stemmed pudding with cream
February 2026	Black History Month with the African Diaspora serving beef & chicken suya skewers with sweet plantains and puff puff
March 2026	Black History Month (cont.) with Black Student Union
April 2026	Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month with APSA (Asian Pacific Student Association) serving pork lumpia, spicy tuna onigiri, and egg tart

Coffee Shop Training Days

Over Fall Break, Elon Dining hosted adult students with intellectual and developmental disabilities from the Alamance Community College (ACC) ABLE program at Acorn for a hands-on experience running a coffee shop.

ACC students arrived at Acorn excited for work and were each given a black hat for food safety and uniform standards. The students then spent an hour training and practicing running the register, making beverages, and completing orders with two Elon Dining managers and one supervisor to get a feel for the space. Since Elon University students were off campus for a break, select faculty and staff groups were invited to Acorn for the next hour to order a beverage on us to give the students real life experience. Then at the end of service, students worked with managers to clean and close the location. Two of the students who participated in the training days applied for jobs and were hired in Spring 2026 at Acorn!



awards & recognition



Silver in Sustainable Procurement

for local procurement strategies from the North Carolina mountains to coast, specifically focusing on Grade B produce strategies with Western North Carolina orchards and sustainable seafood strategies with Captain John from Southern Breeze Seafood.



Silver in Residential Event of the Year

for Elon Dining's 2025 Earth Fest, with the theme "Leave Your Mark, Sustain the World," prioritizing a focus on local partnerships and the impact each of our individual actions have on the environment.



Silver in Special Diet Recipe of the Year

for recipes for vegan scrappy coffee chocolate cookies and vegan scrappy banana bread cookies, both of which were utilized at special events and in the residential dining hall program, becoming some of the students' favorite desserts.



awards & recognition

ELON NEWS NETWORK



Best Campus Initiative

for Elon Dining's local sourcing strategies in residential, retail, and catering services.



AASHE STARS

Elon Dining actively participated in Elon University's achievement of an AASHE STARS Silver rating for the 2026 submission earning 3.2/8.0 points in the Dining Service Procurement category and 2.0/2.0 points in the Food Recovery category.

Sustainability Manager Leslie Bosse participated in the STARS Report Launch Party hosted by Elon University's Office of Sustainability during Earth Week. At the Elon Dining table, guests at the celebration of the new STARS report were able to learn about Elon Dining's efforts towards sustainable procurement, play interactive games about greenwashing, low carbon footprints, and plant based protein, and take home recipe cards and shopping tips for a sustainable at-home diet.





We welcome your comments and ideas!

elondining.com