Celebrating a decade of deliciousness as the nation's first and only 100% plant-based (vegan) Dining Hall
2009

Fully self-operated campus dining

UNT leadership opted to **in-source all campus food service operations** under one self-operated umbrella. Prior to this, campus dining was a hybrid model, utilizing a third-party contractor to manage retail food service in the student union.

2010

Real food, made from scratch

Dining Services began shifting towards being **100% scratch kitchens** by starting from whole ingredients and hiring professional chefs to develop house recipes.
Mean Greens Café

UNT opened the nation’s first and only 100% plant-based (vegan) university Dining Hall, resulting in widespread media coverage and an enthusiastic following of students, faculty, staff and community members. Prior to its conversion to Mean Greens Café, Maple Dining Hall was one of UNT’s six all-you-care-to-eat Dining Halls.

Using whole ingredients

Mean Greens focuses on starting from whole ingredients and using the entire plant whenever possible. With made-to-order paninis, flatbread pizzas, fresh desserts and a rotating menu of delicious plant-based options, anyone can enjoy the satisfying, healthy options Mean Greens has to offer.

In the media

All-Vegan Dining Hall at UNT Making Waves

“Dining Services at the University of North Texas are making waves in Denton and beyond with the opening of an all-vegan dining hall on campus.”

– GreenSource DFW

COMPASSIONATE CAMPUS AWARD

University opens nation's first vegan cafeteria

“North Texas is winning praise from animal welfare advocates even if its officials didn’t set out to make a statement of that sort: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals is awarding North Texas a ‘compassionate campus award.’”

– USA TODAY

And additional mentions in the media by

2012

In the media

University of North Texas Goes Vegan at Mean Greens Dining Hall
– Foodservice Equipment & Supplies (fesmag.com)

Vegan Cafeteria Sets a New Standard
– One Green Planet

UNT Dining Services received 2012 Goldies Food Democracy award
“Everyone eats, so everyone counts.” …that means making sure that there is something for everyone, and that the desires of student customers are never forgotten or ignored.

The way that simple premise plays out at UNT is what led judges to select it as the 2012 Goldies Award winner in the category Food Democracy.”
– FoodService Director

2013

Clark Bakery
UNT opened Clark Bakery, which scratch-bakes all cakes, buns, breads, ice cream, pastries and more served on campus, including many of the treats served during Mean Greens Café’s special events such as National Pumpkin Cheesecake Day and National Baklava Day.

A+ Ratings
2013 began our 7-year A+ rating streak by Peta2, with 91% student satisfaction!

2014

In the media
UNT ’s all-vegan café sees continued growth
“Mean Greens’ success is proving to be a model for other colleges and universities considering upping their vegan and vegetarian offerings. [UNT] is regularly contacted by both administrators and students from other campuses for advice and guidance on following Mean Greens’ lead.”
– FoodService Director
Mean Greens Café began making our own seitan from scratch

Seitan is a popular plant-based alternative with a meat-like texture.

Room for growth

Mean Green Acres

Our hydroponic garden is built inside a specially designed freight trailer behind Mean Greens Café. Five to eleven different types of lettuce and herbs are grown inside year-round, allowing Dining Services to produce up to 750 heads a week for dining locations on campus — on about one gallon of water per day!

A greener future

Mean Green Acres largely reduces food shipments and UNT’s carbon footprint. We’re proud to produce non-GMO greens — grown from organic seed stock in an organic growing medium.

Menus of Change

UNT was invited to join Menus of Change, an organization that works to integrate optimal nutrition, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility in the foodservice industry.


Change in leadership

Chef Matthew Ward joins Mean Greens Café as Chef/General Manager.

In the media

Hydroponic Garden Provides Organic Produce for Mean Greens Cafeteria
— FoodService Director

And 2 additional mentions in the media by wedentondoit.com and livekindly.co
Making headlines

UNT landed the No. 2 spot in Delish.com’s list of “Colleges with the Best Campus Food You’ve Ever Seen” due in large part to the national reputation of Mean Greens Café.

Mean Greens hailed as “best vegan dining experience in North Texas” by Dallas Culture Map

“Mean Greens is the world-famous all vegan cafeteria that debuted at the University of North Texas in Denton in 2011, long before vegan became the big trend it is today.

As the first all vegan university dining hall in the country, it earned the university national attention (‘Texas cattle country seems an odd place to break new ground in veganism,’ yee-haw).

But it’s really the best vegan dining experience in North Texas.”

And 8 additional mentions in the media by

The North Texas Daily, CBS Local News, food-management.com (x3), foodservicedirector.com, insider.com and Executive Business Media magazine.

UNT Dining shows it “means green”

UNT celebrated Earth Day with a university-wide cookout for over 3,000 students featuring a 100% plant-based (vegan) menu.

DISH Study

UNT Dining Services participated in an MCURC groundbreaking academic research study led by researchers from Stanford University. The DISH Study found that emphasizing the tasty and enjoyable attributes of vegetables, rather than their health attributes, increased the number of people choosing to eat them.

And 9 additional mentions in the media by

2020

Passing the baton

Chef Cristopher Williams is promoted to Chef/General Manager. Chef Matthew Ward is promoted to Executive Chef, Residential Dining.

Leadership at MCURC

Chef Matt accepts the position of co-chair for the Executive Chef’s Committee for MCURC.

Award-winning

Mean Greens Café’s famous Tomato Curry recipe received the Gold Award in the Best Vegan Recipe category of 2020 NACUFS Nutrition Awards.

2021

Continuing Excellence

UNT Dining Services continues to be ranked 2nd Best College Food in Texas and among the top 3% in the country, and was awarded an A+ Campus Food rating by Niche.

A campus-wide plant-based culture

The Mean Greens team trains other Dining Services chefs on vegan recipes. Each Dining Hall has at least one vegan or vegetarian entrée or full line every day, spreading the goodness of plant-based cooking to the entire campus.

Championing inclusivity

Chef Cris is named Co-chair of the MCURC Racial Equity Working Group.

In the media

• Gen Z Takeover: Colleges embrace vegan foods to meet student demand
  – Higher Ed Dive

• Is Beef the New Coal? Climate-Friendly Eating Is on the Rise
  – Bloomberg

• Dallas’ vegan-Mexican trend mushrooms with new Denton restaurant
  – CultureMap Dallas
The future of Mean Greens Café is brighter than ever!

Chef Cris and his team have big plans for fresh, new flavors and fun twists on everyone’s favorite dishes.

We hope to expand our on-campus hydroponic garden program so that Mean Green Acres will provide all of the leafy greens and fresh herbs served at UNT.

Experience the innovative future of plant-based goodness right here on our campus. Visit again soon!