

# Ernie Davis, Graham Dining Center eliminate trays

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In an effort to save water, soap, money and cut down on food waste, Ernie Davis Hall and Graham Dining Hall have eliminated trays from their dining centers.

“Students have encouraged us to become more sustainable, and when we renovate a dining center, we are setting it up to become a trayless dining center,” said Syracuse University food services director, Dave George, in an email.

In the future, George said renovations to Brockway and Shaw dining centers will lead to the campus dropping trays all together.

Melissa Cadwell, marketing manager for the Department of Sustainability, said dining centers that don’t offer trays typically see a 15 percent decrease in food waste. Also, if a student takes fewer dishes, less energy is used to run and heat the dishwashers and sinks.

But the sustainability of not using dining trays stretches further than the kitchen.

If a student takes less food because of the trayless initiative, Cadwell said dining centers would need to produce less food. She said that it could also affect the amount of food that needs to be delivered to the dining centers, decreasing the trucks and tractor-trailers that would deliver the food to the university. This could lead to a decrease across the whole food system, Cadwell added.

George, the food services director, added that feedback for the change has been positive from students.

“They like the fact that we are reducing food waste — since students carry plates instead of trays, they tend to take what they can eat thereby creating less food waste,” he said. “They also appreciate the reduction in water and soap usage since we don’t have trays to wash.”

Students eating at Ernie Davis Dining Hall have experienced both positive and negative effects of not having trays available for use.

“It’s good and bad, just because it’s hard to carry things,” said Chrissy Bader, a sophomore English and anthropology dual-major. “But it’s nice that I stop eating so I don’t eat as much and that’s probably healthier.”

When asked if she would rather have the trays back, Bader said that she prefers to not have them.

Josh Metzman, a sophomore marketing major, echoed Bader's statement that trays make him eat less, but added that he would rather have trays back for the students' convenience. Metzman also noted that SU can do other things to conserve energy rather than going trayless.

"From an environmental standpoint, I wish I could say that it meant a lot, but there are a bunch of other things we could do around campus to conserve energy," he said. "I think that getting rid of trays is a little harder on the students than some of the other things we could do."

The changes at Ernie Davis and Graham come a year after the dining center in Sadler Hall eliminated trays. For some freshmen who predominantly use the three trayless dining centers, the convenience of having trays isn't an issue simply because they're not used to having them.

"If I was a sophomore and we had trays as a freshman, I would probably be annoyed," said freshman film major, Matt Kerr. "But since I came in as a freshman (to Sadler) it doesn't bother me because I started out not using them."