

Eat your veggies!

On- and off-campus dining facilities offer healthy eating options

By KENDRA KINGSLEY
The Battalion

From the Commons to Sbisa Dining Hall, students all over campus are coming face-to-face

with the great challenge of finding something healthy to eat.

Cara Crowe, a freshman psychology major, said she understands first hand the reality of the weight-gaining epidemic brought on by unhealthy food choices.

"I can't fit into my jeans anymore," Crowe said. "With spring break right around the corner, I'm skipping the greasy food and desserts and going for turkey and fruit instead."

While the goal of spending the weeklong vacation in a

to the consumer-driven market.

"Nutrition doesn't sell," she said. "People eat with their eyes and are drawn to franchises, so we tried to create that in Sbisa."

Zawieja added that, in spite of America's obsession with fad diets and stick-figures, the average diner orders what appeals to the tastebuds not the waistline.

"Students want to eat healthy, but they don't," she said. "At this age, no one's worried about blood pressure or heart disease. They just want their cheese fries and pizza."

Yet for those who want heart-healthy options, campus cafeterias have added nutritious twists to an old menu. A new three-week cycle provides a rainbow of green, red, orange and white produce every day to ensure students have access to a variety of vitamins and minerals. Low-calorie meals now include a variation of the featured entree rather than a completely different main course.

"We had health-conscious students come in and see 'chicken-fried steak' listed as the main entree," Zawieja said. "They'd want the taste of steak without the fat, but would have to settle for the Lite-Line option, which could be

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—Melanie Edwards
freshman general studies major

anything from fish to vegetarian casserole. With the new plan, students can order a lighter variation of the featured dish without sacrificing their cravings."

In addition to the daily low-calorie fare, diners can also find a long list of relatively low-fat dishes like beef ravioli (5 fat grams), teryaki chicken (4 fat grams) and red fish (2 fat grams).

For those abstaining from dining hall fare, however, dining requires a little more self-control. Doug Slade, a freshman industrial distribution major, said he likes the off-campus dining for both nutrient and monetary related reasons.

"Whenever I go out, I end up eating pizza and fried food, so I try to balance that out — I have

bikini has many running for the salad bar, others would still rather indulge in their daily dose of deep-fried dining. Jace Campbell, a freshman business major, said he tends to dismiss the benefits of nutrition in favor of flavor.

"Health is not a factor," Campbell said. "It's definitely the least concern on my list. I'd much rather enjoy Stonewilly's and a piece of pecan pie than a plate of vegetables."

Campbell is not alone in his preference for fattening foods. Though the dining halls offer fresh produce and low-fat entrees, the meals most often consumed by students are the ones that look (and taste) the most indulgent.

Cindy Zawieja, a registered dietitian in Texas A&M's Food Services Department, said she attributed students' palate for fast-food

to watch my figure," he said, jokingly. "I look for cheap, low-fat food, mostly cereal and potatoes to bake in the microwave."

Raenetta Nance, a freshman political science major, also said she opts to scour the grocery isles rather than face cafeteria temptation.

"The food here makes it hard to hold back," she said. "[My roommate and I] shop pretty healthy when we buy groceries — mostly lunchmeat, bagels, tortillas and bottled water, but you also have to work out. It's not just about eating."

Yet for many, exercising and planning healthy meals requires time they cannot spare.

Kathy Porter, a local grocery store deli manager, knows the hectic lives of college students leaves little opportunity to plan and concoct nutrient-packed cuisine. Instead, she said her store offers pre-made meals for those who want to sit down and enjoy a hot meal without slaving over the stove.

"These meals are ideal for students who are always on the go," Porter said. "You can just shove an entree in the microwave and four minutes later, you've got dinner."

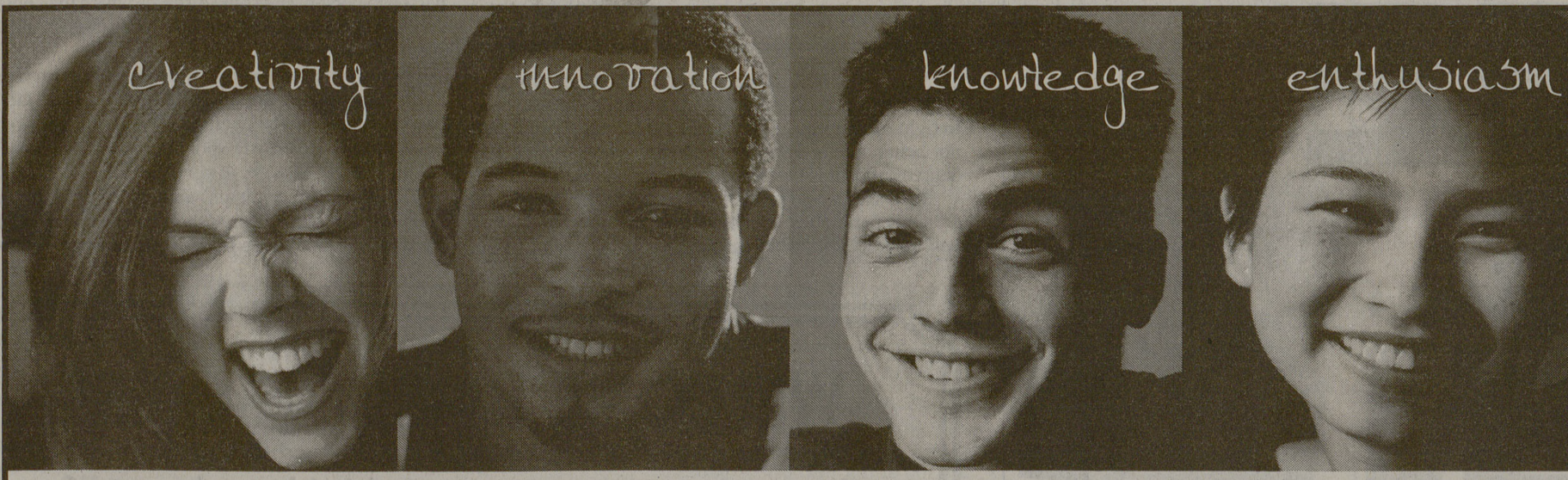
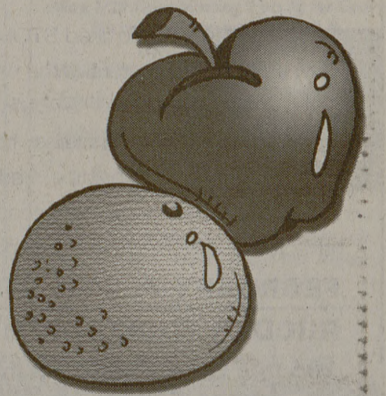
The take-out meals include dishes such as chicken and pot roast that easily adapt to a tight budget while creating a meal even Mom would approve.

Whatever dietary route students choose to take, they should be aware of their food's nutritional content. The department of food services hosts a Website at food.tamu.edu so students can find out how many calories and fat grams are in their favorite dish.

Grocery stores also seem eager to assist the health-conscious consumer. Albertson's offers quick, light meal ideas on their Website www.albertsons.com.

In spite of the lifelong wellness advice promoted by such online resources, some students have just one goal in mind — the much-anticipated seven days of scantily-clad vacation.

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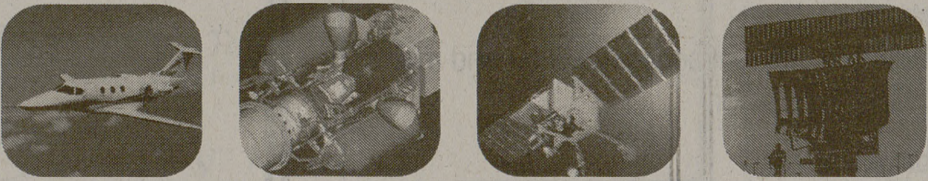
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