

The skinny on Sodexho's low-calorie meal plan

By Alex Seise

Sodexho is currently developing low-fat and low-calorie foods for the Brower Student Center food court. The new foods, which include both salad and non-salad meals, will also incorporate high amounts of fiber.

According to Meagan Terry, Student Government Association (SGA) liaison to Sodexho, the meals each contain 320 calories or less, three or more grams of fiber and are low in fat.

"The prices for these meals will be comparable to the SmartMarket brand items that are offered at the food court in the student center," Terry said. "The guidelines for picking meals that have a limited amount of calories and fat are similar to ones that are used by weight-loss or (weight-)maintaining programs."

Steve Hugg, director of Marketing and Business Development for Sodexho at the College, said that "the exact menu of items is still being finalized."

He also said meals will be offered on a rotating selection of two items per day, including one daily salad meal.

Several items are also being sold in microwavable packaging that could be heated at the food court or taken back to dorms.

"I think that any step by Sodexho to better the quality of food here is a great start," Janna Raudenbush, sophomore open options in the school of Culture and Society, said.

Raudenbush was one of three students that helped compile a list of 16 questions and suggestions for Sodexho titled "Requests for Healthier Food in the Dining Hall."

While Raudenbush said that the move to add healthy foods is a show of progress on Sodexho's part, she said, "While high-fiber and low-calorie salads are great, some healthy entrées would really be an appreciated, and necessary, addition to the menu."

She added that most underclassmen eat all of their meals in Eickhoff Hall, where the new healthy options are not yet being considered.

The new meals are being marketed under the Slim2Go program, according to Joanna Brunell, marketing coordinator for Sodexho Dining Services at the College. The program is being developed by Hugg.

"Slim2Go is being planned and introduced here at (the College) based on customer requests for items that work with weight-loss or weight-management programs," Hugg said.

"These items, which will be prepared and packaged at the food court and offered in the SmartMarket case, will be offered in addition to the other options," Hugg added.

The new, low-fat meals were designed with input from Nicole Clayton, a dietician interning with Sodexho.

Clayton has worked on locating foods that fit with the low-fat, low-calorie and high-fiber guidelines the new meals possess.

"These qualifications can help customers, even those of Weight Watchers, make choices appropriate to their weight-maintenance or weight-loss program," Hugg said.

Terry also said that Dining Services is working to offer new products in the student center, including Sobe LifeWater and Stacy's Pita Chips.

"I do think that the call for healthier snack foods, like the pita chips, definitely (stemmed) from recent concerns, and Sodexho was able to research and find products that can be offered (as) an alternative to, say, Doritos," Terry said.

"(Sodexho) didn't say that the new options were because of the recent concerns with nutrition, since I think there have always been concerns with the nutritional value of the food," Terry said.

Hugg, however, reiterated that other healthy meals are already available at the College.

"Other healthy options are available across campus, including fresh salads with assorted toppings, whole wheat breads, hot items sautéed in vegetable broth instead of oil (and other similar items)," he said.

An article in the Sept. 20 issue of The Signal reported on rumors of shortening being added to food to suppress appetites.

John Higgins, general manager of Dining Services, said that only soybean oil is used, but shortening can be found in some of the bakery items.

Comparisons between Sodexho's on-campus food and similar items from fast-food restaurants showed that,

in many cases, Sodexo's items contained both more fat and calories than their counterparts.

After that article was released, several sophomore students created a petition and a list of ideas for healthier dining options on campus.