Health-Focused Menu Delights at UAlbany’s Welcome Picnic - Albany, NY

Incoming freshmen and their parents were welcomed into the UAlbany community with a convocation and President’s Welcome Picnic this August. The picnic menu was a collaborative effort between UAlbany Catering and the president’s office, with a deliberate emphasis on health and wellness.

To achieve this end, the menu included items from Sodexo’s award winning Mindful concept, which concentrates on ingredients that are unprocessed and nutrient-dense.

“Choosing just the right Mindful recipes for an event that will feed 5,000 diverse eaters was a major undertaking by the catering department,” said Karen Kettlewell, associate executive director of operations for University Auxiliary Services at Albany. “The main goal -- which I believe we achieved -- was to get students and parents to know that healthy eating is a priority on our campus.”

Two featured Mindful items at the picnic were local roasted root vegetables and citrus spinach pasta salad. The simple, yet delicious, root vegetables included a melody of red onions, sweet potatoes, carrots, parsnips, and zucchini marinated with balsamic vinaigrette and a touch of black pepper (110 calories per serving). The citrus spinach pasta salad
included bow tie pasta tossed with baby spinach, mandarin oranges, mushrooms, red onions and pecans finished with a low-fat vinaigrette (240 calories per serving).

UAlbany Catering Director Helene Coye said the picnic had a big impact on her department, stating, “With the success and positive feedback from the picnic, we plan to include Mindful recipes in all our future catered events... a standard we are already achieving in our resident dining program.”

Featured in the September 2015 NACUFS Northeast Region Newsletter