



Entry details

Entry Name:	Leave Your Mark, Sustain the Future: Elon Dining's Annual Earth Fest 2025
Institution Name:	Elon Dining
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Leslie Bosse, Sustainability Manager

Earth Fest at its core is a celebration of Elon Dining’s dozens of local partnerships that support our 30% average local spend on food in our residential program. Eleven tents line the campus’ Lake Mary Nell, all featuring local partners and dishes.

Since the event is hosted during Earth Week, when our local partners have an abundance of seasonal offerings, the menu was designed to highlight the local, in-season goods. Plant-forward and vegan dishes were prioritized without advertising them as alternatives for an environmentally friendly menu. Made without the top-9 allergen options were also featured for an inclusive event.

Essay:

Featuring over 30 local partners, Earth Fest is truly a celebration of North Carolina produce, products, and people. Guests entered the event and were greeted with local charcuterie cups featuring entirely local ingredients including all the cheeses, meats, crackers, vegetables, honey, and sauces. Following the smell of the giant grill, guests found members of a local supplier and of our local chicken farm grilling sustainably-raised poulet rouge and vegan oyster mushrooms topped with house made sauces and served with vegan sides, with this entire station also being top-9 allergen friendly. Right across the path, local ingredients filled up locally made pita bread in falafel pitas at an entirely vegan station. Captain John, our local fisherman, was breaking down a whole tuna caught off the NC coast

and serving it up over local NC rice in fresh poke bowls. Southern staples could be found at the local pork ribs tent, the local crawfish boil tent, and the plant-powered vegan barbeque pit. Local partners from Andia's Ice Cream, Ran-Lew Dairy, Bondi's Bakery, and Rose & Rae's Cafe greeted our guests for ice cream floats and strawberry shortcake, ensuring that vegan and made-without-gluten options were available.

Introduction:

Earth Fest 2025's theme was "Leave Your Mark, Sustain the Future," encompassing local partnerships and encouraging the Elon community to engage with how what and how you choose to eat has an impact on the planet.

To execute this massive outdoor event, two of three campus dining halls closed to shift their efforts to Earth Fest. A local tent company was utilized to put up tents, a local paper goods company supplied the compostable service ware, and the team on the ground pitched in to shift the tools needed to cook and serve outside to the event location.

Essay:

The theme, slogan, and logo for Earth Fest were decided months in advance to allow for time to market and strategically build the menu to reflect the theme. A massive banner was hand-painted with the logo and slogan for an activity at the event where students added their fingerprint to the banner to physically "leave their mark." The first 100 students to attend the event got an Earth Fest 2025 t-shirt with the logo and slogan.

Local partners were invited in early February to confirm attendance and given enough time to prepare for adding the event to their busy schedules and to plan for what ingredients would be available at the time of the event. All working Elon Dining team members and first 100 students get a t-shirt to wear at the event, building campus community and making Earth Fest a coveted event to work at and attend. The university print shop was utilized to print large-scale menu signage that hung from each tent. The execution of the event wouldn't be possible without the thoughtful and strategic partnership between Elon Dining and local vendors. Local teams that helped support the execution of the event were given free wristbands to attend.

Introduction:

Earth Fest is one of Elon's most-loved traditions for all the details that make it special. Trying dozens of delicious dishes, spending time outside with friends, meeting the local partners (including everyone's favorite, Pearl the dairy cow), and celebrating the planet, all make Earth Fest an event to remember.

Marketing starts early with social media posts highlighting previous years' events and featured local partners. Sustainability events throughout the week build the hype for Earth Fest. At the event, printed signage and an innovative digital tool, a menu website, were used to market the incredible food and goals of the event.

Essay:

Meeting the actual partners that supply the food for Elon's campus is what truly makes the event special. Ran-Lew Dairy, Elon Dining's local partner for milk, became one of the most special parts of Earth Fest because Randy Lewis and two of his dairy cows, Pearl and her calf, spent their afternoon shaded by the trees and getting lots of well-loved attention from Elon students. Guests took hundreds of photos with the cows and then enjoyed ice cream made with Ran-Lew's milk.

A month before the event, Elon Dining began posting "Meet the Local Partner" photos on Instagram to promote Earth Fest. Each sustainability post leading up to the event also included an advertisement for Earth Fest. Student interns made social media content to promote the event. A menu website was also developed and promoted early that included the time, date, location, the t-shirt design, a map of the event, the entire menu, all local features and their social medias, and interactive questions encouraging participation and for feedback about the event. A QR code to the website was added to printed marketing materials for students to scan and linked on Elon Dining's Instagram for easy access at the event.

Introduction:

Sustainability wasn't just the theme of Earth Fest, it was woven into each decision made for the event. Local partnerships brought in fresher food that had to travel shorter distances to arrive to campus. With over 1,500 guests attending the event, compostable service ware was used exclusively, plant-forward dishes, and small touches including handmade activities and limited printed signage made the event more sustainable.

Earth Fest also partnered with the Elon University Office of Sustainability (OOS) to host the event in conjunction with Party for the Planet, an event held by the OOS that features dozens of student organizations.

Essay:

Guests purchased entry to the event using a residential dining swipe or other payment method. The event was staffed by dining hall employees.

Serving at an event outside required single-use materials, but to make it as sustainable as possible, compostable products were chosen with compost bins available for disposal. Compostable paper boats were chosen and ordered in large quantities because they could be utilized across multiple stations, reducing the overall volume ordered because more popular stations could cross utilize supplies from stations that were less popular, and any leftover product was saved and used at retail operations on campus.

The "Leave Your Mark" banner, the central activity at the event, was painted by hand on canvas and was saved to be hung up at future events. A stand to hold the banner was built by the Elon Dining team out of salvaged wooden pallets, an additional nod to sustainability.

Partnerships with Elon University brought in a high volume of guests both for Earth Fest and for the Office of Sustainability's Party for the Planet, benefitting both events. A student band was also booked to play live music at the event, showcasing the collaboration amongst the campus community to support sustainability.

Log in to nacufs.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.



Branding Guide... 153 KiB



Menu and Meal... 279 KiB



Menu and Meal... 297 KiB



Theme Develop... 251 KiB



Theme Develop... 225 KiB



Marketing and ... 241 KiB



Marketing and ... 216 KiB



Marketing and ... 168 KiB



Marketing and ... 192 KiB



Additional Cons... 335 KiB

PDF

Temp Log.pdf 120 KiB

PDF

Preparation an... 464 KiB



Attachment name
Advertisement

<https://www.instagram....>



Attachment name
Elon News Network Arti...

<https://www.elonnewsn...>



Attachment name
Elon News Network Ton...

<https://www.elonnewsn...>



Attachment name
Elon University Recap P...

<https://www.instagram....>



Attachment name
Event Website

<https://bmheffrondesig...>



Attachment name
Elon Dining Recap Post

<https://www.instagram....>