ISU Dining Services
ISU Dining provides a variety of quality and sustainable culinary experiences that enhance the educational and cultural aspects of Iowa State University. ISU Dining is committed to offering food options that meet the needs of students on a special/restricted diets. Kallen Anderson, ISU Dining Dietitian, about how she can accommodate these students and their special requests. More information about ISU Dining, contact information, and other resources can be found on their website.

1. As a dietitian on campus, how do you work with students with disabilities or with eating challenges?
I work with students with a variety of needs. Everything from food allergies, to nutrition therapy for digestive conditions, to helping students with eating disorders or other mental health conditions manage better in the dining center. Each of these conditions have specific nutrition therapy and strategies to make food and eating a little easier for students.

2. What other dining options are available for students with life threatening food allergies?
For students with severe food allergies, ISU Dining has our Special Diet Kitchen. The Special Diet Kitchen is an enclosed venue within the Union Drive Marketplace that is mostly free of the top 8 food allergens. Our cooks in the SDK go through additional training in food allergy and safety procedures to keep these students with severe food allergies safe.

3. Are food items labeled with all ingredients?
Food items in the dining centers on campus have labels that include the main ingredients list, whether they contain any of the top 8 food allergens, as well as whether a food item is identified as vegan, vegetarian, or halal. I say the ‘main ingredients list’; this means that for the main ingredient for pasta, the label says ‘wheat’. Students are able to view the full nutrition facts and ingredient label on the ISU Dining website, or by scanning the QR code on each label in the dining center. This will take ‘wheat’ and break it down to ‘semolina (wheat), durum wheat flour, niacin (Vitamin B3), Ferrous Sulfate (Iron), Thiamine mononitrate (Vitamin B1), Riboflavin (Vitamin B2), Folic acid’ . That’s a lot of sub-ingredients, so we shorten to the main one on these labels.
For food items that are a single ingredient, like corn our on the salad bar, we do not set out a label. However, if it’s corn seasoned with salt and pepper, a label will be out with the three ingredients: corn, salt, pepper). All single ingredient labels are also kept in a binder within the venue if a student wishes to look at it or scan the QR code for the full nutrition and ingredient facts label.

4. How can I be assured that the food served on campus is safe?
All of our cooks are training on food safety and food allergy cross-contact prevention upon hire. I train our staff annually on food allergy cross-contact prevention as well. We have staff from myself working and supporting these students, to our menu management team who ensures that our recipes, menus, and ingredients are correctly identified in our menu management software database for accurate nutrition information both on the labels in the dining centers as well as on our website. ISU Dining has food allergy prevention policies and procedures to ensure that every menu item is accurate.

5. What is a service that you provide that most students would not be aware of?
I provide nutrition counseling for students needing nutrition therapy for various medical conditions. This can also include mental health conditions like eating disorders, or if a student with anxiety is struggling to eat in the environment of our dining centers. I also coordinate the Give A Swipe emergency food access program for students as well, and individually support them to get connected to campus and community resources for sustainable food access.