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## MSU to Offer Allergen-Free Option for Campus Diners and General Public <sup>[1]</sup>

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**By:**

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Michigan State University students and members of the general public looking for an allergen-free menu might want to check out the new "Thrive" dining area, which will offer a special menu beginning this fall semester.

The allergens-free "Thrive" cafeteria at Owen Hall (Bogue Street and East Shaw Lane) will be open to the public, and prices will be similar to those at all other MSU dining halls <sup>[2]</sup>.

MSU dietician Gina Keilen told ELi that Thrive will be free from the top eight allergens: milk, eggs, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, fish, and shellfish. In addition, Thrive will avoid sesame and gluten.

Keilen estimates that one in every eight MSU students has a dietary restriction. While the exact number of those with dietary restrictions in East Lansing is not known, approximately 32 million <sup>[3]</sup> people in the U.S. have some sort of food allergy. With the increasing concern from parents, Keilen said that MSU decided to create Thrive, aptly named due to parents' wishes for their

children with allergies to thrive, not just survive.?

“This takes it to another level of safety for the guests,” said Keilen. She noted that Thrive would be, “testing and certifying [food] free from certain allergens [to] getting that extra level of assurance for incoming students, current students, public, and parents.”

The dining hall will feature three venues, each sporting a different style of food. Keilen said that recipe testing has been ongoing for months, and staff hopes to emerge with new, allergen-free items.

“We’re not looking to use a lot of substitution products,” she said. “but just serve food that is good and mainstream and appeals to everybody since everybody can come in.”

The focus, Keilen said, is on making food that “just happens to be allergen-free.” In fact, she said, there’s a lot of allergen-free options that people typically don’t notice. For example, mashed potatoes, rotisserie chicken, and vegetables are often safe to eat. However, for those concerned about cross-contamination, Thrive will have completely allergen-free utensils.

Thrive will offer a “Homestyle” comfort food section, which will include whole proteins such as pork loin, turkey and chicken, as well as vegetables. Another venue, “Street Food,” will have tacos and grain bowls. Finally, the cafeteria will supply allergen-free mac and cheese and vegan chicken tenders with gluten-free panko. (Keilen noted that all panko used on MSU’s campus is gluten-free.)

Thrive will have a soft opening for lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on July 8. It will fully open August 25 and will serve lunch and dinner Monday through Friday. Regular dining hours can be found here [4].

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