

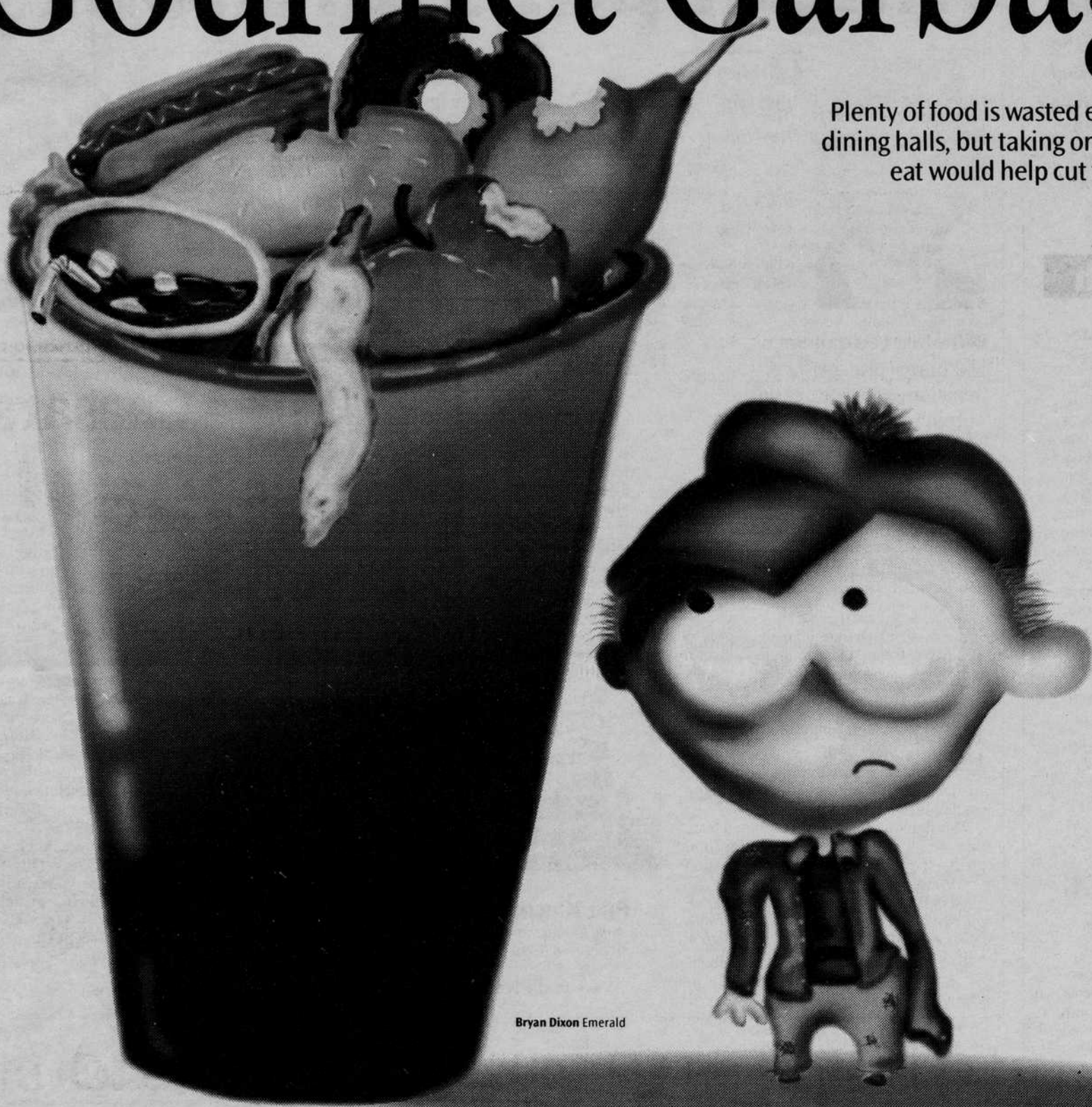
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Perspectives

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Gourmet Garbage

Plenty of food is wasted each year in the dining halls, but taking only what you can eat would help cut the waste



Bryan Dixon Emerald

As Oliver Twist once said, "Food, glorious food." Indeed. People eating in the University dining halls each day are bombarded by copious amounts of food. There is so much to choose from that sometimes you just take one of everything. We've all heard of the "freshman 15." Yeah, that's not talking about how many hours of sleep you get during finals week. That number is actually a lot smaller.

Joking aside, the food that students take is often more than they can eat. And so we arrive at our quandary.

Food waste is a constant problem for the people in charge of the dining halls.

"We always need to have more food than we need," said Kari VanOrsdel, University Inn dining hall manager. "The last person in line deserves as much as the first."

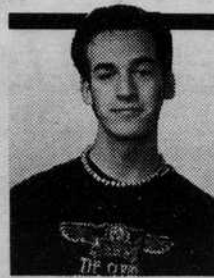
But food that is prepared and not used by students can either be reused somehow by the University dining operations or donated to Food for Lane County.

Recycle the food? Ewwwww. But don't worry about it. There are very strict guidelines regarding what food can be reused based on what it is and how long it has been sitting, etc.

But they can't do diddley about the food we take. Everything that we grab is either going in us or in the trash. In our defense, I must note that sometimes you see some item that you think is going to be really good, so you fill your plate with it. Then it turns out to taste worse than black licorice.

I know that some people like black licorice, and I would like to take a quick moment to inform them that they are wrong.

An easy solution to this problem in the dining halls would be a more detailed list of ingredients of the food. This would let me avoid such mishaps as getting macaroni with onions in it. Onions! I admit



Mason West

that it went directly from my plate to the landfill.

So I'm just as guilty as anybody else, and I'm not preaching from on high. I am trying to change myself as much as I'm trying to change you. The only way that anything is

going to change is if we collectively change our attitudes.

To monitor waste, Campus Recycling does a few "food waste audits" in the dining halls each year. These are days when it keeps track of all the food thrown away. In the last waste audit on Nov. 15, 1999, during lunch at Carson the average was about .3 pounds of food waste per person. Though that doesn't sound too bad, when you multiply that by the 858 people that ate there for that meal, you get a total of 259 pounds of food that was discarded.

Despite this waste, there is still hope. "Things have gotten better over the year," VanOrsdel said. "I think people have bigger eyes than stomachs when they come in."

The other day, chicken tenders were served for dinner. While I was eating, I saw a gentlemen walk by with a plate that contained no less than 10 chicken tenders. Those tenders are mighty tasty — and I didn't stick around to see if he ate them all — but I bet a third of that went in the trash untouched.

I'm glad that VanOrsdel is optimistic, but if that's an improvement, we have a lot more improving to do. Though this is just

one example, we students don't recognize how good we have it. All I ever hear about the dining halls is "the food's so gross," or, "hey, my hair's not that long!" Come on people! Appreciate what we have. Besides Izzy's, University dining halls are some of the few places where you can get all-you-can-eat.

One other possible solution is to eliminate the all-you-can-eat dining halls in favor of a pay-per-item style. While University Housing is not seriously considering this option, it would solve the problem. "I'd hate to get rid of the all-you-can-eat atmosphere," VanOrsdel said. Carson manager Cindy Lund said that most of the universities that have gone away from the all-you-can-eat style have returned to it.

The easiest solution to this whole problem is simple. Take a conservative amount of food your first time through, then do as my good friend Oliver does. Walk back through the line and say, "Please sir, might I have some more."

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