

THE HEART BEAT

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Op-Ed: Fine Dining at SHP

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I love everything about Sacred Heart. The campus, the teachers, the faculty, and the students have all made my experience in high school so unforgettable. There is another, more subtle part of the Sacred Heart experience that I have grown to love so much: the cafeteria food. You might be thinking, the cafeteria food? What about the cafeteria food is so great? Many students at Sacred Heart actually complain about the cafeteria food quality and prices. However, I am here to explain why we need to give Epicurean Group the credit that we currently do not.

I must first establish, growing up, I attended a public elementary school where a “hot lunch” was nothing more than packaged frozen spaghetti covered by a murky film people were convinced contained carcinogens. Let’s just say that most days, I implored my mom to pack me a lunch. This unfortunate experience with cafeteria food as a young child has helped me gain a deeper appreciation for the quality and efficiency of the cafeteria at Sacred Heart. For starters, it is important to acknowledge that our cafeteria is open four times during the school day - before school starts, during break and office hours, during lunch, and after school. The cafeteria staff arrives to school at 6:00am to begin set up and doesn’t leave until 3:30pm most days; their days at school are longer than ours. Epicurean Group always aims to meet the needs of students. More amazingly, each time the cafeteria opens, a new rotation of gourmet food is put out. The cafeteria even has meal options for gluten-free, dairy-free, and vegetarian students. And while tasty food four times a day is a wonderful thing to have, what really makes our cafeteria so great is something much more underappreciated by our Sacred Heart community: the cafeteria staff.

All great institutions begin with a great leader, and in our case that leader is Farnham Hogue, who is the head of the Sacred Heart Cafeteria. In the past, Farnham, along with the head chef Jeff Tachibana, has done cooking demonstrations with ingredients from our SHP farm. He has also headed new projects in the cafeteria this year, such as the “street food” self-serve bar, which he put in to try to expand SHP community’s exposure to food from Latino and Asian countries. But, that isn’t the only reason behind the “street food.” In fact, Farnham reveals that the self-serve bar is actually also “a way to divert students from the main entree line” to try to reduce overcrowding. The street food is in fact just what student have been asking for, so clearly Epicurean Group has been doing all that it can to please students.

Farnham wouldn’t be able to run the cafeteria without his wonderful cafeteria staff, Perla, Josephina, and Evelyn. Lanie Miller ‘17 says that, “Perla is my homie! She always says hi to me when I’m in the checkout line and always greets me with a smile.” For most schools, having cheerful and engaged cafeteria staff is rare, but Epicurean Group does a great job providing the SHP with more wonderful community members.

One particular issue that many students have with the cafeteria is their prices. However, believe it or not, there is a fair amount of logic behind the high prices of food. Every year, Farnham has a meeting with the CFO of our school to address the cafeteria progress and prices. Specifically, Farnham gives a “market basket” report, in which he compares the cafeteria’s prices to local stores like Safeway and restaurants on Santa Cruz Avenue. Farnham stated that our cafeteria prices are actually lower than those of local restaurants and grocery stores. Another factor, which most students don’t consider, is that the entire cafeteria uses only compostable materials, which can be quite pricey, meaning the prices of cafeteria food must compensate for our cafeteria being 100% compostable. The extra price is worth reducing our waste. Farnham also mentions that “everything in the cafeteria comes from scratch. From the sandwiches, to the burgers, nothing is opened from a can other than tomatoes used to make tomato sauce.” The homemade nature of the cafeteria food is one of a kind, I am so grateful that I know exactly what ingredients I am eating when I buy from Epicurean Group.

So now, you can see why it shocks me whenever I hear students complain about the cafeteria. Sometimes we, as students, can have unrealistic expectations of what we want our school to provide. We get angry or frustrated when we feel like the cafeteria does not provide enough options for our individual needs, or that cafeteria prices are too high. However, we need to remember that it is incredibly hard to provide food for 600 people for four meals every day. Yet, Epicurean Group still manages to provide this, with a variety of meals. Farnham left me with the final remark, “We really take a lot of pride in our partnership with Sacred Heart. We do everything in our power to go above and beyond to be there for you guys.” Needless to say, we should praise Epicurean Group for continuing to provide us with healthy, delicious food and be grateful that we go to a school with such a wonderful cafeteria.



Epicurean Group District Manager Farnham Hogue listens to questions from students in the Sacred Heart Schools educational garden.