

JUST FOOD COMMITTEE REPORT

NOVEMBER 6, 2020

I. Committee Background

A. BUCC Meeting

In April 2019, student leaders from the Brown Ethical Sourcing Initiative (BESI)¹, formerly the Brown Fair Food Campaign (BFFC), presented to the Brown University Community Council (BUCC) advocating for greater transparency in terms of purchasing and the supply chains of the food consumed on campus². They noted the importance of understanding in greater detail the origin of the food purchased by Brown Dining Services (BDS), and whether policies and practices that guide purchasing reflect University values with respect to factors such as labor standards and environmental sustainability. As part of their presentation, BESI outlined and suggested the incorporation of fair-trade procurement into BDS purchasing policies, and they shared a resolution promoting these actions that had been signed by more than 760 students, 28 student groups, and 20 faculty and staff.

During the BUCC discussion, it was noted that the Campaign's work builds on a tradition of student interest, activism and advocacy around dining purchasing policies, practices and options. For example, the student-driven Real Food campaign (2008)³ helped shape dining services practices and purchases and led to increases in locally-sourced food, and to the University adopting the Real Food Challenge, which called for the University to commit to purchasing 20% "real food" by 2020. It was noted that many, but not all, of the Real Food campaign's recommendations had been adopted, and more work remained to advance overall goals.

President Christina Paxson acknowledged the importance of the issues and concerns raised by BESI and established the Just Food Committee (JFC) to assess University policies and practices and offer recommendations to strengthen the University's food sourcing practices to reflect shared values.

B. Just Food Committee (JFC)

President Christina Paxson established the Just Food Committee and tasked it with working over the course of the 2019-20 academic year to:

- Gather and analyze data on the University's current purchasing policies and practices with respect to food.
- Identify more opportunities to promote ethical and sustainable sourcing of food at Brown University.
- Develop recommendations for President Paxson's consideration to strengthen the University's efforts in this area.

C. Committee Membership

Chaired by Provost Richard M. Locke, the committee's membership includes the following faculty, staff, and students:

- Sarah Besky, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and International and Public Affairs
- Barbara Chernow, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration
- Jessie Curran, Assistant Director of Wellness and Nutrition
- Eric Estes, Vice President, Campus Life and Student Services
- Dawn King, Senior Lecturer in Environment and Society
- Ty Paup, Director of Culinary Operations
- Tenaya McCoy, Undergraduate Student
- Vanesa Mora, Undergraduate Student, BESI member
- Camila Rice-Aguilar, Undergraduate Student, BESI member
- Jasmine Yang, Undergraduate Student, BESI member
- Staffed by Marisa Quinn, Provost's Chief of Staff

III. Methodology

A. Process

The committee met in May, June, July, October, and November of 2019, and in February and March of 2020, with work taking place between meetings. Additional work transpired over summer 2020 and into the fall semester to refine the report and recommendations.

Early attention was placed on developing guiding principles for the committee's work, with the bulk of the committee's effort devoted to understanding the policies and practices that inform the University's food purchases. The committee relied heavily on representatives from Dining Services and their partner Bon Appetit to provide information and data.

B. Committee Guiding Principles

The committee adopted the following principles to guide its work:

1. *Embrace shared governance:* The Just Food Committee reflects the University's commitment to shared governance, with students, faculty, and administrators sharing responsibilities for deliberation and decision-making. Through this process, the committee seeks to reach data-driven decisions through deliberation and consensus.

2. *Amplify University's mission and values:* Promoting environmentally and socially sustainable food purchasing and consumption practices throughout the University is aligned with the University's mission and values as a research university. These values are demonstrated in the University's stated goals in its strategic plan (*Building on Distinction*), the *Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan*, and the Code of Conduct.
3. *Be transparent:* To inspire confidence in and ensure transparency regarding the Committee, the Committee will update and justify its work to the Brown University Community Council and report to the wider community once substantial decisions are reached.
4. *Promote greater awareness of Brown's efforts in ethical purchasing:* The Committee hopes to advance the long-term goal of furthering and augmenting Brown University as a sustainable campus by using its work to educate the community about current and future practices that promote ethical purchasing and consumption practices.

C. Data Gathering

The committee's work focused on investigating the policies and practices that guide food purchasing at Brown--in particular, those that promote labor rights, local sourcing, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability.

The committee sought to gather detailed information about:

- A) Current sourcing practices, including the University's food vendors and supply chain; criteria used for vendor selection; the verification process for certifying vendors; definitions of standards for purchasing related to beverages, produce, beef, pork, poultry, seafood and dairy; existing labor standards and licensing policies
- B) Accountability and auditing practices; and
- C) Communications.

IV. Findings: Policies & Purchasing

What follows is a summary of findings, including assessments of areas of strength, and opportunities for improvement to achieve overall goals.

A. Current Sourcing Practices

In 2016, BDS partnered with Bon Appetit, a subsidiary of Compass Group. Bon Appetit is a member of the Equitable Food Initiative, an initiative that details standards that address labor conditions, sustainability, and food safety.⁴ The guiding principles that Bon Appetit follows are:

1. Compass Group Supply Chain Integrity Policies, which outline standards related to animal welfare, environmental sustainability (marine conservation, deforestation etc.), human rights, health and wellness, quality, and transparency.⁵
2. Bon Appetit's Farm to Fork, Fish to Fork and Locally Sourced programs and supplier standards guides purchasing from small farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and food producers within 150 miles.⁶
 - a. Vendors include (1) small farms, orchards and mills that grow plant-based products, and (2) small producers of meat, poultry and eggs, dairy and cheese.

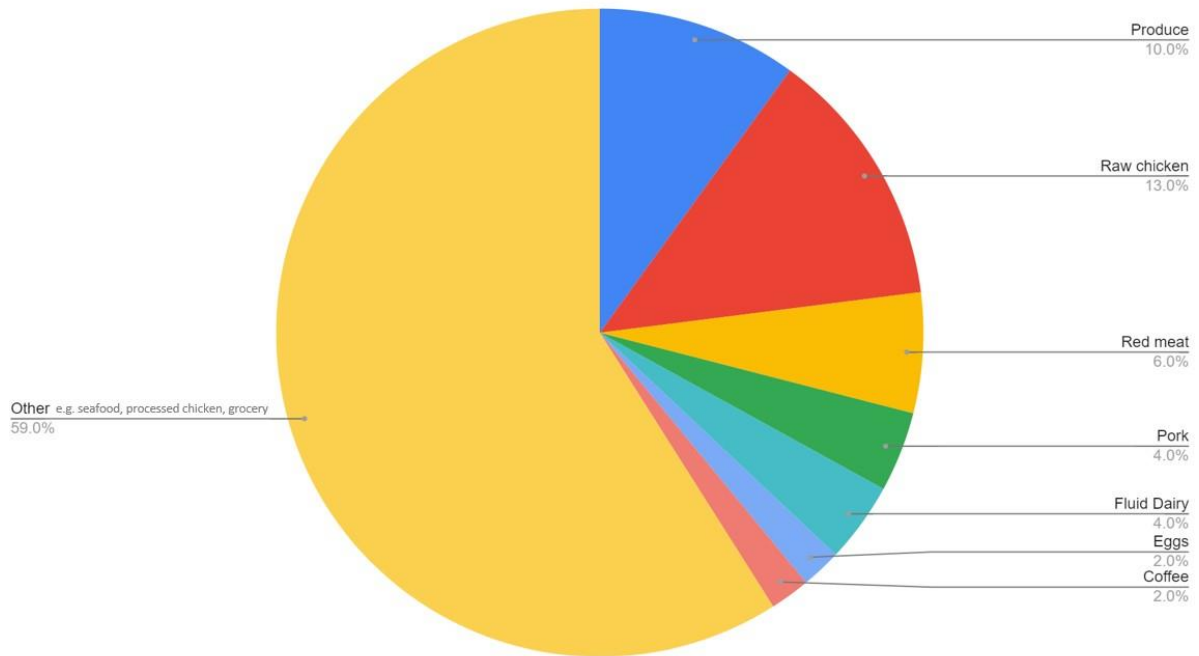
Brown Dining Services has adopted Bon Appetit's policies.

Summary of Spending

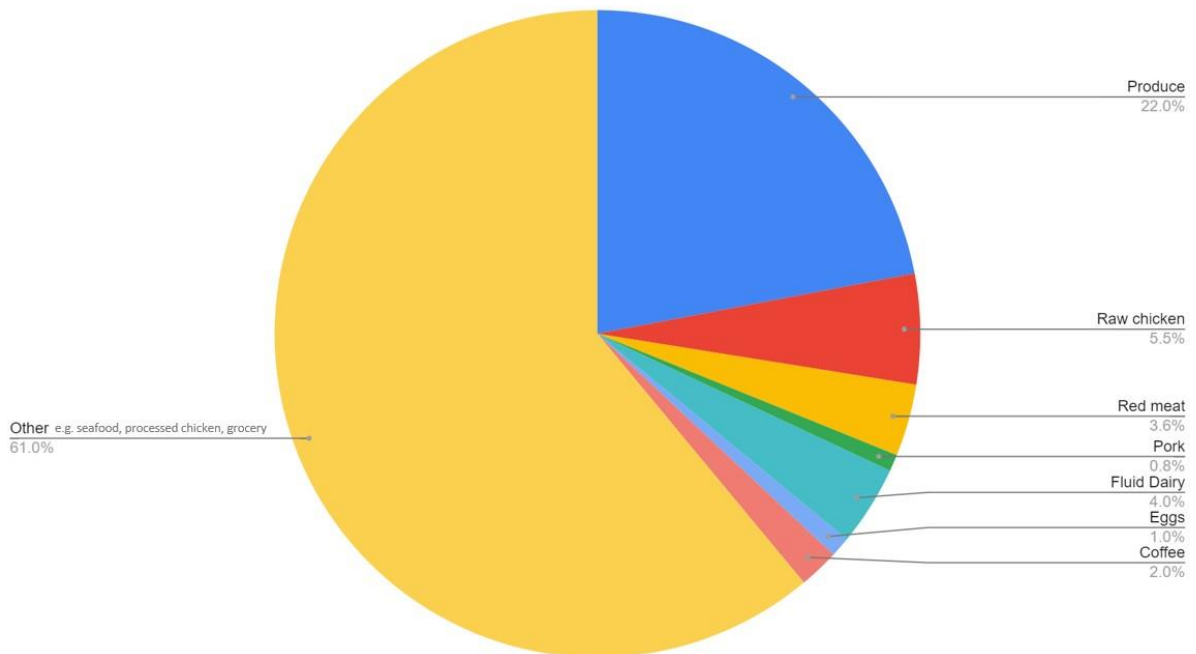
The following charts outline overall BDS spending by category, and the table below provides additional information about vendors and associated standards followed through purchasing.

Summary of BDS Spending on Food (FY 19 & FY 20)

% of FY19 Overall Food Expenditure



% of FY20 Overall Food Expenditure



Detailed Spending Information

Category	Specific Vendor/Product	% of FY19 overall food expenditure	FY 2019 Noteworthy percentages	% of FY20 overall food expenditure	FY 2020 Noteworthy percentages
Produce	Produce	10%	29% is local Farm to Fork	22%	9% is local (March to June purchasing volume dropped due to covid-19)
Raw chicken	Murray's Chicken (Standard: No antibiotics, no growth drugs, no hormones, certified humane, vegetable feed.)	13%	49% is Certified Humane	6%	96% is certified humane
Red meat	Pineland Farms Natural Meats beef (Standard: No antibiotics, no added hormones, strict vegetarian diet, not fed animal by-products.) Switched to Farmsmart Beef in March 2020.	6%	32% of beef spending meets the Global Animal Partnership Standards	4%	37% meets GAP standards
Pork	Clemens Food Group (Standard: No antibiotics or growth promoters, group housed, humanely raised, fed a vegetarian diet, born, raised, and harvest in the US.)	4%	89% of pork spending is Gestation Crate Free	1%	82% is Gestation Crate free
Seafood	Seafood is purchased through Red's Best. The seafood is caught locally and uses technology to intelligently minimize carbon footprint.	Not available	NA	NA	This number will be able to be reported in FY21
Fluid Dairy	Rhody Fresh Milk**	4%	100% of fluid dairy spending is local	4%	100% local
Eggs	Deb El Foods cage free liquid eggs and Little Rhody Farms cage free shelled eggs	2%	100% of egg spending is Cage Free	1%	100% cage free
Coffee	New Harvest Coffee Roasters	2%	100% of coffee spending is Fair Trade Certified	2%	100% Fair Trad

**Note: As a result of business model changes at Rhody Fresh, Dining Services transitioned purchasing to local provider Winsor Dairy as of January 2020.

Areas of Strength: Brown Dining Services' partnership with Bon Appetit has been important in helping to advance a number of priorities embraced by JFC, including local sourcing, attention to labor standards and sustainability.

There have been particular strides in terms of purchasing, such as the increase in purchasing from FY19 to FY20 in certified humane raw chicken, Pinelands Farm beef, Clemens Food Group pork, Red's Best sustainable seafood and local dairy and eggs.

Areas for Improvement: While Brown is guided by Bon Appetit's principles, they are not mandatory. Further, while 41% of the food budget's sourcing and spending is available, data regarding budget breakdown is not readily available.⁷ It would be important to strengthen data collection and availability, especially – to the extent possible – with regard to international spending on products such as imported fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables, and non-perishables such as tea, coffee, sugar and spices. There are no current sourcing practices or data on international foods.

B. Accountability Structures and Auditing

Bon Appetit shared with the committee basic information about the Compass Group's accountability practices. Lacking were specific ways to ensure audits occur regularly, and overall transparency into the process.

Areas of Strength: Compass Group's *Supply Chain Integrity Policies* and Bon Appetit's *Farm to Fork*, *Fish to Fork*, and *Locally Crafted* programs offer valuable frameworks to guide ethical practices.

In addition, the creation of the multi-party Dining Council within BDS, which includes diverse student representation from the undergraduate, graduate and medical student bodies, has been a positive development to promote engagement and accountability.

Areas for Improvement: The Committee was unable to collect relevant data regarding the specific processes and mechanisms used - such as audits - to ensure vendor compliance, supply chain transparency, and adherence to ethical labor practices. This underscored the opportunity for improved data collection within BDS.

C. Public-Facing Communications

BDS devotes substantial resources to communications with students and other members of the community, and has been more intentional in communicating about sourcing and sustainability efforts. There are ample opportunities to advance this work to promote greater awareness about the overall values that guide purchasing.

Areas of Strength: Dining Services is developing an expenditure dashboard that will offer greater details about spending. They have also approved the hiring of a social media intern to support communications.

Dining Services has built a strong relationship with the Office of Sustainability that facilitates shared marketing campaigns in this area. The Composting Campaign is an example of their shared success. The partnership has allowed for shared resources, including the time of a Data Analyst to work on improved data collection for Dining Services.

Dining Services has systems to disseminate nutrition and allergen information to students, and these same systems can be made more robust by including sourcing details. Specific nutrition and allergen information are included in all Dining Hall signage and the Brown Dining website, which offer models for sharing other kinds of purchasing information.

Areas for Improvement: Dining Services is in a strong position to increase community education and student outreach about their role in the food economy, the origins and labor of food that Dining Services purchases, food supplier selection, and how purchasing decisions reflect University values.

In March 2019, BESI conducted a survey of 663 undergraduate students -- in it, 70.6% expressed knowing little to nothing about the environmental practices behind the food purchased by Brown Dining Services, and 81.1% expressed knowing little to nothing about the labor practices behind the food purchased by Brown Dining Services. Dining Services' active social media accounts could include information and/or data on progress related to food sourcing and food purchasing practices.

Signage could be used more effectively to indicate the sources or ethicality behind products. Further, decisions about product purchases should be made available to students, especially students on meal plan. For example, for a brief period, the Sharpe Refectory offered Equal Exchange bananas, but they were introduced and removed without communication to the students. Signage and clear communication would inform students about the origins of their food choices.

V. Recommendations

The Committee's review of University policies and practices revealed important work is being done in local purchasing, animal welfare, and sustainable seafood. It also indicated that certification criteria and licensing for vendors that supply international food products are underdeveloped and/or non-existent.

There are several areas where the committee views opportunities for Brown to enhance efforts and possibly assume a leadership position among its peers in critical areas of sourcing, purchasing, sustainability, labor rights and transparency.

What follows are recommendations to advance progress toward the stated goals in the short and longer terms.

Recommendation 1: Track spending with greater specificity

While the University has detailed information about local food purchases, spending data on national and international sources is not readily available. While JFC recognizes that this may be challenging to access, tracking sourcing of large expenditures should be a priority.

In line with current efforts to develop an expenditure dashboard, the committee recommends that food costs be included and reported according to categories such as produce, dry goods, seafood, non-perishables, etc. These categories should then be further refined according to vendor and supplier, and then based on ethical labor practices parameters (see recommendation 3). This will allow the University to:

- Ensure food purchases meet ethical labor standards, by a third-party certification, University Licensing, and/or criteria outlined by BDS in collaboration with students, faculty and staff outside of BDS.
- Leverage the University’s institutional power to promote ethical labor practices at local, national, and international vendors.
- Identify avenues to increase ethical food purchases in a way that aligns with the University and Bon Appetit’s commitment to human rights, and does not disadvantage undergraduate students on meal plans. (i.e., costs will understandably be a factor in decision-making.)

Recommendation 2: Develop clear vendor guidelines and provide greater transparency around vendor certification and cycle of audits

Despite the existence of clear guidelines adopted by Bon Appetit, BDS lacks a binding agreement requiring vendor adherence to these guidelines. Brown is a major food purchaser and has influence in the marketplace. Brown can be a leader in developing criteria for approved vendors, including a process for meeting standards to be achieved over time.

BDS in partnership with Bon Appetit should develop criteria as soon as possible, recognizing that criteria will account for the diversity of vendor types, products and geographic location.

It is also critical for BDS to provide ways for the community to understand the certification process and verify the audit process and timeline.

Recommendation 3: Develop a method for purchasing based on just labor practices

Whenever possible, BDS should purchase products with existing third-party certifications that forbid labor exploitation in farms and factories, such as “Fair Trade USA” and “fair for

life” and factor in their respective certification rigor when making purchasing choices (see endnotes for a complete list of third-party fair labor certifications).⁸

In dealing with vendors whose products do not bear any of these third-party fair labor certifications, or when cost and quality considerations do not make third-party certified products most viable, we urge BDS to adopt/adapt the University's existing Supplier Diversity Policy to guide its purchasing decisions.⁹ Specifically, awarding contracts to vendors and suppliers that are local small businesses, minority local small businesses, [minority owned business enterprises \(MBE\)](#), [women owned business enterprises \(WBE\)](#), disadvantaged, and [veteran owned businesses](#) whenever possible.¹⁰

Brown can be a leader among its peer institutions in developing criteria for being an approved food vendor based on labor standards that protect workers against human trafficking, forced labor, and other labor rights exploitations. We urge BDS to reference the University's existing administrative policies related to licensing standards outside of BDS's purchasing, such as Code of Conduct for Brown University Licenses, which Brown's licensees must agree to (detailed in [Licensing](#)).¹¹ Specifically:

- Not licensing vendors and contractors that fail to adhere to practices that forbid child labor, forced labor, and harassment and abuse, and discrimination, and provide work environments that comply with local and national health and safety laws, and respect the right of employers to freedom of association.

Recommendation 4: Enhance communication and transparency of purchasing practices

There is an opportunity to strengthen community education and student outreach about BDS's role in the food economy and the environment, and to increase the community's awareness of the origins of their food, the labor behind their food, and the institutional and community values that are reflected through the University's purchasing decisions.

- Upon its completion, the food sourcing dashboard should become available to the Brown community. In line with the University's commitment to transparency, it is important that students, especially those required to be on meal plans, can access vendor information in regards to their dining options. Specifically, this means that the student body is able to know the names of Brown's vendors, and how much, in terms of percentage, is purchased from each vendor.
- Improve signage of certification of food in dining halls and retail locations, and label specific products that are certified or contain certified ingredients.
- Promote community education through highly visible infographics within dining halls, specialty dishes in the theme of food justice, as well as University hosted

workshops/presentations, speaker events surrounding food justice, a preorientation program etc.

- Have a portal to make licensees of the to-be developed BDS-specific product licensing code of conduct available ([like here](#)). This separate portal will allow the Brown community to explore current University food vendors/suppliers, increase opportunities for further research and improvement.
- Increase publicity of ethical sourcing progress and initiatives via the BDS website, Instagram, Facebook and other media. We urge BDS to provide updates and initiatives pertaining to ethical food sourcing in a timely manner via their media outlets. This work is important and relevant for the student body, specifically those on meal plans.

Recommendation 5: University Sustainability Plan should incorporate and address food purchasing policies and practices

BDS has a strong partnership with the University Office of Sustainability, and should continue to engage with the University's sustainability planning initiative to ensure ongoing prioritization and coordination. This should include a process for regularly examining current standards to ensure integrity of measurements used in criteria assessments.

Recommendation 6: Establish a student intern position in BDS

To help implement these recommendations and promote community engagement and awareness among students, BDS should create an annually-hired and paid student intern position. Consider integrating this position into the Dining Council or other relevant working groups.

Recommendation 7: Develop a multi-year plan to accomplish these priorities

We recommend that BDS develop a multi-year plan to advance the goals and objectives outlined in this report, and specifically to adopt the Compass Initiatives principles, strengthen accountability and transparency, and enhance communications and outreach.

V. Conclusion

Brown University and BDS have made strides in recent years to adopt policies and practices that reflect the values of students, faculty, and staff around food purchasing, and today, BDS is positioned to be a leader in ways that reflect the University's values of equity, justice, health, wellness and transparency.

This report has also identified areas for improvement, including BDS's transparency and accountability around adhering to sourcing principles. We urge adoption of the recommendations outlined above to build on recent progress and make important and necessary strides.

Endnotes

1. The Brown Ethical Sourcing Initiative (BESI), formerly the Brown Fair Food Campaign (BFFC), was formed by undergraduate students in November 2017. Students launched the initiative to advocate for Brown University's food purchasing practices to reflect more consistently overall University values with regard to labor rights and environmental sustainability.

2. Brown University Community Council presentation by Brown Ethical Sourcing Initiative Members, April 2019,
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1MenyUNIBriND3nj2Xt2qusb7I3uQsxaUrwGgKF/CjS6Y/edit#slide=id.g565dcf712b_1_0

Brown Ethical Sourcing Initiative's Proposed Resolution to the BUCC, April 2019,
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KGgJepDbfjxJBRyGeoNvZYW5cmNDs3i/view?usp=sharing>

3. The 2008 student-driven Real Food Campaign sought to increase more "real foods" on campus—foods that are locally-sourced, respect farmworker rights, and ensure ecological sustainability. The campaign called for (1) a 20% increase in Real Food over five years, an (2) eight-member Student Food Sustainability Team employed within BUDS, and (3) a University-wide Food Systems Working Group composed of students, staff and faculty. Brown adopted the Real Food Challenge and has exceeded the 20% real food sourcing goal. BESI has noted that the second and third campaign calls were not fulfilled.

Real Food Challenge Website <https://www.realfoodchallenge.org/real-food-campuscommitment/>

Brown Real Food Now Petition
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DESQP9UxllzQtNK586oeCL_e84_v8ynGnIoFJiLpS8/edit?usp=sharing

4. Equitable Food Initiative Standards <https://equitablefood.org/efi-standards/>

5. Compass Group Supply Chain Integrity Policies:
<https://www.compass-group.com/content/dam/compass-group/corporate/Actingresponsibly/SCI%20Policy%20Statement%20Rev%20July2018.pdf>

6. Bon Appetit Sourcing Guide: <https://www.bamco.com/sourcing/>

7. Reference table below for a further breakdown provided:

Food spending breakdown (percentages are *FY19, unless otherwise stated)

- Produce: 10% of Brown Dining's overall food spending is on produce. > 29% of produce spending is local (Farm to Food).
 - > International spending breakdown is unavailable
- Murray's Chicken (Standard: No antibiotics, no growth drugs, no hormones, certified humane, vegetable feed.)
 - > 13% of our overall food expenditure is on raw chicken.
 - > 49% of our raw chicken spending is Certified Humane.
- Pineland Farms beef (Standard: No antibiotics, no added hormones, strict vegetarian diet, not fed animal by-products.)
 - > 6% of Brown Dining's overall food expenditure is on red meat.
 - > 32% of red meat spending meets level four of the 5-step Animal Welfare Rating.
- Clemens Food Group (Standard: No antibiotics or growth promoters, group housed, humanely raised, fed a vegetarian diet, born, raised, and harvested in the US.)
 - > 4% of Brown Dining's overall food expenditure is pork.
 - > 89% of pork spending is Gestation Crate Free.
- Dairy - Rhody Fresh Milk, Narragansett Creamery Yogurt - rBGH-free milk and yogurt.
 - > 4% of Brown Dining's overall food expenditure is fluid dairy. > 100% of fluid dairy spending is local.
- Deb-el Foods cage free liquid eggs and Little Rhody Farms cage free shelled eggs.
 - > 2% of Brown Dining's overall food expenditure is eggs.
 - > 100% of egg spending is Cage Free.
- Sustainable Seafood: Bon Appetit has a Fish to Fork program that sets clear parameters for sustainable seafood. (See [standards.](#)) Brown serves Red's Best seafood. The seafood is caught locally and uses technology to intelligently minimize carbon footprint.
- Beverages: The top 10 beverages sold in retail eateries at Brown: 1. Odwalla 2. Coke-Vitamin Water 3. LRF Milk (8 oz cartons, all flavors) 4. Simply OJ 5. NBPoland Sparkling water 6. Coke-Powerade 7. Honest Tea 8. Purity Organic 9. Vita Coco 10. Sweet Leaf
 - > 2% of Brown Dining's overall food expenditure is coffee.
 - > 100% of coffee spending is Fair Trade Certified.

Some of the local Brown dining vendors include:

- Horse Listeners Orchard (fruit, tomatoes, basil, apple cider, apple sauce)
- Maine Sea Salt Company
- Kitchen Garden Farm (tomato products)
- Blackbird Farm (pork, beef)
- Queen's Greens (lettuce)
- Barden Orchard (apples)
- Murray's Chicken
- Narragansett Creamery (cheese)
- Farm Fresh RI (produce)
- Confreda Farms (produce)
- New Harvest Coffee Roasters
- RI Mushroom Company
- Red's Best (fish)
- Winsor Dairy (milk)
- Aquidneck Honey
- Gotham Greens (lettuce)
- Young's Family Farm (produce)
- Leafy Green Tea
- New England Grass Fed (beef)
- Pineland Farms (beef)

8. <https://fairworldproject.org/get-informed/movements/fair-trade/certifiersmembership-orgs/>

9. Supplier Diversity Policy:

<https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/policies/supplier-diversity-policy> ^{10.}

Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs): <https://www.vip.vetbiz.va.gov/>

11. Licensing: <https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/policies/workplace-codeconduct-brown-university-licensees>