



FRESH THINKING.
WORLD CLASS.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Duke Dining Leads the Nation as the First University to Introduce a Stand-Alone, Top 9 Allergen-Free Dining Venue

DUKE UNIVERSITY, DURHAM, N.C. – Duke Dining continues to lead the way in inclusive dining with the groundbreaking achievement of FARECheck Gold recognition for It's Thyme—the first and only stand-alone university dining venue in the nation completely free from the top 9 allergens and gluten. This milestone reflects Duke Dining's unwavering commitment to providing a safe, transparent, and innovative dining experience for students with dietary restrictions.

"This recognition represents more than just a milestone—it underscores our mission to ensure every student, regardless of dietary restrictions, has access to safe and high-quality meals," said Robert Coffey, Director of Duke Dining. "Duke Dining remains committed to setting the industry standard for food allergen safety and inclusivity."

"It's Thyme is the first stand-alone dining location in the nation to earn [FARECheck Gold](#) recognition, a distinction that reflects Duke Dining's commitment to inclusive dining," said Sung Poblete, PhD, RN, CEO of FARE. "We hear from students with food allergy that dining options play a critical role in their choice of where to pursue higher education, and we commend Duke Dining for its dedication to meeting the highest standards for food allergy safety at this location and the location on East Campus. Their leadership is an example for other institutions, demonstrating the importance of making dining more accessible for the many students with this potentially life-threatening disease."

FARECheck Gold is the highest level of recognition awarded by Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE) to food establishments that demonstrate exceptional commitment to food allergen safety. To achieve this status, an establishment must first ensure that at least 90% of its workforce has undergone food allergy safety training, qualifying for FARECheck Silver. Subsequently, the establishment must undergo a thorough food service policy review, and an annual on-site audit conducted by FARE to verify compliance with stringent allergen management protocols. This comprehensive process ensures that certified establishments maintain the highest standards in food allergen safety, providing a safer dining environment for individuals with food allergies.

"It's Thyme was created to provide a completely safe dining option for students with food allergies," said Erik Dailey, Operator of It's Thyme. "We are honored to receive the FARECheck Gold recognition, and we hope this sets a new standard for inclusivity in campus dining."

Duke student Jennifer Lee shared how It's Thyme has transformed campus dining: "It's not just a safe and convenient option—it's a place where all students can enjoy meals worry-free without compromising on variety, nutrition, or flavor. Beyond the food itself, It's Thyme has fostered a more

inclusive dining experience, allowing everyone to come together and share a meal. Seeing Duke lead the way in food safety and accessibility with this expansion is exciting, and I hope this is just the beginning of making allergy-safe dining the norm on campuses everywhere.”

Seth Lee, a parent of a Duke student with allergies, also praised Duke Dining’s commitment: “Duke Dining proactively addressed all our anaphylactic food allergy requirements prior to applying to Duke. This level of engagement influenced my son’s decision to apply early decision, and now, three years later, Duke Dining has fully upheld their commitments to food safety and nutrition. We chose Duke University because of Duke Dining’s comprehensive food allergen program.”

“This achievement reflects Duke’s commitment to student well-being,” said Mary Pat McMahon, Vice Provost and Vice President of Student Affairs. “It’s Thyme is one of the ways Duke Dining ensures all students, especially those with food allergies, can fully participate in campus life. We are proud to see Duke Dining continue to set the standard for innovation and accessibility in university dining.”

This is not the first FARECheck Gold recognition received by Duke Dining. In 2023, Marketplace and Trinity Café received the award, making Duke Dining the first university dining program that offers a peanut and tree nut-free all-you-care-to-eat location.

Celebration Event Details:

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

11:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony: 12:00 PM

It’s Thyme (Plaza Level, Bryan Center)

For media inquiries, please contact:

Steve Hartsoe

steve.hartsoe@duke.edu

About Duke Dining

Duke Dining is a nationally recognized leader in university dining, committed to providing exceptional, inclusive, and innovative dining experiences. With a focus on student well-being, sustainability, and culinary excellence, Duke Dining continually sets the standard for university dining programs across the country.

About FARE

FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education) is the leading nonprofit organization that empowers the food allergy patient across the journey of managing their disease. FARE delivers innovation by focusing on three strategic pillars—advocacy, research, and education—united by the through line of health equity. FARE’s initiatives accelerate the future of food allergy through effective policies and legislation, novel strategies toward prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, and building awareness and community. For more information, visit [FoodAllergy.org](https://www.foodallergy.org).

Find out more about Duke Dining’s FARECheck Gold recognition [here](#).