UNDER THE ROCK:

THE HUSKY HUNGER GAMES OF UCONN'S BEST OFF-CAMPUS EATS

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Exterior shot of the UConn Dairy Bar. The Dairy Bar has been a staple of the Storrs campus since 1953.

PHOTO BY SAMANTHA BRODY, LIFE EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS.

While eight great dining halls are a staple, some of the most meaningful meals for University of Connecticut students occur off-campus. I fancy myself an amateur food aficionado — otherwise known as a "foodie" — so I figured I'd build a guide of UConn's best off-campus eats matched to the moments that matter most.

For When Parents Visit: Dog Lane Cafe

When family comes to town, this classic eatery has a little bit of everything to offer. Located in the "downtown" area on the corner of Dog Lane and Storrs Road, the Dog Lane Cafe offers a polished yet relaxed atmosphere that feels nostalgic yet inviting. Think "global village coffeehouse" with some Huskies imagery mixed in.

The menu has a wide variety of sandwich specialties, plus house-made chili and soups, burritos, burgers and breakfast options — and plenty of beverages like smoothies and "bottomless" coffees.

With thoughtfully sourced ingredients, rotating seasonal specials and ample seating, it's the ideal place to show parents that Storrs-Mansfield has grown into more than just a campus bubble — especially for those who attended "back in the day" when Store-24 and Paul's Pizza were the only options.

Bonus points for the soup varieties — a necessity during our iconic cold winter weather.

For Late-Night Cravings: DP Dough

Few places are as intertwined with UConn nightlife as DP Dough, nestled away on the ground floor of University Plaza on Storrs Road.

Known for its "zones," this unique spot thrives when everything else is closed. Their draw is a near-mythical late-night delivery service: DP Dough is open until 2 a.m. Sunday to Wednesday and until 3 a.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

My pick off their large menu is the "Maui Wowi Zone," which has mozzarella, pineapple and ham. The "Twilight Zone," named after the iconic television series and the "Chicken Parma-Zone" are also great choices — or you can go build-your-own with the "Construction Zone" and dozens of fillings and sauces (get it?).

Whether you're coming back from the library or ending a night out, it's the dependable answer to the question every student eventually asks: "What's still open?" The food may be indulgent, but that's exactly the point.

For a Romantic Date: Fenton River Grill

For a more refined off-campus experience, The Fenton River Grill in Mansfield offers an upscale but approachable setting for lunch and dinner.

With dim lighting, comfortable seating and elevated classic comfort food dishes, it's a strong choice for a date or a celebratory dinner. The menu isn't overcrowded, focusing on what works — don't sleep on their chicken and tortellini, served with a wine demi-glace and roasted red peppers.

The restaurant's location, about a 15-minute drive from campus at 135 Storrs Road, is away from the "hustle and bustle" but not too far in my book. It's a restaurant that balances sophistication and comfort — perfect for a night where dinner and drinks flow into meaningful conversation.

For Watching UConn Basketball: Willington Pizza House

If you didn't know, you're in the "Basketball Capital of the World." When UConn tips off, few places capture the communal energy like Willington Pizza House.

A short drive from campus, just up Route 32, this longtime local favorite converted from a 250-year-old farmhouse becomes a hub on game nights, filled with fans, televisions tuned to the action and tables stacked with specialty pizzas. If you're more into grinders, salads or classic appetizers, WPH has your back with a wide but not overwhelming menu.

Whether it's a high-stakes tournament game or a regular-season showdown, Willington Pizza House offers the space, food and energy that turn watching the Huskies into a shared experience.

For a Quick, Reliable Lunch: Mooyah Burgers, Fries and Shakes

When students need something fast, Mooyah Burgers, Fries and Shakes on Dog Lane consistently delivers.

With a simple menu of made-to-order burgers, fries and shakes, (who would have guessed?) plus hot dogs and vegetarian options, Mooyah offers quick service without sacrificing quality. Now, this spot isn't as cheap as other fast food burger joints, but the old saying "you get what you pay for" applies; the portions are generous.

It's predictable in the best way — efficient, filling and easy to fit into a tight schedule — which is exactly what makes it a lunch time staple.

For a Sweet Treat: UConn Dairy Bar

Did you think I wouldn't mention this classic spot? Enjoying the UConn Dairy Bar is practically a rite of passage for students, alumni and visitors alike. The scoop shop is located on Manter Road near the Agricultural Biotechnology Laboratory and Horsebarn Hill — don't worry, there are signs to guide you.

The menu rotates through a wide selection of flavors, from dependable classics to more adventurous seasonal offerings and limited-time specialties like the annual "Senior Scoop" flavor. As a self-proclaimed ice cream buff, I have so many "favorite flavors," but you can't go wrong with the Dairy Bar's black raspberry, Jonathan XV Supreme (vanilla with a peanut butter swirl and mini M&M's) or "Husky Tracks."

Churning since 1953, the Dairy Bar has received so many awards I don't think it's too unfair to call them the best ice cream in Connecticut, maybe even the whole world.

Good Eats Keep You Going

Off-campus dining at UConn isn't about finding the "best" restaurant overall. You may just find it's about the right place at the right time. Whether you're celebrating a win, feeding a craving or hosting visitors, these spots have earned their place in UConn culture one meal at a time.



LOGO BY SAMANTHA HASS, ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS