New options for campus food, but prices are still steep

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A new to-go option for buffet meals at Utah State University means students have more dining choices — but many are still struggling with the prices.

The take-out boxes are available to use at The Junction and The Marketplace, but students have to buy into the to-go system with a one-time fee of $5 for the box itself. After that, filling the box costs the value of one meal plan meal — from $7.40 to $7.90 depending on how many meals the student has purchased in his or her meal.

There's also a catch: Customers have 10 minutes to fill their boxes. If they go over that allotted time they will be charged for an additional meal.

Extra fees and fill-the-box-fast rules notwithstanding, the to-go buffet meals might still might be a better deal than using a student meal plan at the Hub, Quickstop or several other on-campus cafes, where food can be even more expensive — particularly for processed and packaged food. At those locations, students who paid up to $7.90 for each meal get a cash equivalency of just $6.50.

“You can get two bottles of Gatorade for $3 at the gas station,” said Torrey Green, a university student and football player. “It's over $3 just for one at The Hub.”

But David Chambers, the customer service manager for The Marketplace, said Utah State students are, in fact, getting a good deal on their food.

“We meet every year to compare the prices of our meal plans to other schools in the state,” Chambers said. “We actually have lower-priced meals than most of them and probably most of the country as well.”

Students who disagree, though, have a new off-campus option. Morty’s, a new restaurant adjacent to the school’s west side at 780 E. 700 North, offers burgers and salads for an average price of $6.50.