



## Small-Scale Sustainability

# Raising the Roof at Millikin University

Nestled right in the center of the state of Illinois, Millikin University is a small and independent-minded university. The signature of a Millikin education is a unique experience called Performance Learning, where students get out in the world and perform their studies as a way of learning through action. As Aramark Collegiate Hospitality's Executive Chef at Millikin, Brian Pehr has taken this to heart. With hard work and collaboration with the university and community, Chef Brian has built Millikin an effective sustainable food program, from the ground up.

The seeds were first sown in 2015, when Chef Brian began partnering with Millikin's biology department to grow herbs he could use in recipes. The department donated two rooftop planter beds to the cause. As good ideas tend to grow quickly, those two initial beds sprouted into 14 spread across the roof, as Millikin administrators liked the hyperlocal food idea so much they partnered with Chef Brian to expand it.

Herbs and vegetables find their way from the roof to the plates of Millikin students through Chef Brian's sustainably-sourced recipes. "It's not just farm to fork; it's rooftop to fork," Chef Brian says. Much of what's grown in the rooftop garden is even donated to the local homeless shelter. As both a chef for Millikin students and staff, and an important steward of the larger community, Chef Brian often asks, "How are we going to help our fellow man?"

Chef Brian and the Aramark Collegiate Hospitality team at Millikin benchmarked the costs of running the sustainable rooftop garden against a typical vendor-supplied food budget, and proved that growing a sustainable food program on Millikin's small footprint is both a healthy and financially responsible decision.

### Items that have been made from the garden:

- 4 different types of olive oil
- 6 different infused vinegars
- Upscale drizzles for salad bar
- 3 different infused salts
- Infused mayo
- Infused butter
- Marinara with fresh basil and oregano
- Roasted garlic and mixed herb pesto



**PARTNER SINCE:**  
2008

**LOCATION:**  
Decatur, IL

**GARDEN BEDS:**  
14

**GROWING SPACE:**  
448 sq. ft.

**RETAIL VALUE OF PRODUCE GROWN SINCE 2019:**  
\$2,400



**It's not just farm to fork; it's rooftop to fork."**

**Brian Pehr**  
Executive Chef  
Millikin University





While the Millikin University campus is located downtown with little room to grow food on adjacent land, Chef Brian's rooftop garden program has reached far beyond the blocks of campus. Soon, students from nearby Mt. Zion High School will come to Millikin to get their hands dirty in the garden and learn what it takes to grow food on their own. The university is planning to create an entirely new academic department in agricultural business because of the rooftop garden's success. The garden plants will also be getting some new friends in the future, as a local beekeeper is partnering with Aramark Collegiate Hospitality to build a hive on the roof. While the beekeeper will keep the honey, the garden will get much needed pollination to expand the types of vegetables that can be grown there to include varieties like zucchini, squash and pumpkins.

## SUSTAINABILITY DOESN'T STOP AT MILLIKIN'S ROOFTOP GARDEN

Aramark Collegiate Hospitality teamed up with the university's facilities department to create a composting program as well, cycling both food and yard waste. The compost creates rich soil for the rooftop garden. While community partners have lent a hand by donating plants and soil to the garden, in the 2022-23 academic year, the garden will use 100% composted soil from the university — a completely closed sustainable system.

Chef Brian has worked for Aramark Collegiate Hospitality at Millikin University for 12 years, and he's proud that his small but powerfully sustainable solution has contributed to creating a close-knit family atmosphere on campus. He has dedicated countless hours to growing the garden and building great relationships with the community, and is excited for what the future may bring.

Your mission and Aramark Collegiate Hospitality's passion go hand-in-hand to fuel academic and personal success.

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## DOES SCHOOL SIZE MATTER WHEN GOING SUSTAINABLE?

Not at all! Any university of any size can support a sustainable food program.

These small but powerful ideas could make a difference:



Rooftop gardens



Reusable water bottles



Compostable packaging



Composting bins



Waste-stream monitoring at receptacles



Apiaries

