



# Healthy Choices at Mizzou Market: Is It Impossible?

David Sternfeld

The Mizzou markets at Mizzou are a staple of the community for many students. It is an easy way for them to get a quick snack or get some groceries for the meals they want to make that week. However, there aren't many healthy food options available, and the healthy options are not financially feasible for the average student. While the Mizzou Market is a convenient resource for students, its lack of late-night hours and limited product variety fail to meet student needs. One student noted that the Markets have "great snack options, but no real food or meals offered." By increasing the inventory diversity, lowering prices, and altering hours of operation, the Mizzou Markets could better cater to the students at the University of Missouri.

Eating healthy and getting more exercise is a goal that many students have coming into college. It is important to them to eat well and exercise in order to improve their mental and physical health. Every freshman is required to buy a meal plan, which can be used throughout Mizzou's campus at Mizzou Markets and Campus Dining Services restaurants. The Mizzou Markets offer a quick and easy way to get food for either a quick snack or for any meal during the day. The Markets offer many diverse food options, including fresh fruit every week, which varies based on the shipments they receive from their shipping company, Crazy Fresh. The company will make shipments to Mizzou every week containing items it has ordered, however sometimes the shipments aren't always what was originally ordered. One manager, who requested to remain anonymous, spoke about the shipments saying, "We make orders from the company, but sometimes things are either missing or they have gotten replaced with other items. It happens a lot with our fruit, which is why we often have the same fruit every week. The manager reported receiving more oranges than ordered, less apples, and more bags of chips. This allowed the chips to be restocked more and leads more students to reach for the less healthier options.

As the days go on throughout the week, before another shipment arrives, many students are less likely to pick the fresh fruit option available in the market because they have grown brown and do not look as appetizing as when they first arrived on the shelves. Mizzou Market stores its fresh fruit in air temperature baskets next to the checkout counter. According to an article published by the Nebraska State Government, "apples ripen about four times as fast at 50°F as at 32°F..." (Nebraska State Government). The fresh fruit at Mizzou Markets are stored around 72°F, which means it is only fresh for about




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My name is David Sternfeld. I am an undergraduate student from Charleston, South Carolina. I am pursuing a bachelors degree in news production at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Post graduation I plan to produce sports or news at a news station.

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four hours after it is received from the shipment trucks. The freshness can be detected by visual clues, such as its color being brown or appearing softer, as well as not being as crisp as it once was. The reduction in freshness time makes the fruit look less desirable for purchase, and as such leads to more food waste. According to a study done by the American Marketing Association, if food looks less desirable, consumers may “avoid consuming healthy (vs. nonhealthy) about-to-expire food, resulting in increased disposal intentions.”(Kim). The best way to help keep fruit fresh for as long as possible is to store it refrigerated in the refrigerators that are already placed in the Markets. This may cause one unintended side effect for the Markets; however, as they will run low on stock due to the higher demand. As the demand increases, the price of the fruit will inevitably increase due to the lower stock.

At the multiple markets across campus, in addition to fresh fruit, students can find precut fruit in packages located in the refrigerated section. Some of these options include pineapple, watermelon, and a fruit salad. These items are some of the most expensive items in the entire store, only being outpriced by a select few frozen meal items. Prices will fluctuate slightly throughout the semester based on the demand, however the average price of the packaged fruit has remained around \$7.99. The Mizzou Markets offer a 20% discount to anyone who is using a dining plan, which many feel is not discounted enough. At most of the restaurants that fall under Campus Dining Services(CDS), which provides students with their meal plan, students who make purchases with their meal plan receive a 50% discount on their purchase. The higher total price with the discounts applied makes many students hesitant to purchase these healthier foods due to their higher price. On the basic plans that most freshman students receive when they enter Mizzou, students are allotted \$925 per semester. If a student were to eat on campus everyday, they would only be allotted about \$8 per day. The dining halls such as Plaza 900 and Restaurants at Southwest cost \$6 per entrance with the student plan, which means that a student would overspend and have troubles at the end of the semester when they have either run out of money or are almost out of their dining plan. The high cost of these healthier foods at the Mizzou Markets makes students feel discouraged about eating healthier. In a survey of Mizzou students from all across campus, one student noted that, “It kind of tempts me to make unhealthy decisions like getting candy when I shouldn’t.” Many students reported feeling similarly, as the more unhealthy foods in the market cost less. For example, students can buy a soda and a Hershey's bar at the Mizzou Market in the Student Center for \$4.98 before the discount is applied to the purchase. This is starkly contrasted with the cost of a container of cut fruit, such as the pineapple. The packaged fruit is one of the healthier options that is offered in the market, however its high price drives many students to go for the candy bar and soda instead. The Market is sometimes the only option open at the time for students, and as such they choose the less expensive option to save money for later in the semester.

Mizzou Market’s hours of operation have shifted over the last few years. After relocating from Hawthorn Hall in 2023 to the student center, Mizzou Market Central changed its hours of closing from 11pm to 9pm. As the Maneater’s Sterling Sewell wrote in her article about the move, “Students often have classes and organizations that last late into the evening. Cutting the market’s available evening hours would be a detriment to students’ needs” (Sewell, 2023). The only options available to students after 8pm when many clubs and organizations have completed their meetings is often only Pizza & MO and Wings & MO, both of which are located on a side of campus away from most of the dorms. The only other CDS option that is available to students after 8pm is the Mizzou Markets, which are often short on stock by the end of the day. The Mizzou Market Central, where most students go for the markets, changed its hours at the beginning of 2024 and now is only open until 8pm. The options available for students after their clubs and extracurricular activities have commenced do not have many healthy options for students during these hours which serves as a determinant to their physical health and their diet. When students look for dinner after 8pm, and the only CDS location that is open is the Mizzou Market with their small selection of “real food or meals”, students feel discouraged and decide to opt for an unhealthy option that does not serve the same purpose as a healthy meal. One student noted that “The Mizzou market near my dorm is Emporium and they run out of a lot quite often. it’s the only one open when I get off of work most days”.

The solutions to help Mizzou students eat healthier, fresher foods are very important for their mental and physical health. First, one solution to this problem would be to store the fresh fruit in the refrigerator section that is already



built in the Mizzou Markets. Second, by reducing the price of the packaged fruits and vegetables, more students would purchase the items. By allowing students more flexibility to buy healthier options throughout the grab and go markets, Mizzou students would have the ability to take care of their physical health.

Ultimately, while Mizzou Markets offer a convenient food access location for students, the current operation fails to support the health and wellness needs of an otherwise health-conscious student body. Between few healthy offerings available, healthy offerings being more expensive than junk food, and fewer late-night offerings for those unplanned nighttime snacks, students have no choice but to make unhealthy selections. In order for these important changes to happen, Mizzou Markets will not only need to have their hours changed by the university, but the university will also need to contract local supermarkets in order to get the fresh fruit in better conditions than they are currently in. In addition, in order to upgrade the refrigeration section in each of the markets, a donation would need to be made to upgrade the space to accommodate the influx of new items that require to be refrigerated. As such, should Mizzou Markets properly refrigerate perishables, lower healthy options prices, and change the hours of operation to last longer into the evening, Mizzou can change the current mindset of management to something more conducive to the health and wellness of its students.

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