Motivation
Food consumption constitutes a significant portion of our carbon footprint when we take into account food production and transportation. College dining halls in turn play a major role in the support of sustainable food systems simply through the sheer volume of food that they serve.

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) provides a self-reporting framework for colleges to measure their sustainability performance. One of the many contributing factors to the framework is food & beverage purchasing. AASHE’s metric for food sustainability overlaps with that of the Real Food Challenge and requires a comprehensive inventory of food purchases complete with the sustainability aspects of each product.

What constitutes sustainable food?

- Third party verified: the food product is sustainably and/or ethically produced as determined by one or more recognized food and beverage sustainability standards (e.g. Fair Trade)
- Local & Community Based:
  - Single-ingredient products: privately or cooperatively owned, does not exceed $5 mil in gross annual sales, and within 250 mile radius of institution
  - Multi-ingredient products: privately or cooperatively owned, does not exceed $50 mil in gross annual sales, within 250 mile radius AND at least 50% ingredients satisfy Ownership, Size and Distance criteria

Goals

- Consolidate Valentine Dining Hall’s food & beverage purchases into a dataset by extracting data from invoices
- Develop a process for updating the database in the future
- Research the sustainability aspects of the purchased food products

Data Extraction

- Invoice processing done through writing scripts in R
- Created an interactive web app to process invoices in the future

Challenges

- Paper invoices, compared to digital ones, presented the challenge of requiring high quality scans before they can be processed
- Even with high quality scans, pen mark-ups on the invoices obscured the text on the scanned PDFs

Moving Forward

- Develop more robust scripts to handle more invoices in the future
- Research the sustainability aspects of Val’s food purchases
- Append Val’s existing food database management system with sustainability-related rags

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