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THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Utah's eat-local movement transforming u-pick into fine dining

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Features

Park City » Kayley and Todd Rooney picked the snap peas and cherry tomatoes that are being tossed in the large green salad. Susan Odell harvested the herbs that are now chopped and ready to stir into the risotto. And Russell Taylor brought the Angus steaks -- specifically from Heifer #23 -- from his certified organic farm in Emery County. In a moment, these four guests and the 16 others attending this farm-to-table dinner at the Copper Moose Organic Farm will carry plates to an elegant outdoor table, covered with a white linen table cloth and set with fine china and stem ware.

Once seated, they will toast -- and savor -- this meal without miles.

The distance the dinner traveled from farm to plate can be measured in minutes, hours and days -- a chain so short it didn't include a middleman, a semi-truck or a warehouse. Full-flavored meals like this were an everyday occurrence generations ago, but somehow got replaced by fast and convenient food, with taste usually going by the wayside.

But as more people seek to understand where their food comes from -- and who is producing it -- more diners are returning to the field. From harvest dinners and culinary classes to restaurants and caterers, the farm-to-table concept is now a culinary buzz word in Utah and across the country.

"People are inherently drawn to farms and growing food, it's such a part of our historical culture," said Daisy Fair, who runs the one-acre Copper Moose Farm. "It's just in the last generation that we have lost touch with growing our own food."

Fair was hired four years ago by land owners John and Kristi Cumming to run Copper Moose Farm. The first summer was spent planning and building greenhouses. But for the last three years,

Copper Moose has operated a successful Community Supported Agriculture program, offering more than 50 families a weekly allotment of fresh grown produce, eggs and honey. The farm offers U-pick days where members can harvest what is in season, tour the farm and feed the resident flock of chickens and ducks.

Copper Moose offered its first farm-to-table dinner last year. Three were held this summer, all of which sold out quickly even at the \$125 per person price tag. "It's so beautiful to eat out in the field," said Fair, "and its a fun way to connect people with the land where their food is being grown."

The concept has been around for several years in states such as California and Oregon, where America's sustainable food movement is rooted.

Seven years ago, Erika Polmar co-founded The Plate and Pitchfork, a traveling farm-to-table restaurant in Portland. Tables, grills and propane burners are set up on different area farms. Chefs and wine makers take turns hosting the dinners, preparing five-to-six course meals using food picked fresh from the field. The first year The Plate and Pitchfork offered three dinners, serving 45 people each night. Today they do more than a dozen dinners feeding 112 a night.

"When we started, local and sustainable weren't something people talked about," Polmar said. "The change since then has been immense."

While eating local not only tastes better and is healthier -- and benefits local economies and the environment -- it's also addictive. "My favorite moment is when I take someone to a farmers market for the first time, and they sample a cherry or a peach and they get this instant sugar bomb," Polmar said. "It's not what a cherry that has been picked before it was ripe and been transported 1,500 miles tastes like."

At Park City's Copper Moose, farm-to-table evenings start with a tour of the garden and the harvesting of produce for the evening meal. Special guests, usually a Utah food purveyor, speak about their local product. Past speakers have represented Taylor Made Beef, Beehive Cheese and High West Distillery.

Then participants head to the kitchen, where Rebecca Brenner, owner of Park City Holistic Health, puts them to work preparing and cooking dinner. Brenner, a registered dietician, said she finds that most of her clients are interested in eating fresh, whole foods, but the problem is knowing how to cook them. Most are surprised to find out it doesn't take much to make fresh food taste good. "It's so full of fantastic flavor it does all the work for you," she said.

Michael West and his wife Jitka attended two of the Copper Moose dinners. "I love knowing that between the food and me, there's been

no truck, no gas, no shipping across several states," West said.

This year, Eileen Dunn, of Park City's Done to Your Taste Catering, started offering farm-to-table dinners for her clients. The caterer contracts with local farms for eggs and meat, and harvests a steady stream of fresh, organic produce from her garden, including tomatoes, greens, beets and peppers.

"Now we are moving into the fall, so you'll see more squashes and corn on the menu," Dunn said. "We are going to add canning, freezing and dehydrating to our repertoire" to extend the possibilities in to the winter months.

While it's more work tending a huge garden, preserving fruits and seeking out local food purveyors, Dunn said farm-to-table dining is more than just passing trend. "It's the new way of doing dinners and planning menus," she said. "It's a new way of eating, and it's where we are all going."

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Interested in making your own farm-to-table meal? Here are a few options:

Cooking From The Tuesday Farmer's Market » On Sept. 15, meet cooking instructor Marguerite Henderson at Pioneer Park, 300 South and 300 West, where you will shop for fresh produce and then head back to her kitchen at 1529 Hubbard Ave., Salt Lake City, to cook. Class ends around 8:30 p.m. Cost is \$60. To reserve a spot, call 801-582-9204 or visit www.margueritehenderson.com

Bounty of the Garden » On Sept. 19, let the experts from Wasatch Community Gardens show you how to make delicious meals using the foods from your garden or farmers market. The three-hour class begins at 1 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church, Elliot Hall, 569 S. 1300 East. A \$5 donation is suggested. To reserve a seat, e-mail Krystal Rogers at educator@wasatchgardens.org or call 801-359-2658, extension 12.

Preserving Fruits and Vegetables » Sept. 9 and 17 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. learn to pickle, freeze, can and dehydrate fruits and vegetables. Class meets at SmartSpace, 50 W. Century Parkway, (2950 South) Salt Lake City. To register call the University of Utah's Lifelong Learning, 801-587-5433 or visit www.lifelong.utah.edu to register.

Apples, peaches and pumpkin pie » On Sept. 24, learn to make a harvest dinner for eight using produce from your fall garden. Class begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Thanksgiving Point Emporium Kitchen, 3003 Thanksgiving Way, Lehi. Cost is \$50. Call 801-768-2300 for a reservation.

Grilled Rib Eye with Summer Greens

Steaks & rub:

1 1/2 to 2 pounds of rib eye or strip steaks, about 1-inch thick

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons packed brown sugar

2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, finely chopped

5 cloves garlic, finely chopped

2 tablespoons kosher salt

1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper

1/2 teaspoons cayenne pepper

Summer greens:

1 1/2 pounds stir-fry greens, shredded

3 tablespoons olive oil

3 cloves garlic

1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/3 cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese

Arrange steaks in a single layer in a large baking dish. In a small bowl, stir together oil, sugar, rosemary, garlic, salt, black pepper and cayenne. Spread mixture evenly over both sides of the steaks. Cover and refrigerate 4 to 12 hours.

Remove steak from refrigerator. Before grilling, let steaks sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes.

Preheat a grill or grill pan to medium-high heat. Place steaks on grill and cook 4 to 5 minutes per side for medium rare (145 degrees on an instant-read thermometer.) Remove steaks from heat. Cover and let stand 10 minutes before slicing into 1/4 inch thick pieces.

For summer greens, heat oil in a small saute pan over medium heat. After 3 minutes, add garlic, red pepper and salt. Saute for 3 minutes. Remove from heat and allow mixture to cool for 5 to 7 minutes. Mix in shredded greens. Top with cheese. Divide greens evenly among 6

plates. Serve steak slices on top of greens.

Servings » 6

Source » Rebecca Brenner, Park City Holistic Health

Risotto with fresh garden herbs

6 cups chicken or vegetable broth

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 medium onion, finely chopped

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 cups Arborio rice

1/2 cup dry white wine

1/2 cup chopped fresh herbs, such as basil, chives, parsley, thyme, sage and rosemary

1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Place broth in a saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cover.

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are soft, about 6 minutes. Stir in rice and cook 1 minute, until edges of grains are translucent and there is a white spot in the middle of each grain.

Add wine and bring to a boil, stirring until most of the wine is absorbed. Add 2 cups hot broth. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook, stirring every few minutes until most of the liquid is absorbed, 7 to 9 minutes. Add broth by 1/2 cupfuls every couple of minutes until rice is nearly cooked through, about 10 minutes.

Stir in fresh herbs and cook 1 minute. Remove pan from heat and stir in Parmesan cheese, lemon zest and pepper. Serve immediately.

Servings » 8

Source » Rebecca Brenner, Park City Holistic Health

Copper Moose Farm's Herbed Salad Dressing

1/4 cup light soy sauce

2 1/2 to 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1 1/2 tablespoons minced garlic

1 1/2 tablespoons fresh chopped basil

1 1/2 tablespoons fresh chopped cilantro

1/3 cup olive oil

1/2 cup white wine vinegar

Combine all the ingredient and sere with a summer salad.

Servings » 8

Source » Copper Moose Farms

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