



Farro served at Lark in Seattle

# FROM FARM TO FORK

Divine dining that benefits your community and the environment. By Jacquelin Carnegie

Eating organic food grown locally is a good idea, and easier than you might think.

The terms “locavore” and “homegrown” refer to organic food that’s grown within a 100-mile radius of where it’s served. Many people are trying to eat healthier, and shopping at local farmers’ markets and choosing organic produce at the supermarket are great ways to get more nutrients into your cooking.

But what to do when you want to dine out? There are farm-to-table restaurants across the country gaining prominence for their green practices as well as their savory menus. The movement is happening nation-

wide, with homegrown restaurants run by established chefs as well as up-and-comers with new ideas.

In a traditional restaurant, the chef places orders for the same ingredients week in and week out. But at restaurants devoted to local ingredients, the menu changes seasonally, sometimes weekly, often daily. The chef does not request a set list of ingredients, but his suppliers—from organic lettuce growers to pig farmers—tell him what they’ve got, and he works those elements into the menu.

By buying local, restaurants support small businesses and stimulate the local economy. Not only is homegrown food better for you, but

it tastes fresher, too. For proof, visit any of these top notch locavore establishments.

## Lark in Seattle

**Seattle, Washington**

**Chef/Owner: John Sundstrom**

To be as sustainable and supportive of local growers and suppliers as possible, chef Sundstrom is extremely flexible with the Lark menu, adjusting it weekly to reflect even small seasonal changes. These changes might be as simple as going from chanterelles to porcini mushrooms in a given dish, or inventing an entirely new preparation of an entrée. Apart from five or

six classic dishes, the entire menu changes over the course of a month. Such flexibility allows the chef to work with a number of small producers with limited quantities of high-quality provisions.



ANDRE BARANOWSKI

## Dressing Room

**Westport, Connecticut**

**Chef/Owner: Michel Nischan**

**Executive Chef: John Holzwarth**

When getting this cutting-edge, homegrown restaurant off the ground, it helped that the late great actor and philanthropist Paul Newman was in cahoots with James Beard Foundation award-winning chef and sustainable agriculture activist Michel Nischan. Its “cuisine of well-being” focuses on pure, flavorful, local and organic ingredients. The motto: “We believe that the food we grow and cook in the place that we call home defines who we are.” There’s a parlor game that foodies play—coming up with a menu for their ideal “last meal.” Whatever chefs Nischan and Holzwarth are cooking that day is probably a safe bet.

They also operate Wholesome Wave Farmers Markets (June–Oct.; Thurs. 10am–2pm).



## Proof on Main

**Louisville, Kentucky**

**Chef: Michael Paley**

Chef Paley is acclaimed for his farm-to-table menu and his support of regional farmers and purveyors, including Woodland Farm, home to the Kentucky Bison Company (hence some mighty-fine Bison Burgers on the menu). The bar extends the locavore philosophy by offering seasonal specialty cocktails flavored with herbs from its rooftop garden.



ANNABEL BRAITHWAITE / BELATHEE

## Spoonriver

**Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**Chef/Owner: Brenda Langton**

Being in the farm belt certainly helps chef Langton fulfill her mis-

sion to provide delicious dishes made from organic, locally-grown, seasonal ingredients. Long a pioneer in the locavore movement, Langton’s Spoonriver menu features a natural, gourmet cuisine.

Their Mill City Farmers’ Market is also worth checking out (May–Oct.; Sat. 8am–1pm).

## The Squeaky Bean

**Denver, Colorado**

**Chef: Max MacKissock**

You know you’ve got a good thing going when “restaurant people”—other chefs, cooks and wait staff—come to eat at your place. Chef MacKissock creates scrumptious food and mouth-watering cocktails from seasonally-fresh and local ingredients. He’s quite resourceful in this pursuit—turning an abandoned alleyway behind the restaurant into an urban garden and setting up a farmers’ market on the restaurant’s patio. The Squeaky Bean Farmers’ Market at Aspen Moon Farms is open Thursdays from 3pm to dusk.

Okay, go ahead and make a reservation. But to get fully on board the sustainable boat, explore other locavore/homegrown restaurants in your area. Ask them about their suppliers. Learn about what foods grow in your region and when they are seasonally available. Find out about local farmers’ markets.

And, if you really want to become a poster child for the locavore/homegrown movement, take a class or attend a lecture at the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture ([www.stonebarnscenter.org](http://www.stonebarnscenter.org)) in Pocantico Hills, NY, where chefs and foodies come to worship at the “homegrown shrine.”