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When Locavore Meets Gourmet

By Sophie Braccini



Chicken farmer Janice Alamillo talks to the diners
Photo Sophie Braccini

Locavores - people who prefer to eat food procured within a 100 miles radius of their community- are sometimes perceived as obsessive militants of the 'eat local' movement, ready to make any culinary sacrifice to eat only what's been produced in their immediate vicinity. But when a restaurant offers a locavore dinner, the effortless experience brings forth both eating pleasure and clear conscience, a good recipe for a summer night meal. Chow Restaurant of Lafayette, in partnership with Sustainable Lafayette, gave that option to about 60 diners on May 12.

"This area we live in has all the potential to go down in history as the place where America rediscovered the pleasure of eating locally," said Tony Gulisano, the founder of the Chow restaurants, who came to talk with the diners. "The food community is so rich with possibilities, it is easy to deepen the ties between producers and restaurants and work together to bring customers the best fresh local taste ever."

"The event had a really relaxed, personal vibe that Sharon and I both really enjoyed," said Sustainable Lafayette's Steve Richards.

Chow's young Executive Chef said that cooking with local foods is part of the restaurant's everyday philosophy, "We made just a little extra effort, for this dinner, to combine ingredients that we already buy regularly," he said, "A food that is in season and local is a

natural part of our offering anyway."

Some local farmers were also part of the evening. Janice Alamillo, the owner of Alamo Farms, talked about her 110 hens that have become a part of her family in Alamo. A nurse by day the mother, who according to one of the guests looks more like a yoga instructor than a chicken farmer, explained the joys of raising a family with that close connection to the natural way of producing sustainable and humane food.

Joe Queirolo, who owns Vicina Farms, was also at dinner. He talked about his business model and how important it is for local farmers to form business relationships with restaurants and produce stores, supporting a thriving local economy.

"I'm very happy to see that people's attitude toward food is evolving, that we move slowly away from mass production and toward local craft production," said Lafayette resident and locavore Carole Hagglund, "the taste is much better, fruits are seasonal, farmers and breeders are valued and recognized for the quality of their work. In truth it is somewhat more expensive, but may be we can just eat a little less."

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