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It's ~~Not~~ Easy Eating Green



WHETHER SUSTAINABLE SUPPERS (AND BEYOND) ARE YOUR WAY OF LIFE OR YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION, LOCAL RESTAURANTS OFFER EARTH-FRIENDLY FARE TO TEMPT ANY PALATE

■ BY SKYE SHERMAN

Environmental awareness is all the rage in the modern push to go green. By now, we've long known to reduce, reuse, recycle, and lighten the ecological footprint we leave behind.

But it's not just the big, bold moves that make a difference. Our food choices—the ways we choose to nourish our bodies every day—have a ripple effect on the world around us, too. Every element of your plate can be eco-friendly (or not), from the garnish atop your meal to the pottery it's plated upon to the menu you reviewed to make your selections.

As plant-based options have become more widely available (and palatable) in recent years thanks to innovations in animal-free “meats” and the evolution of alternative milks, the conversation on eco-friendly eating has evolved along with it, with more consumers considering the environmental impact of what they ingest and food-industry producers striving toward more sustainable practices.

Ever at the vanguard of trends, Palm Beach County boasts numerous ways to eat green.

NATHAN VENZARA



CUCUMBER TARTARE AT FARMER'S TABLE

OPPOSITE PAGE: PEACH AND ARUGULA SALAD AT DISTRICT TABLE & BAR



THE PLANTA MENU (ABOVE) INCLUDES FRESH SUSHI AND AN ARRAY OF CREATIVE, PLANT-BASED DISHES, INCLUDING APPETIZERS LIKE CAULIFLOWER TOTS (LEFT). SUGAR CHEF SPECIALIZES IN ECO-CONSCIOUS DESSERTS SUCH AS LEMON MERINGUE PIE (RIGHT).



Take the soon-to-open Planta at Rosemary Square as one example. Led by chef David Lee and restaurateur Steven Salm, Planta fills a void in the upscale full-service plant-based dining market. With locations already in Toronto and Miami, the restaurant features a 100 percent plant-based menu in the name of sustainability. Its founders point out that veganism is arguably the most eco-friendly diet on the planet, since just one day of eating animal-free can save 1,100 gallons of water, 30 square feet of forest, and 20 pounds of carbon dioxide.

“At Planta, our mission is to change the way the world views plant-based dining,” explains Salm. “Our goal is to make an impact on the planet by taking animals off the plate and committing to using high-quality, traceable ingredients sourced from ethical suppliers.”

In some parts of the world, the mentality tying ecological responsibility to eating is well established, as the owners of Del-



ray Beach eco-conscious bakery Sugar Chef point out. “We are French but also lived many years in Scandinavia under Swedish eco-standards,” says Marie Roth, who runs Sugar Chef with her daughter. “There, ‘eco-friendly’ is the lifestyle.”

The duo makes indulging with a clean conscience easy, crafting sweets uncompromised by ingredients like refined white sugar, which is highly processed and carbon-heavy. “We try to use less sugar or alternative sugars, focusing on flavors from natural sources,” she explains. They prioritize ingredients that have endured minimal processing and have not been chemically altered or grown with additives—think unbleached flours, purées of local in-season fruits (organic when possible), and products from humanely raised animals. They rely on local resources and suppliers, incorporating Pascale’s Jam, for instance, and chocolate from bean-to-bar chocolate factory 5150 Chocolate (both Delray Beach-based artisans). “We also like to use herbs we grow ourselves and fruits from our neighborhood, such as mangoes, bananas, and avocados,” she says.

Emphasis on earth-friendly food was popularized under the farm-to-table label. Happily, the trend that restaurants like Boca Raton’s Farmer’s Table pioneered locally lives on. Gary Rack’s Farmhouse Kitchen, with locations in Delray and Boca, serves farm-fresh

food amid reclaimed, refurbished decor and cooks without butter, cream, or excess fat. At District Table & Bar in Port Salerno, dishes are based on what’s available from local providers, including fresh eggs from Pasture 714, honey from Stuart’s Hani Honey Company, and seasonal produce from CoLab and Kai-Kai Farms—and an on-site garden supplies many of the herbs in their dishes and cocktails. District Table also implements solutions to mitigate food waste, transforming excess fruit into syrups for drink specials, for example, or preserving and pickling vegetables until the chef is ready to reimagine them in a new dish.

Food waste is a true lose-lose problem for restaurants and the planet. To solve it, The Chesterfield Palm Beach recently partnered with UK-based Winnow Solutions, an intelligent-waste-management company with a goal to save \$1 billion worth of food waste by 2025. The company employs artificial intelligence technology to help kitchens (like executive chef Gerard Coughlin’s at The Leopard Lounge & Restaurant) reduce unnecessary food waste using a smart system that auto-

BUZZWORD

Zero Foodprint funds farmers’ switch to carbon farming, a regenerative practice that restores soil health so it can better process our (currently overabundant) carbon emissions, resulting in improved planetary health—and more nutrient-rich food for us. (zerofoodprint.org)

matically captures a photo and weight of discarded food, which the AI learns to recognize over time, producing analytical data to help refine menus.

Reducing food waste isn’t just an ethical move—it also has bottom-line benefits. Users of Winnow Solutions cut food costs 2 to 8 percent and see a typical return-on-investment between 200 and 1,000 percent within the first year.

In the same way, eating clean is a win-win, resulting in better health for Mother Earth and her inhabitants. Honoring the environment by supporting local purveyors and incorporating sustainable practices makes for happy bellies and a happy planet, too.



TUNA TARTARE AT FARMER’S TABLE

SEA to Plate

SNACK ON STONE CRABS AT PB CATCH, A MODEL OF GREEN EATING

After they're pulled from the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, stone crab claws are immediately steamed and transported to Cod & Capers, a North Palm Beach seafood market that has been family-owned and -operated since 1984, before making their final stop at PB Catch, where chef Aaron Black likes to serve them chilled and paired with a light salad.

To the delight of diners and the planet, the dish is a model of sustainability, exquisite in its simplicity: stone crabs are sourced from our own waters, only available seasonally, and require minimal processing. The best part? After the claws are harvested, the stone crabs are returned to the ocean, still alive, where they are able to regenerate their lost claw(s).

As demonstrated by his focus on ethical sourcing and low-waste cooking methods, Black is an outstanding advocate of sustainable seafood practices. At PB Catch, he strives to use the whole fish—either as an entree or by recycling oft-discarded elements into new dishes like a fish-cheeks appetizer or simmering up a rich stock or broth. The catch of the day, of course, depends on what the



boats haul in each afternoon.

"Sustainability is working," says Black. "Over the past 10 years, price has become consistent as well as average size and health of fish received; both are indicators that local populations are being well managed. It is now up to consumers to continue to support restaurants that are sourcing responsibly."

ORGANIC VS. ECO-FRIENDLY

Which is more sustainable?

Not all organic is created equal. A food can be certified organic—meaning it was "grown and processed according to federal guidelines addressing, among many factors, soil quality, animal-raising practices, pest and weed control, and use of additives," per the USDA—without being earth-friendly. Some organic crops require excessive land and rely on nonrenewable energy sources, leaving behind a heavy production and packaging footprint.

Still, according to Columbia University's Earth Institute, "organic farming is widely considered to be a far more sustainable alternative when it comes to food production." When possible, eat what's in season, cut down on transportation emissions by purchasing food grown within 100 miles, opt for glass over plastic (or skip nonreusable containers altogether), and forgo meat.



CLOCKWISE FROM INSET: WHOLE CRISPY LIONFISH AT LIONFISH IN DELRAY BEACH; COD AND BRANZINO AT THE COOPER IN PALM BEACH GARDENS.



RACHEL WALLACE PHOTOGRAPHY



MAS APPRETT

GREEN Cuisine

LOCAL INITIATIVES WORK TO PLEASE THE PLANET BY IMPROVING RESTAURANTS' SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

While each of us individually can aim to make better food choices, our impact is limited without the participation of heavy hitters like restaurants. Fortunately, these local initiatives incentivize eateries to go greener.

Loggerhead Marinelifelife Center's Blue Table Restaurant Program requires participating restaurants to implement environmentally friendly changes (e.g., no straws, plastics, or styrofoam) and apply Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch recommendations, which rate seafood sustainability on factors such as total population, bycatch, impact on ocean habitats, and more. Bonus points to restaurants like Tequesta's Hog Snappers and Delray Beach's Lionfish that include invasive species on their menu to impel elimination.

Check out one (or more) of the eight Blue Table-approved restaurants:

- 1000 North
- Carve Surf & Coffee
- Hog Snappers
- Papa Kwan's Coffee Shop
- The Cooper Restaurant
- Tommy Bahama Restaurant & Bar
- Cucina Cabana
- Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach

Through the Florida Oceanographic Oyster Restoration program (FLOOR), 15 local restaurants donate their leftover shells to reef-restoration efforts. The program researches and restores oyster-reef habitat in

the St. Lucie Estuary and southern Indian River Lagoon—a critical component of the area's delicate ecosystem. "Last year we collected 32,280 pounds of shell, which went toward building 12 reefs," says Lorae Simpson, director of scientific research at the Florida Oceanographic Society. "To date, recycled shells have been used to build over 138 reefs encompassing over 66,000 square feet."

And while the pandemic launched more than its fair share of inconveniences, some COVID-19-induced changes to restaurants actually benefit the environment, such as the proliferation of QR code menus in place of one-time-use paper menus and a greater emphasis on compostable packaging to accommodate the surge in take-out orders. <<

SEAFOOD TOWER AT PB CATCH



JORDAN VILONNA