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## Locavores Eat Out



BY MADISON STAHL

"Our diet, like that of the birds, must answer to the season."

That's Henry David Thoreau, who, as always, was well ahead of the curve.

And today — gratefully — we are beginning to recognize that just because food is readily available doesn't mean it's best. Because once you've had a Caprese salad with heirloom organic tomatoes, freshly picked basil and homemade fresh mozzarella cheese, well, there's simply no point in having one any other way.

Fresh. Seasonal. Regional. Artisan. Organic. These ideas are spreading like a religious crusade among New Jersey restaurateurs.

Order Griggstown Quail Farm organic chickens at the Lawrenceville Inn in Lawrenceville, Mediterra in Princeton and Steve & Cookie's By the Bay in Margate. Try some of the acclaimed artisan cheese from Bobolink Dairy in Vernon, at Circa in High Bridge, Terra Tea Salon and Fair Trade Eco Market in Montclair, Andre's Restaurant in Newton or Restaurant Latour in Vernon.

And, at many other Jersey restaurants, the produce comes from local farmer's markets. It's all part of the ethical eating campaign — eliminate fuel consumed in shipping, support your neighbors. But the real reason is simple: flavor.

We've highlighted a few Jersey chefs who are passionately local, but this list is by no means comprehensive. To see who else focuses on local ingredients, visit [njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu](http://njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu) and [state.nj.us/jerseyfresh/jfrestaurants.htm](http://state.nj.us/jerseyfresh/jfrestaurants.htm).

MEET THE CHEF

Meet Chef Maricel



Her Hoboken eateries are considered among the best Latino restaurants in the country. And lately, everyone we meet is talking about her. So it's long past time for Garden Plate to meet this intelligent and well traveled chef.

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REVIEWS

**Avenue Awaits a**

Arthur's Landing  
Port Imperial, 1 Pershing Road, Weehawken  
(201) 867-0777  
[www.arthurslanding.com](http://www.arthurslanding.com)

Chef Michael Haimowitz grew up fishing along the Jersey Shore, so it's something of an understatement to say he gets the value of freshly caught seafood, of authentic local taste.

Haimowitz is credited with reviving Arthur's Landing — which was always a destination spot thanks to its stunning view of Manhattan — into so much more than a restaurant with scenery. Fish for the restaurant comes directly from the docks in Port Monmouth or Belmar, and really lucky regulars can get freshly caught black sea bass or fluke from the chef's dad, Harrison, who sometimes drops in with his own personal catch of the day.

Harrison Haimowitz also taught his son the value of fresh produce with his Middletown garden full of nectarines, figs, peaches, melons, berries and vegetables. "If you have fresh ingredients, everything tastes good," Haimowitz says. This time of year, 60 percent of the restaurant's produce comes from New Jersey, and the seasonal ingredients simply make the chef's job easier.

"I just have to take what nature made and get it out on the plate correctly."

Blue Restaurant  
11th Street and Long Beach Boulevard,  
Surf City  
(609) 494-7556  
[www.bluelbi.com](http://www.bluelbi.com)

A cow's milk has a different taste in March than in October, and so does its cheese. One head of lettuce is distinct from another, even if it comes from the same garden.

A good chef, says Steven Cameron, knows and respects those differences.

"That appreciation in a restaurant — that's where the importance of serving local comes from," says Cameron, who is chef at Blue in Surf City. Blue is a hip urban oasis on Long Beach Island that serves global food — order crab salad sopé with cilantro, tomatillo and avocado or poached black tiger shrimp salad with yuzu, honey, watercress and Asian pear.

Cameron was raised in Kansas, where a chef could easily commission a farmer to grow zucchini blossoms or heirloom tomatoes exclusively for his restaurant. It's not as easy in New Jersey, but the attitude is still here. "For me, food doesn't exist without that kind of freshness."

The food industry has gotten too big, Cameron says. Big agriculture, big restaurant chains, and too many culinary school graduates looking to become the next big Food Network celebrity. "It's very important to break it down," he says — for a chef to know how to cook food from scratch, to handle a whole tuna or a whole black bass, to learn how to respect food from its entirety.

"I want to meet the farmer; I want to meet the cheesemaker," Cameron says. "I want to let them know where their food is going and that we're taking care of it."

Mumford's Culinary Center  
33 Apple St., Tinton Falls  
(732) 747-7646  
[www.mumfords.com](http://www.mumfords.com)

Explaining his food philosophy, Chris Mumford tells the story of famed chef Thomas Keller, who once decided to butcher his own rabbits. Keller bungles his first attempt. The rabbit is still alive, and suddenly Keller realizes the enormity of his actions. After that, the chef treats each rabbit, each loin in the skillet, with a newfound respect.

"You have to pay homage to it," says Mumford. "It lived for a reason."

Mumford has been paying homage to foods for more than 32 years. Long before it was chic to grow your own, he cultivated his own garden to

### Star Performance



You can't get closer to the beach than dining at Avenue in Long Branch. But does the food match the view?

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support his restaurant kitchen. The quality just isn't available elsewhere, he says.

Today his all-organic garden (almost a full acre) includes figs, raspberries, boysenberries, blueberries (from an 80-year-old plant transplanted from a farm in Wall), peaches, tomatoes (40 varieties), yellow beets, red beets, Asian greens, asparagus, green beans, wax beans, butternut squash, eggplant, peppers, apricots, and almost any herb a chef would covet.

"It's old-school to me," he says. "It's the way America was built."

Today, Mumford's is open for just breakfast and lunch, but Mumford also offers an extensive catering service, private classes, tastings and wine dinners.

Orbis Restaurant  
128 Watchung Ave., Upper Montclair  
(973) 746-7641  
[www.orbisrestaurant.com](http://www.orbisrestaurant.com)

Nancy Caballes chose an ambitious name for her restaurant. Orbis is named after the world – it's from the Latin orbis terrarum, or world map. Caballes is part Italian, part Asian and a French-trained chef. She also loves to travel. So the restaurant, which serves global cuisine, reflects that.

Here you'll see some unexpected combinations — calamari sautéed with red peppers, cilantro and mint in a soy Thai chili sauce; arugula in a lemon thyme dressing with shaved manchego. Best of all, say customers, are the numerous daily specials.

Why so many? Cabellas is inspired by the freshest ingredients of the day. Here, diners truly can think locally and eat globally. Or vice versa.

Pluckemin Inn  
359 Route 202/206 South, Bedminster  
(908) 658-9292  
[www.pluckemininn.com](http://www.pluckemininn.com)

Sure, it's easy to serve fresh foods at harvest time, when all the fruits and vegetables are at their glorious peak. But the Pluckemin Inn's menu is not only truly seasonal and ever-evolving, but abundantly so.

In the spring, early tomatoes show up in a Spanish-style gazpacho, spring vegetables are served with milk-fed suckling pig and spring garlic broth accompanies a crispy American red snapper — the seasonal bests are clearly celebrated. In late summer, you'll find Jersey tomatoes, corn, squash, melons. Come winter, you'll see the menu loaded with preserved fruits and vegetables, such as the restaurant-made sauerkraut using recently harvested spring cabbages.

The Inn itself is appropriately housed in a new Colonial-style farmhouse; the restaurant's garden out back boasts fresh tomatoes and herbs. Plus acclaimed chef David C. Felton also works with a nearby farm. (The Pluckemin salad features lettuces from Three Meadows Farm, a fact proudly included in the menu description.)

"The better produce comes from the closest distance," Felton says. "There's a lot of Jersey pride in this restaurant." (More from Felton in our "Meet the Chef" feature on page 20.)

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