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UNH Eats Equitably: Kettle Cuisine

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by Paul Young, AmeriCorps VISTA

Guest Blogger: Paul Young is an AmeriCorps VISTA member serving at the University of New Hampshire on Food Security and other Basic Needs initiatives. Paul has a passion for food systems and how they interact with climate change, health, opportunity and so much more.

While working at UNH, in addition to working with the Sustainability Institute on the 21 Day Challenge, he has helped launch a food repurposing kitchen and the [Cats' Cupboard](#) (the UNH food pantry).

Photos Courtesy of Kettle Cuisine

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In this installment of UNH Eats Equitably, we are talking about a company in an industry that does not get enough credit for the effort that goes into

their product. Soups, broths, sauces and ready-to-eat meals are the bedrock that, the spotlight company, [Kettle Cuisine](#) is built upon. Kettle Cuisine began as a door-to-door campaign to change the ‘soup status quo,’ back in 1986. Kettle Cuisine wanted to bring the freshest, highest quality soups to restaurants that did not have the time or ability to do it themselves. Even as they have grown, these values of innovation and quality have remained central to the company. I had the pleasure of speaking with Alan Fletcher, their Director of Sales.



When asked to boil down the mission of Kettle Cuisine, Alan used the word honor. [Kettle Cuisine aims to honor four values: food, each other, development, and innovation.](#)

In honoring food, Kettle Cuisine sources the best ingredients from trusted suppliers. Through a combination of high quality ingredients, passionate and classically trained chefs, and industry-leading technology, they strive for perfection in everything they make. They believe you can notice the ‘natural difference.’ In their soups you will find “nothing unnatural or unnecessary” like: MSG, preservatives, artificial flavors, artificial colors, artificial trans fats, modified food starches, chemical additives, poultry raised with any antibiotics or meat treated with hormones. This results in a consistently flavorful and wholesome food that they are proud to serve.

Kettle Cuisine honors each other by nurturing and supporting the communities that make their work possible. Whether with their suppliers, clients, partners or one another, Kettle Cuisine values that relationship. Alan says the importance Kettle Cuisine places on their people starts with the CEO, “He believes that people are our most important asset.”

Across their business, Kettle Cuisine is 79 percent people of color and 31 percent female. Open positions are posted on diverse websites, the company participates in community job fairs and they are also a second chance employer.

During the onset of COVID-19, Kettle Cuisine hosted several vaccines clinics at their facilities, and they raffled off prizes to incentivize vaccination. They also provided onsite rapid tests for employees to use. This was all done to ensure their employees and their families were safe from the virus. Every member of Kettle Cuisine from the top of the organization down, made sacrifices to ensure Kettle Cuisine was able to retain its employees during the pandemic. This allowed them to continue operating at a high level, pay their employees and provide for their community.

With an eye on development, Kettle Cuisine is constantly trying to strengthen and grow their capabilities and relationships as a team and company. That means seeking out, celebrating and developing people's individual abilities as well as developing the best ways to make delicious food their consumers love. Higher level staff also open themselves up for time with employees to help nurture their development, in addition to the programs offered to assist employees.

Kettle Cuisine continuously strives to innovate and find creative and sustainable ways to ensure they are delivering the highest quality of delicious food as possible. Their four production facilities are full of the leading cooking and handling equipment as well as passionate, experienced, and well trained production teams. Kettle Cuisine regularly checks their facilities, products, and processes for ways to improve the quality and safety of their food.

Kettle Cuisine also innovates to improve their environmental sustainability. They believe "it is our responsibility to comprehensively understand the areas in which we may be affecting the world around us. We proactively seek investments that will maximize our long-term environmental sustainability." To name a few interventions: they have

moved facilities, found ways to reduce their water consumption and found ways to “upcycle” their food waste and by-products (like pig feed or biofuel plants). They take pride in the fact that none of their food waste is disposed in landfills. They also have developed ways for their facilities not to contribute to any odor pollution in the communities they operate in.

A big part of the way Kettle Cuisine approaches their business is with sustainability in mind. Environmental and social sustainability is as core to the company as the economic. Kettle Cuisine has held true to their values, as they have grown, and continues to have a positive impact on every one of their stakeholders.

If only every company could say that!

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