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UNH Reopens Celebrated Dairy Bar With Focus On Local, Sustainable Food

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DURHAM, N.H. - It still looks like a train depot, and it still serves breakfast, sandwiches, and much-loved ice cream.

But the University of New Hampshire's Dairy Bar, a landmark for generations of students and community members, has been renovated and reopened with a focus on sustainability that has current and future generations in mind. Reopened in August 2008 under management of UNH Dining Services, the Dairy Bar boasts food that is local, often organic, and served with an eye toward nutrition; Energy Star-rated appliances; and even take-out containers that are compostable.

"This was an opportunity for us to do something different," says Rick MacDonald, assistant director of University Hospitality Services and a driving force in the "new" Dairy Bar. MacDonald, director of dining Jon Plodzik, and director of culinary services Ralph Coughenour drew on UNH Dining's significant Local Harvest Initiative, a collaboration with the University Office of Sustainability that brings local and sustainable food into the university's three student dining halls and retail outlets regularly.

Natural chicken for salads and sandwiches comes from Lasting Legacy Farms in Barrington; Durham's Bagelry supplies bagels; eggs are certified-humane, cage-free and organic from Pete & Gerry's in Monroe; GrandyOats Organic Granola, founded by UNH alums, comes from Brownfield, Maine; and Londonderry's Stonyfield Farms supplies yogurt. Coffee, from NH Coffee Roasters in Dover, is fair-trade and shade-grown. In addition to ice cream from Blake's in Manchester, the Dairy Bar also serves Doriti Gelato from Brentwood.

Sustainability at the Dairy Bar goes beyond what customers put in their mouths to what they *don't* put in the trash. Take-out containers and cutlery, in addition to unwaxed paper goods, are all compostable. As a large customer for Central Paper, the Manchester-based company that supplies the compostable containers, UNH is driving a new market for these innovative products, MacDonald notes.

Early planning for the new Dairy Bar involved students and faculty in UNH's nutritional sciences program. Their work is reflected in the restaurant's modest portion sizes, no fried food but lots of salads, condiments offered on the side, and healthy choices like yogurt parfaits, fresh fruit cups, and baked apples. "We even worked with Abigail's to develop a roll that was three ounces, rather than their usual four," says Coughenour.

Long-time patrons will be relieved to learn that strict portion control has not been applied to the ice cream. "If you eat all that healthy food, it's OK to have ice cream," says Plodzick.

Other sustainable innovations at the Dairy Bar include Energy Star-rated appliances and organic cotton uniforms. Even the Vetrazzo countertops, which sparkle with recycled glass, reflect the restaurant's mission.

"We want to make as little of a footprint as possible," says Plodzick.

Other Dairy Bar changes include counter service instead of the previous waited tables and extended hours, until 8 p.m. seven days per week. Plodzick anticipates that the restaurant may stay open even later to catch post-hockey or event crowds leaving the nearby Whittemore Center.

For the ultimate experience in sustainability, Dairy Bar patrons can catch the Amtrak Downeaster to Portland, Boston, or points in between just outside the back door - as more than 60,000 passengers do each year.

Opened in 1970 at the Richardsonesque railway station that had then been unused since passenger train service ended in the previous decade, the UNH Dairy Bar was run by students in the food service management program at the Thompson School for Applied Science until 2007. It closed at the end of 2007 for a renovation that included significant upgrades to the Amtrak station, funded in part by the U.S. and New Hampshire departments of transportation. Total costs for the renovation of the Dairy Bar were approximately \$300,000.

For more information on the UNH Dairy Bar, including a complete menu and hours, go to <http://www.unh.edu/dairy-bar/>. To learn more about the Local Harvest Initiative of UNH Dining and the University Office of Sustainability, go to <http://www.unh.edu/dining/community/local-harvest.html>.

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Photographs available to download:

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2008/sept/dairybar1.jpg

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2008/sept/dairybar2.jpg

Credit: Erin Gleason, UNH Photo Services.

