

Food, Glorious (Local) Food

Harvest Dinner on Oct. 1 will feature high-end menu items with locally sourced ingredients

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If you skipped breakfast or lunch today, you are forewarned: this article will make your stomach rumble and your mouth water.

Vermont cheddar and Redhook ale soup, Acadian redfish tacos, carved applewood smoked ham, butternut squash ravioli with sage butter, local day boat hake with lobster saffron sauce and apple crisp with vanilla ice cream and homemade New Hampshire maple syrup swirl cheesecake are just a few of the decadent dishes that will be on the menu at UNH's three dining halls Wednesday evening. And better yet — they're all made using local ingredients.

Slated for Wednesday, UNH Dining Services' 10th Local Harvest Dinner is an annual treat where chef-inspired recipes created from locally sourced food delight the palates of students and UNH community members.

David Hill, assistant director for culinary operations at UNH Dining Services, notes that throughout the year, roughly 25 percent of the dining hall purchases are locally grown items. This dinner has a more concentrated focus on local products in the mix — local ingredients will find their way into roughly 70 percent of the evening's offerings; everything from a porchetta-style pork roast to a raspberry hibiscus dessert bar.

Originally a partnership between Dining Services and the Office of Sustainability, the harvest dinner tradition started in 2005 as a way to highlight the university's commitment to sourcing local products, becoming more sustainable and supporting the local economy. The event creates more opportunities for UNH Dining Services to connect with local farmers and food producers — which means UNH students are benefitting, too, by having more local options available throughout the year.

"Students and guests will get a better visual of all it is that we do to support local products. It is really a celebration of all that we do and a commitment to our community and to our mission of increasing our local purchasing," says Hill. And another bonus is that students get to try new food they may never have seen before — menu items like BBQ venison pizza, faro with curry roasted vegetables and poutine with fresh local cheese curds are among the notable exotic offerings.

Planning for the event begins in mid-summer in order to accommodate the estimated 8,000 diners who will enjoy the Harvest Dinner, said Hill. And what's a popular culinary event for guests is also a fun event for the chefs and other kitchen staff.

"This event gives the chef team the opportunity to push limits of creativity," Hill says.

If you go

What: Annual Local Harvest Dinner at UNH

When: Wednesday, Oct. 1

Where: Philbrook Hall from 4:30-7:30 p.m., Stillings Hall from 4:30-8 p.m. and Holloway Commons from 4:30-9 p.m.

Cost: This meal is included in any [UNH Dining Services](#) meal plan. Community members who wish to attend can pay \$22.95 (adults), \$13.95 for kids under 10 and children age 5 and younger eat free with a paying adult. A 9 percent meal tax will be added for those without a UNH ID. It is an all-you-care-to-eat format.

Why is local food better?

The local food movement has been gaining momentum, as more people are looking for healthier food options. Local food is better for the environment, as food you buy locally doesn't require delivery trucks or airplanes to make it to your plate and thus conserves fuel used for transport. Think of local food as less-treated food, too. Because food bought from your local farmer doesn't have to stay fresh as long as it would have to if it came from across the country or from overseas, it's likely to have fewer pesticides and/or preservatives. And, don't forget one of the most important things: taste and nutrition. Local food is fresher, so it tastes better. And once produce is picked, it starts to lose nutrients.

What does 'local' really mean?

It varies from restaurant to restaurant, some define local as greater New England, while others are stricter and define it to be within a specific region or mileage range. Don't be afraid to ask UNH Dining what local means to them — they're happy to boast of the ingredients they're using and why they are better than stuff shipped in from far-off locations.

Local Vendors for Oct. 1 Harvest Dinner

Abigail's Bakery, Weare, N.H.

Autumn View Farm, Pittsfield, N.H.

Bee Rich Apiary, Hudson, N.H.

Blake Hill Preserves, Grafton, Vt.

Bonnie Brae Farms, Plymouth, N.H.

Boston Coffee Cakes, North Andover, Mass.

Bake'n Joy Foods, North Andover, Mass.

Cabot Cheese, Cabot, Vt.

Calef's Country Store, Barrington, N.H.

Costa Fruit and Produce, Charlestown, Mass.

Cedar's Mediterranean Foods, Ward Hill, Mass.

Duane Family Farm, Barnstead, N.H.

East End Bagels, Ipswich, Mass.

Fantini Bakery, Haverhill, Mass.

Fox Country Smokehouse, Canterbury, N.H.

From My Head Tomatoes, Lee, N.H.

Garellick Farms, Lynn, Mass.

Grafton Village Cheese, Grafton, Vt.
GrandyOats, Brownfield, Maine
Jessica's Brick Oven, North Andover, Mass.
Kayem Foods, Inc., Chelsea, Mass.
Ken's Dressings, Framingham, Mass.
Kinnealy Meats, Milton, Mass.
Kettle Cuisine Soups, Chelsea, Mass.
Maine Family Farms, Portland, Maine
New Hampshire Coffee Roasting Company, Dover, N.H.
NorthCoast Seafoods, Boston, Mass.
North Country Smoke House, Claremont, N.H.
Ocean Spray Cranberries, Lakeville-Middleboro, Mass.
Old Neighborhood Foods, Lynn, Mass.
Pete and Gerry's Eggs, Monroe, N.H.
Pineland Farms, New Gloucester, Maine
Pinewoods Yankee Farm, Lee, N.H.
Redhook Ale Brewery, Portsmouth, N.H.
Red's Best Seafood, Boston
Stonyfield Farm, Londonderry, N.H.
UNH Dining Bakeries, Durham, N.H.
UNH Kingman Farm, Durham, N.H.
UNH Woodman Farm, Durham, N.H.
Union Lake Orchard, Barrington, N.H.
Vermont Butter and Cheese Creamery, Websterville, Vt.
Westminster Cracker Co., Rutland, Vt.
Yankee Farmer's Market, Warner, N.H.

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University of New Hampshire

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