



Best farm-to-table movement restaurants

Larry Olmsted, Special to USA TODAY 1:11 p.m. EST December 6, 2013

To say that buying food directly from farmers and artisanal producers is a hot trend is an understatement: the number of farmer's markets across the U.S. has exploded in recent years, nearly tripling since 2000, with almost a ten percent increase from 2011-2012, the last full year measured. Often focused on sourcing the highest quality ingredients, top professional chefs have been at the forefront of this trend, with some trying to buy locally as much as possible and others going further afield to get the best products directly from growers or ranchers.

Either way, it is the diner who usually wins at the best restaurants embracing this "farm-to-table" philosophy because the food tastes so good. Farm-to-table restaurants come in all shapes, sizes and price points, from fancy, fine dining eateries to pizzerias. Here are some unique examples from around the country and around the globe.

The Greenhouse Tavern, Cleveland, OH

Chef Jonathan Sawyer was chosen as one of *Food & Wine* magazine's Best New Chefs in 2010, while rival *Bon Appetit* named the Greenhouse Tavern one of the 10 Best New Restaurants in the nation. Part of the reason for Sawyer's success has been his impeccable sourcing of ingredients. Most chefs simply use garlic; he uses heritage breeds many people don't know exist, obtained from a small farmer outside Cleveland growing more than a dozen varieties.

Sawyer also makes his own range of cooking and eating vinegars. These are so good that other chefs use the bottles. Everything that can be, from onions to winter wheat, is grown locally, while much is made in house, including the ricotta cheese from local goat's milk. His is the only restaurant in the state serving Certified Angus

Beef raised exclusively within Ohio, and Sawyer even brings in eggs from his own chickens at home to make ultra-light, French style omelets. thegreenhousetavern.com

Pizzeria Bianco, Phoenix, AZ

Routinely named the best pizzeria in the country (sometimes the world) by many notable critics, Pizzeria Bianco is legendary for its thin crust, wood fired and utterly delicious pizzas, so much so that there can be a 3-hour wait. But while authentic Neapolitan pizzerias are all the rage and found in every city, owner Chris Bianco excels by breaking traditional Neapolitan rules which require certified pizzerias to buy imported Italian flour, tomatoes and other ingredients.

He sources the best closer to home and has dedicated local farmers specially growing his knockout basil, arugula and other vegetables for him, while he makes his own cheese in house daily. Bianco learned his craft in the Bronx, but one reason he is in Arizona is for the climate, which allows him to have the best produce grown for his restaurant all year long. He even serves Arizona wines. pizzeriabianco.com

Clodagh's Kitchen, Dublin, Ireland

Clodagh McKenna is a well-known Irish food personality with a TV show and multiple books, and her new restaurant in suburban Blackrock combines the techniques she learned living in France and Italy with the best local Irish ingredients, from fresh caught razor clams to nettles to 35-day, dry-aged natural Irish beef. The chorizo sausage is locally made by a natural pig farmer, and the catch of the day is not determined until late morning when the individual fisherman she uses returns from the sea. clodaghmckenna.com/restaurants.html

Island Creek Oyster Bar, Boston, MA

The waters of Duxbury, Massachusetts have a unique micro-climate, and many foodies – especially chefs - think the oysters from this particular body of water may be the best on earth. One notable fan is Thomas Keller of world-famous French Laundry and Per Se, who uses Duxbury oysters from the Island Creek Oyster Company in his signature Oysters and Pearls.

A couple of years ago the farmers behind Island Creek opened their own restaurant in Boston, "a collaboration joining farmer, chef and diner in one space." It has the most amazing crustaceans imaginable, straight from the owner's oyster

beds, and the theme is continued throughout the menu, using local fishermen, vegetable farmers, distillers and brewers. The restaurant sources award-winning cheddar cheese from bordering Vermont and hand-dug clams from Ipswich, MA for the fried clams. islandcreekoysterbar.com

Gravity 1020, Ft. Collins, CO

Quite possibly the best brewery restaurant in the nation, Gravity 1020 has an unbridled obsession with local. For starters, one of their own beers is used as an ingredient in virtually every dish. The brewery has a large covered rooftop garden that provides produce for the downstairs restaurant all year round, and 95% of the ingredients are sourced locally. Gravity 1020 dropped the popular Lobster BLT from the menu for that reason.

The restaurant uses a specialty produce distributor for regional Colorado farms, while meat and poultry, including grass fed beef, comes from Grant Family Farms, Colorado's first certified organic farm (just 20 minutes away). The brewery even sends leftover grain from beer production to local farmers who feed it to pigs and cows, coming back full circle as meat. Because of the local dependency, the menu changes seasonally, featuring stews, roasts and soups in winter, and more fresh vegetables from spring to fall. gravity1020.com

L'AOC, Paris, France

As unpretentious as it gets, this is the laid back neighborhood bistro many tourists wish they could find in France, with reasonable prices to match. But as the name suggests, its theme is based on France's "*appellation d'origine controllee*," laws that designate exceptional regional foodstuffs from wines to cheeses to poultry with the AOC seal: Champagne is the most famous example of a superlative product allowed to be made only in one specific region. The entire menu is like that, featuring sow ham from the French Pyrenees, black-footed chicken from a specific farmer, regional sausages and prime rib of Normandy beef. restoaoc.com

Emeril's and Emeril's Delmonico, New Orleans

Celebrity Chef Emeril Lagasse literally wrote the book – okay, a book – on the subject, *Farm to Fork: Cooking Local, Cooking Fresh*. After all, Emeril grew up on a pig farm, has long been involved in organic gardening and is an avid fisherman. His twin Big Easy eateries have a huge emphasis on local seafood, especially Gulf shrimp, drum, blue crab and Louisiana crawfish, but he doesn't stop there. His decadent Buffalo style duck wings use ducks from Chappapeela Farm in Amite,

LA, his chicken is locally raised, he uses tons of locally farmed field greens and lettuces, and he makes his own Andouille sausage and smokes his cod in house. emerilsrestaurants.com