

Cafe sticks to locally grown foods

BY NICK PAULSON • JOURNAL STAFF • OCTOBER 13, 2008

Like a squirrel hiding away acorns before winter, the CPS Cafe is in the process of storing and processing produce before the growing season is done.

The CPS Cafe, in the College of Professional Studies building on the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus, strives to use only locally grown, organic foods. In order to stick to that goal in the winter, when finding fresh local produce is tough, the cafe must change its operations.

In addition to storing summer produce like peppers and tomatoes, cafe manager Kim Beckham plans the week's menu around what she can get her hands on.

"I buy what (local farmers) have for me to buy," Beckham said. "If carrots are available, we have carrots."

In the winter, that means a lot more root vegetables. Potatoes, beets, onions, squash and the like can withstand colder temperatures and are left in the ground longer into the fall.

They also store better and can be bought locally year-round. "It's just simply a change from summer vegetables to winter vegetables," said Chris Malek, who sells produce to the cafe all year from his farm, Malek Family Stewardship Farm.

The cafe also works with the farmers to make the process run smoothly. Beckham will let them know in advance what she wants to store, and then during the snow-covered months she buys some of the excess the farms are having a hard time selling.

"When we have hams ready for Easter and then the demand is gone, then (the cafe) has been able to buy the extra, and that has really helped us," said Good Earth Farms owner Mike Hansen.

Keeping the local focus also requires some long-range planning. Beckham said she typically lays out the menu for the next week on Thursdays, but she also tries to think in advance about what she might need.

When leafy greens are used, it is in a larger batch that can be stored easier, and other foods need to be forgotten about until spring.

"We try not to have ingredients in the recipes that involved foods that need to be trucked from long distances," Beckham said.

"That way I don't need a watermelon in January."



Hannah Brillowski serves a lunch at the CPS Cafe on the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus that includes produce grown locally. (Thomas Kujawski/Stevens Point Journal)