

Living the local lifestyle in Mountain Brook



By Allie Black

Oak Street's local market

What's for dinner?? The proverbial phrase that gets asked over and over again all year long. To some, it's the bane of their existence, to others it's pure fun to cook up a new menu each week. As summer approaches, the colors are breath taking when it comes to fresh produce, and that means a plethora of ideas for the menu on your table.

More and more the trend nationally is moving towards living locally in hopes of bringing down our carbon footprint and increasing the nutrients you are eating. Historically, many cultures embrace a local lifestyle of living for all of its advantages it brings to the table. Many Europeans revel in daily shopping and eating as they believe in buying it all fresh that day versus purchasing pre-packaged items that tend to sit for long periods of time in stores and are more regularly filled with preservatives and additives.

Local options in Villages

With four villages bustling with opportunity right here in Mountain Brook—living the local lifestyle is becoming easier by the moment.

Assistant Manager of Continental Bakery in English Village, Jason Grover says his customers feel a big need for "connection to their food" and that's why they do it all fresh in their French bakery. Their customers demand the natural, no preservatives approach with all baking done the day you buy it. Plus, you are 2 steps away from the bakery; if there is ever an issue you can speak directly to the baker which gives many peace of mind for daily eating. He says, "gone are the days of wondering where your eggs, bread, fruit and veggies actually came from. Walk on in and just ask me...odds are it's just been

SEE LIFESTYLE | pg 6

LIFESTYLE

from pg 4

made within hours of your arrival and the ingredients delivered earlier from a local, natural vendor."

For the past 25 years Continental's business has flourished in the benefits of fresh, local living, and with one quick glance around Mountain Brook, you can see the shift to follow in their footsteps quickly—with many storefronts popping up around town with a "back to basics" approach. Keeping their items the way nature intended, Indie Candy in Crestline village will not allow anything artificial in their products. "Living cleanly doesn't mean you give up the fun," that according to owner Hanson Watkins who goes on to say the trend to "do natural" is overpowering her business. She only opened her doors originally to utilize the space's kitchen to make her notorious gummies—but locals thought otherwise and have been knocking down her door ever since she opened. She hopes to educate her regulars that REAL food won't kill you and it tastes good... this as she prepares natural "Camp Boxes" with homemade Chex Mix and Muddy

Buddies for children this summer. Parents can breathe easy knowing they are 100% clean and not filled with extra yuck.

Little changes make a big difference

The words "organic" and "natural" are thrown around a lot as the trend in our culture to get back to what nature intended grows. Why? A new study published just this month in the *Journal Pediatrics* links pesticide exposure in children to a diagnosis of ADHD among several other issues as well. Diet is a major source of pesticide exposure in children, according to the National Academy of Sciences, and much of that exposure comes from favorite fruits and vegetables. Many wonder, how can we keep ourselves and our children safe from high levels of exposure? Nationally renowned doctors are encouraging families to choose local and organic when it comes to what you are putting into your mouth, thus keeping the levels of exposure at a minimum.

Ellen Riley knows all too well the advantages of keeping things cleaner and closer to home. Working with Oak Street's fresh market in Crestline, she tries to stick to a strict 100 mile radius for all her local

farmers calling it their "local foodshed" and is proud to say she can and does talk to her growers and knows how they are growing the foods they buy. She revels in being able to provide free range eggs from Cahaba Hill Farm in Leeds and natural cheeses from R & N farms in Clanton and Blount County strawberries. She also says "if you can't pronounce it, put it down." We know all our ingredients we sell here at Oak Street Market.

That's also true for mega shopping grocery chain, Whole Foods in Cahaba Village. We have a demand for organic with our regulars says Demo Specialist, Stephanie Minderhout. The trend for going local and fresh has been gradually growing, but it's really starting to boom now with families taking a vested interest in what exactly is in their food and where it came from. Minderhout goes on to say, "customers feel confident that our products are all natural and real food," crediting their high quality standards where every product goes through strict testing for no artificial ingredients at all.

Organic 'Higher Ground' coffees, milks, teas and cereals plus on-site scratch bagels bring in locals galore at Crestline

Bagel. With no preservatives, additives or anything artificial, owners see 75-100 "regulars" embrace the local lifestyle, that according to Hiram Centeno.

Across the street, Chad Adams with Crestline Seafood says this trend sits well with him as most of his customers walk in his doors and say "what's fresh today?" They depend on his fresh fish, cold shrimp and oysters too plus 'on site' home made corn pudding and mom's recipe corn bread. He says if you top it all off with a bottle of organic wine...you are all set in living the local life.

Ah yes, it's that time of year again, when nature beckons us outside warmly and sweetly to frolic in the backyard or play in the park. With all these delicious and easy to reach places at our fingertips, you can make mealtime another wonderful excuse to get outside and enjoy eating local.

Allie Black is a Mountain Brook mother of two young children and the founder of Wholesome, which is a service for busy families looking to make healthier choices in what they eat and how they live, regardless of their budget. You can learn more at www.wholesomebyallie.com



Fresh bread is baked daily at the Continental Bakery



Silver Queen at Oak Street, Yum!