



THE LATEST BUZZ FROM THE BIRCHWOOD CAFE

good real food

March • 2010

3311 East 25th Street • Minneapolis • 612 722 4474 • www.birchwoodcafe.com

We “heart” Community! On February 18th, an unimaginable tragedy occurred in South Minneapolis: a two-alarm fire raged through the corner building at 50th & Bryant, incinerating a block of local neighborhood businesses, including two favorite Twin Cities restaurants, Heidi's & Blackbird. Both were community gems as well as destinations to food lovers far and wide. Watching the news that night I was spellbound by the horrific image of fire engulfing the roof, thinking “that could be Birchwood” and then immediately “what can we do to reach out and help?” As a fellow restaurateur, I know the passion and hard work that Stuart & Heidi of Heidi's and Chris & Gail of Blackbird put into their businesses and I felt heartbroken. But as a fellow *Twin Cities* restaurateur, I took heart, knowing the strong camaraderie and solidarity of our local restaurant community would not let them down. It was no surprise that within days, a food community benefit had been organized to raise funds to help both restaurants recover. We're proud to be a part of **FORK THE FIRE** on Sunday, March 14th, along with 55 plus other restaurants who will be donating proceeds from that day's sales. All you have to do is eat! For participating restaurants, see birchwoodcafe.com or Fork the Fire on Facebook.

Featured Farmer: Jack Hedin, of Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables. The Birchwood met Featherstone Farm's Jack Hedin about 4 years ago, when he approached us about becoming a drop site for his weekly CSA. We were thrilled about the idea and excited to work with Jack, whose charisma, creativity and eloquence, not to mention GREAT fruits and vegetables, has made him one of our local foods heroes. Featherstone Farm (Rushford, MN) has been certified organic since 1997 and serves as an ever-growing model of sustainability which, led by Farmer Jack, points the way towards a hopeful future for our health and environment.

An interview with Jack Hedin: What is happening on the farm right now? We put in more storage crops in 2009 than ever before and we've been selling them through the winter, but we're winding down on that right now to start on the 2010 season. The first of March is a big transition time when we start the greenhouse for transplant production, growing the seedlings for the fields. In the last couple of weeks we built a new greenhouse for growing crops to maturity in the ground, so we'll get a jump on the season. Organizationally we're going through some changes that are really positive. We have a new organizational structure with new folks managing parts of the farm. There are some new initiatives: applying for grants, refining and expanding our distributions group, building a new machine shed and tool shop... We're taking on a really exciting program this spring with our CSA boxes. We've got Peggy Hanson, a neighbor, local food writer and advocate, set up to be blogging, social networking and creating online resources for the CSA customers. I don't know any other farm that does this to support their CSA program. This is one of my big deals, I love to get people to cook in their own kitchen. So that's the main thrust of what Peggy will be working on. **Has the government's track record supporting local and sustainable agriculture improved since your NY Times piece?** The thing I wrote about in the Times did not change at all. I got a little exemption to accommodate me so that I wouldn't make more noise. I see very little help going through for producers, although the USDA is funding a lot more alternative programs for sure and I do see some hope there, but it's way out of proportion to conventional farming.

You've talked about the need for many new small farms for sustainable agriculture to move ahead. Well our mid-sized farm does lot a lot of things well, but we're far from sustainable in many ways. As we grow to meet demand, every step leads you to make a little compromise of one sort or another. For our farm to get really sustainable we need to get a lot of people working. But it's not going to make sense for a 100 acre farm to exist given the labor that's needed. Our farm is only a stepping stone in the direction. The problem is petroleum substituting for human labor. Technology substituting for proper management... for the ability to really go out and observe what is happening in the field. You might see that the potato beetles are only established in one part of the field and you really only need to deal with them there. More labor with more attention in the field will lead to sustainability. Right now, at least in the world of vegetables, I'm comfortable growing 100 acres because it's better than bringing it from Mexico and California, health-wise and sustainability-wise. I believe there needs to be more people managing smaller tracts. We're a stepping stone to something better, in a perfect world we'd put ourselves out of business. **But can small-level farming be economical for new farmers?** That's exactly it. They have to be able to support themselves or no one is going to choose it. You have to be profitable. We're trying to demonstrate that there is money in it right now, but there needs to be a larger shift over time in which more consumers recognize the need to spend more money on food. Until that shift happens on a broad level, there won't be enough money around for four, six and twelve acre farms. That's why we have to expand the market. Our focus right now is to target suburban people who may not be cooking, or who shop at Rainbow and Cub, and try to introduce these people to local, organic food. We need the people beyond Minneapolis to become organic buyers to support what we're doing. We're trying to leverage the market. The way to do that is for a mid sized farm, like us, to expand our resources with a program like Peggy's showing people how to value what we do. I don't take our core constituency—the Co-op members and Birchwood customers—for granted but I perceive the importance of expanding demand to be great. I'm also involved in hiring and mentoring new farmers. We want to nurture and grow more farmers; we want to see more people get involved. I'm in this because the present system is so brittle and I worry about what the world will be like for my kids. Creating a local food system is the best thing I can do to abating things like global warming or oil wars in the mid-east. I want this thing to grow.

How can YOU get involved in the Food Revolution?

Support Jack Hedin's sustainably minded Featherstone Farm. Visit www.featherstonefarm.com & sign up for their 2010 CSA (delivered weekly to Birchwood!) • Purchase Featherstone's organic produce at your local food Co-ops, Lunds, and Kowalski's. • Read Jack's NY Times Op-Ed: www.nytimes.com/2008/03/01/opinion/01hedin.html. • Learn more about the local foods movement & tasty events at simplegoodandtasty.com! • Support the Land Stewardship Project, which promotes sustainable agriculture, assists new farmers, and highlights the farm to table connection. (www.landstewardshipproject.org) • **Spread the word!** Tell your friends and families what good food means to you. Bring them to Birchwood or a Simple Good & Tasty event! Talk to your workplace or school about supporting local & sustainable food. **Be the change.**



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Meet Birchwood All-Star Megan

Megan joined the team early this fall and has quickly become an integral part of the Birchwood. Her passion for food and community has really been an example for her co-workers and helped her shine. Her willingness to grow and learn as a cook exemplifies the values we share with her. I think her success here will open the door for other people who have the passion and drive to cook locally and sustainably. Thanks Megan! Your hard work and commitment to serving Good Real Food is much appreciated. *Jimmy

What is your favorite thing about working at the Birchwood?

I love that the Birchwood standards and values are a part of the staff's personal values — from Tracy, to the cooks, to the dishwashers and the front house servers. Everyone cares about what they do. **What was a favorite day @ Birchwood?** Honestly any day that keeps me on my toes. Luckily there are a lot of them!

What is your dream job?

Any job that allows me to live holistically. That's why I love to cook. I studied anthropology and economics and that's why I got into cooking — I like a job that lets me continue to explore both of those at work. Where they merge is where cooking is for me. **What is your theme song?** "Can I Kick it" by Tribe called Quest. It can speak for itself!

If you could be on any game show, what would it be?

Jeopardy! Who wouldn't want to be on Jeopardy?

What do you do when you're not at work?

I enjoy reading, gardening, hanging w/ the neighbors. I have a lot of neighbors and roommates who are cooks, grocers, bakers, potters. They are my teachers on everything. **What are you reading?** *The Crying of Lot 49*, by Thomas Pynchon. My book club would be so happy if I gave them a shout out — we're really into ourselves. Go book club!!!

Tell me about your plans for gardening this spring?

I am excited to plant vegetables and design my own flower garden. I live on a double lot of land and all my neighbors garden so I'm learning a lot from them. I am splitting seed packets with Meg F. (Counter Server). **Which other Twin City restaurants do you like?** Brasa! For me it's comfort food served in an affordable and accessible way, plus I love fried plantains! I also like Hard Times and Taco Taxi.

What is your fondest memory of a meal you've made at the Birchwood?

Some of the best conversations I have ever had have happened over veggie pizzas, even before I worked here. I like how the unusual ingredients mesh well on the pizza. **What is your favorite Birchwood dessert?** Carrot Cake. I love carrot cake, ours is just so good. **Favorite coffee Drink?** Soy latte with Kat's infamous skull latte art.

If you had \$1,000,000 in excess, what would you do?

Buy a plot of land and let all my friends start experimental communities. More like an economic experiment where we could figure out how to grow and make our own things. **If you could have any superpower, what would it be?** I would want to be able to transcend the time-space continuum. **Who is your staff superhero and why?** Bakers Sandra and Diana - They make the Birchwood sweet!

What's something you have learned while working here?

I have learned so many things. I loved learning how to braise bison. It was a blast! I have also learned a lot about communication and the components of cooking locally. **Want to give a shout out to a coworker?** Yes! I want to give a shout out to coworkers. Maria C., Maria G., Magdalena, and Andrea. Dishwashing crew! Every time you eat off a clean plate, thank a dishwasher.

What's Happening/Birchwood Buzz

Sat March 13th Seven Hawks Wine Tasting 5-8pm Birchwood is proud to be the first restaurant to serve Seven Hawks wine out of Fountain City, Wisconsin—already available at many fine liquor stores. Currently, we're featuring their Smiling Moon, a white table wine made from 100% locally grown grapes including La Crosse, Edelweiss, Frontenac Gris and Prairie Star. These grapes are the result of cross breeding with local wild grapes to produce cold-hardy vines. Stop by, meet the vintner and sample their distinctive wine and ask them to pair one for you with our good real food!

Sun March 14th FORK THE FIRE Benefit Please join us along with 55 plus Twin Cities restaurants and countless Twin Cities diners in an effort to raise funds for Heidi's and Blackbirds, two beloved eateries who lost everything in a tragic fire. Proceeds from the day will benefit both restaurants. All you have to do is eat! Find more participating restaurants at birchwoodcafe.com or the FORK THE FIRE facebook page.

Sat March 20th First Day of SPRING!

Sat March 20th Farmer Meet-n-Eat Hope Creamery 1-3 pm

At Birchwood we're on a mission to grow community through local foods; connecting folks to where their food comes from is our main MO (modus operandi). Please join us for this month's Farmer Meet-n-Eat: we're hosting the fine folks from Hope Creamery, Victor Moritz and Tim Christman, the craftsmen behind everybody's favorite, Hope Butter. Stop by for a taste and learn about the old-world, small batch method Hope Creamery uses to bring us their sweet, creamy, delicious butter. Take home a pound, always for sale at our counter, \$4.25.

Save the dates!

Sat April 17th 2x2 by Locus Architecture A local foods salon discussion featuring Tracy Singleton, Birchwood Cafe owner and Greg Reynolds, owner of Riverbend Farm and moderated by 89.3 the Current's Mark Wheat. More details soon.

Sun April 25th Earth Day Dinner Marshall and crew are creating a menu that spans the globe, celebrating local and sustainably sourced food prepared with their favorite global influences. More details soon.

Where is the Birchwood Cafe? ... and where does their food come from?

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H Mon thru Fri • 7am - 9pm
Sat • 8am - 9pm Sun • 9am - 8pm

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