

Megha Swamy
Queens College
megharswamy@aol.com

Greener Challenge Days 3 & 4



Name: Chalk Point Kitchen

Location: SoHo, Manhattan

Executive Chef: Joe Isadori

Website: <http://chalkpointkitchen.com/index.php>

Menu: Brunch: <http://chalkpointkitchen.com/brunch.php> Lunch: <http://chalkpointkitchen.com/lunch.php> Dinner: <http://chalkpointkitchen.com/food.php>

Farms: Blue Moon Acres Micro Farm, Copper Crest Farm, Paisley Farm & Greenhouse, Satur Farms North Fork Long Island, Bo Bo Buddhist Style Poultry Farm (Just a few off of their huge list!)

Notable mention:

- The farms are listed at the top of the menu with their location
- The date is on their menu
- The menu changes every Friday, based on availability and local markets!
- They have easy sharable dishes. Their menu includes “small plates for the table” and “vegetables to share”
- The vegetarian section is larger than the poultry section
- They have a philosophy to include multicultural cuisine and practices
- It is a comfortable dining experience
- The food is colorful and presented beautifully
- It makes eating farm-to-table seem less bucolic and more fancy!



Name: Blenheim

Location: West Village, Manhattan

Executive Chef: Justin Hillbert

Website: <http://www.blenheimhill.com/>

Menu: <http://www.blenheimhill.com/menu/>

Farm: Blenheim Hill Farm, Catskills (Historic farm with free-roaming animals and a year-round hydroponic greenhouse)

Notable mention:

- Menu changes daily
- The farm dates back to the late 1700's
- Farm structure as been preserved and updated by owners
- Forests of maple and birch trees line the farm property
- Bees are kept to produce local honey
- Two-acre lake supplies fresh water for animals
- Local butchers are used
- Restaurant features décor made by owners

Some improvement:

- More vegetarian options

ROSEMARY'S

Name: Rosemary's

Location: Greenwich Village, Manhattan

Executive Chef: Wade Moises

Website: <http://rosemarysnyc.com/about/>

Menu: <http://rosemarysnyc.com/menu/>

Farms: Rosemary Rooftop Farm (literally right above them!)

Notable mention:

- They have a webcam of their rooftop garden!
- They work with local public schools, markets, and other garden communities

- The transportation costs involved in getting the food to the table as much less considering the garden is above the restaurant
- Simple traditional Italian food
- Menu for kids
- Can order delivery
- Can accommodate a large party

What I learned:

This challenge taught me three important things about costs and benefits of eating at farm-to-table restaurants. First, the food is more expensive than the food at a traditional restaurant and it is important to understand *why* this is. If we eat there, we pay for the true price of producing food, unaided by government subsidies, cheap ingredients, and underpaid labor. We are paying for a wholesome meal. Second, food at farm-to-table restaurants changes with season and availability. We are so used to standard menus regardless of the location of the restaurant and location of the source of the food. This illustrates appreciation for what nature has to offer during different times of the year. Lastly, farm-to-table restaurants keep in mind the life cycle of the food they serve. The produce and animals on the farms are treated more humanely and healthily compared to factory-farm operations. There is a relationship between food provider and buyer and this connection is important. We should know where our food comes from, how long it has taken to grow, the ingredients that went into growing it, etc.

Realistically I may not be able to afford to dine frequently at the restaurants I found but I will be mindful of the gamete of restaurants that I do support. Going forward I will reevaluate where I choose to spend money, and perhaps save up for more wholesome and sustainable options rather than frequent traditional alternatives.

There is one concept that must also be taken into consideration. The statement, "Farm-to-table" makes it seem like this distance from the farm to the table is very short. In some cases, like Rosemary's, this is true since the garden is on the rooftop. However, in other cases, the farm is very far away and there are transportation costs involved. The transportation may be inefficient considering the distance, mileage, and frequency of delivery. I think when I decide where to eat I will first identify my values about food and figure out what is a priority to me: local, organic, etc.