Mouth-watering EVENTS

Taste of the Town

Friday, March 4, 6-10 p.m., Mazama Gym, COCC Campus, Bend

A fundraiser for COCC, the event will showcase the talents of the area's local restaurants including Sunriver Resort, Deschutes Brewery, Anthony's at the Old Mill, Blue Olive at Brasada Ranch and many more. Tickets are $30 in advance and $35 at the door; available at Newport Market, Whole Foods and at the COCC Box Office.

COCC Foundation Meal of the Year

Saturday, March 5, 5:30 pm., Mazama Gym, COCC Campus, Bend

The High Desert Chefs Association will be whipping up a gourmet four course meals, followed by a live auction and music. Tickets are $110 per person; available by contacting Mint Event Coordination & Design at 541-318-7400 or via e-mail at kerry@eventsbymint.com.

Taste of Home Cooking School

Tuesday, March 29, 3-8 p.m., Deschutes County Expo Center, Redmond

More than 30 businesses from all over Central Oregon with information, samples, giveaways and audience participation games. Come join the fun and learn how to make some delicious dishes and get great tips from Kristi Larson, Taste of Home's Culinary Specialist. Tickets are $10 per person and are available from Combined Communications; call 541-382-5263.

Bonded by FoodHub



Online directory brings together buyers and sellers of local goods for trade and support.

by Chef Bette Fraser / for The Bulletin Special Projects

When Benjamin Brown, manager of culinary services, wants to purchase good nutritious food for the patients and staff at St. Charles Medical Center, he has a couple of options.

First, he can source it from the normal food distribution chain. In this process, he places an order, then waits from a day to a week for the order to be delivered. Rarely does he have any say over where the products are sourced and from which farm or ranch the product comes.

Today, however, he can now try a different, non-traditional yet empowering approach to ordering food — a new trend in food acquisition that has been sweeping Oregon and the surrounding states.

Brown can utilize FoodHub.

FoodHub is an online directory that brings buyers and sellers of food products together to trade in local goods and to get to know each other. It is owned by Ecotrust, a nonprofit organization that works in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Headed by Deborah Kane, FoodHub has just celebrated its first anniversary and is going strong.

FoodHub is scale-neutral. In other words, if a buyer wants to buy a pound of pork or the whole hog, each option is available.

This makes FoodHub a convenient and viable option for the food cart as well as the school district. It is a motivating option in an uncertain economic time. When all food purveyors are trying to cut expenses, saving money on food costs is critical.

While still reasonably new, more customers (buyers) will begin to realize the benefits.

Currently, more sellers (farmers and ranchers) are signed up than buyers. Amanda Oborne, sales and marketing director for FoodHub, said that they will make a real effort to get the message out to Central Oregon buyers that FoodHub is something that will really help the regional food economy.

Meanwhile, Brown, along with staffers Mark Petersen and Rodney Scinto, were on their way recently to visit Cher and Patrick Sullivan at Cada



Dia Cheese in Prineville to see if their dairy was a viable food option for the medical center.

Cada Dia makes a variety of raw milk cheeses such as cheddar, feta and Parmesan.

Their herd of Jersey cows graze contently on grass and produce milk that is high in fat and protein. Grass-fed cow milk is high in Omega 3 fatty acids and has more vitamins and minerals than a grain- or hay-fed cow.

Their cheeses are then aged in an underground cellar for at least 60 days, resulting in smooth, firm cheeses with texture and flavor.

Other sellers in the program in Central Oregon include DD Ranch, Sand Lily Farm, Fields Farms, Last Stand Farm, and Timber Creek Farm, to name just a few. Buyers in our area include Bend-La Pine School District, Redmond School District, Common Table, Bellataza, Joolz, and Strictly Organic.

Bethlyn Rider, the chef at Common Table, enjoys how FoodHub provides a way for her to connect directly with the farmer and the rancher. She has already purchased produce from FoodHub with plans to purchase a whole steer from DD Ranch.

Right now, buyers and sellers can join FoodHub for free. As their first anniversary rolled around on Feb. 2, FoodHub waived the $100 membership fee to encourage people to join.

More than 400 users joined their ranks to realize the benefits of buying local and connecting with area farmers or ranchers.

The service is available to any restaurant, health care facility, school district, culinary school, caterer, grocer and others in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, Montana and Alaska.

Encourage the places you dine to join FoodHub and support their local farmers and producers. What a great way to give back to your community and enjoy the bounty that Central Oregon has to offer, all while someone else does the cooking.

Chef Bette Fraser is the proprietor of The Well Traveled Fork, hosting cooking classes, culinary tours and providing catering services. She can be reached at WellTraveledFork.com or 541-312-0097.