

Laughing Planet Café

Dishes Out The Goods

Organic, healthy and fast food on the go.

.....STORY BY VANESSA SALVIA • PHOTOS BY JAMES BATEMAN

With brightly-painted walls, a cheerful atmosphere and peppy music playing in the background, Laughing Planet Café is a welcome choice for a fast but healthy meal. The menu features unusual options such as barley and quinoa pilaf, non-GMO corn chips and even plantains. It's not typical restaurant fare, but Eugene café-goers rejoice in the organic choices. Business is hopping just six

months after the grand opening in August 2004. Owner Richard Satnick said, "People are so happy that we're here, they almost hug us!"

Satnick opened the original Laughing Planet Café in Bloomington, Ind. in 1995. A second location in Portland followed in 2000. The idea behind the first café was to appeal to bikers and other athletes who wanted fast, healthy, affordable and

portable meals. The first burritos were designed to fit inside a bicycle's waterbottle holder.

"What I had noticed is that people who are serious and active, and people who train a lot, want to eat more intelligently," Satnick said. "But the options just aren't out there on a quick-service basis. I wanted to use methods of fast food delivery, but use clean, wholesome, nutritious food instead."

Satnick buys organic and locally-grown food wherever possible, which has been harder than he expected. Navigating the rocky terrain of industrial food produc-

tion and distribution is a challenge. "Most of the people you order from in the restaurant world are not clued into organics or locally-grown food," Satnick said. "So finding out where things come from and what's in the products you're trying to purchase is hard."

'People are so happy that we're here, they almost hug us!' -OWNER RICHARD SATNICK

The biggest challenge has been finding organic poultry. Organic chicken costs almost twice as much as commercially-farmed chicken, and Satnick is reluctant to charge the high prices necessary to offer organic chicken regularly. "Sooner or later we will solve this problem," he said. "But the biggest challenge we're facing is the whole system."

won't stock it now because the demand isn't big enough. Satnick hopes to open more locations and when he does, he said he'll be able to use a whole palette.

Until then, continue to expect more of the same: creative, tasty, healthy, food that's easy to carry and even easier to eat. "I'm also a grab-and-go, street-food kind of guy," Satnick said. "I have too many things to do to sit down and do the slow food thing. Someone reviewed us in Portland recently and called us 'slow food sensibility meets fast food efficiency.' That encapsulates what we are better than anything else."

EW



Steve, manager of Laughing Planet Café, gets his five fruits and vegetables daily.

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