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CHOW! SUMMER 2008

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"PERSONAL CSA" THROUGH THE POWER OF THE INTERNET
BY SUZI STEFFEN

Ready for your Wednesday dinner party? You want local meat, dairy, vegetables and fruit. But it's Sunday afternoon, and maybe you were rafting yesterday and missed the Saturday Farmers' Market. What do you do?

To go local, go online, of course — to Eugene Local Foods (www.eugenelocalfoods.com), where local restaurateur and baker Mazzi Ernandes and a techno-savvy friend have created a central gathering point for local farmers and consumers. It works like this: Each week, the farms, including Noris Dairy from Scio, Deck Family Farms from Junction City, Ernandes' own biodynamic farm and MycoLogical, among others, tell computer whiz Doug Frazier what they have available. Frazier posts the list to the website by Tuesday at 6 pm. Then customers have between Tuesday evening and Sunday night at 9 pm to order what they will need for the next Tuesday. That is to say, if you ordered on Thursday, July 31, your order would be ready for pickup on Tuesday, August 5, between 3 and 7 pm. All of the produce, meat and dairy arrives at the central collection point of Hideaway Bakery, behind Mazzi's Restaurant on East Amazon (of course, you might be tempted to pick up some bread while you're there, so plan accordingly).

But why are Frazier and Ernandes undertaking this operation? And where will it lead? "We believe in creating a strong local economy and supporting our farms," Frazier says. One of the UO's chefs, Carson Dining Hall Manager/Chef Dan Irvin, orders berries and other produce items from Eugene Local Foods. Frazier says that large orders make it easier for farmers to concentrate on several crops instead of trying to produce many crops, something that community-supported agriculture (CSA) farmers sometimes find difficult. He hopes that school districts, including Springfield, will order certain foods through Eugene Local Foods, which in turn will help the farmers know what to plant. They want

to grow slowly but steadily and remain on the lookout for more farmers — within 100 miles of Eugene and who don't use pesticides or herbicides — to participate (there's a sign-up form at the website for both sellers and customers).

For those who are already CSA customers, Frazier knows that supplementing the produce with dairy products, meat and mushrooms will make locavores happy. He points out too that some people try CSAs but find that they get too many vegetables or that they go on vacation too often to take full advantage of the service. With Eugene Local Foods, "You'll be able to create your own personal CSA. It's a way to

shop from home, shop locally and get a lot of your food needs for the week."

Remember that dinner party? Eggplant for the vegetarians: check! Pork sausages for the meat-eaters: check! Cheese and eggs for the quiche: check! Peppers, tomatoes, onions and mushrooms for the kebobs: check! You had your Saturday fun but still supported the local economy, and without a doubt, the fresh food will leave your guests satisfied for many reasons. "Keeping that farmland viable, keeping it out of the hands of developers — that is so important to Eugene," Frazier says. "It's priceless." ■



chow.eugeneweekly.com