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sustainable agriculture: key concept at paul martin's american bistros

Sustainable agriculture is a hot topic these days, but what does it really mean, and why is it such an important part of the mission at Paul Martin's American Bistro? In a way, what sustainable agriculture boils down to is implementing farming techniques and policies that are good for the land, good for the farmers and workers, good for the consumer, and good for future generations.

Farming in the United States has changed drastically in the last fifty years as a result of industrialization, chemical use and policies implemented to maximize production. While some changes have been positive, there are far-reaching effects on the environment, labor, production costs, and the social and economic breakdown of farming communities.

The movement to support sustainable farming is growing because the practices of sustainable agriculture not only address increasing concerns, but help to create a food system that benefits everyone including growers, laborers, entire rural communities and the consumer.

Developing a sustainable food system won't happen overnight, and that's why it is important for everyone to be aware of the issues and do what they can to promote change in the food industry. Paul Martin's American Bistro acts as a bridge between organic, local and sustainable growers and the consumer. Just picked, seasonal produce from over forty carefully selected vendors is prepared in ways that allow guests to fully appreciate the freshness and perfectly ripened flavors. The Bistros support farms that produce meat in wholesome and humane ways, and farms that are valuable contributors to the social and economic structure of local communities.

One such farm is Heirloom Organic Gardens. Since 1970, they have embraced the concept of organic, sustainable farming, and were the first farm in the Santa Clara Valley to be organically certified. Heirloom practices many of the core methods of sustainable farming, which include choosing pest-resistant crops that are tolerant of existing conditions, maintaining healthy soil, and developing efficient biological systems that don't require the use of chemicals. Growing a variety of crops helps to lower economic risk, and using strategies like cover crops and crop rotation can help strengthen the farm by keeping weeds and pests controlled and maintaining soil and plant health.

Heirloom's operation also allows for a permanent workforce and fair working conditions. In their own words, "We are trying to make a profit to assure the ability to survive while doing the right things for our environment. We are prudently frugal at each opportunity we can be, while generous wherever possible and relish the connections to both our direct customers and whomever ultimately eats our food."

Paul Martin's American Bistro takes pride in the organic, sustainable and humane methods used by their vendors, and the folks at Heirloom should be thrilled to know that their products are being prepared at Paul Martin's restaurants with such care and expertise. What better place for Heirloom produce to land than in an expertly prepared tomato-saffron broth over fresh linguine, or combined with mesquite-grilled fish wrapped in a handmade tortilla to create the freshest fish tacos? Bistro guests will enjoy every delectable bite, and can also feel the satisfaction of supporting farming practices that ultimately benefit all of us.