



Purchasing from Local Purveyors

In an effort to support local economies and decrease our environmental footprint, Creative Dining Services encourages the purchasing of foods from local resources. As always, food safety and sanitation are paramount in our business. The following is a guide to help you in working with your local resources.

Produce

- All items in their whole state are approved to purchase from any local merchant but should be washed thoroughly (as should produce from all vendors).
- Processed produce, such as: cut fruits or vegetables, salsas, jams/jellies/preserves, etc., can only be purchased from state licensed suppliers.
- Items purchased at Farmer's Markets are regulated by the state Department of Agriculture and therefore are approved to purchase.

Dairy

- Un-pasteurized or "raw" milk is illegal for sale in most states, and as such should not be purchased by any Creative Dining Services account.
- Cheeses made with un-pasteurized milk products are legal for purchase only if the cheese has been aged for at least 60 days.
- All other dairy items must come from farms that are licensed by the state.

Protein

- All eggs, beef, poultry, pork, seafood, or game may only be purchased from USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) inspected sources.

Organic, Natural, Cage-Free, and Free-Range

- Only the USDA can determine which items meet the federal criteria for organic foods and/or ingredients. Many small farms may be using organic farming practices, but if they have not been inspected by the USDA they nor we, can label their products "organic".
- "Natural" foods are generally defined as: food that does not contain any additives, such as preservatives or artificial coloring. At this time there is not an official definition of natural foods or what may or may not be included in these items, furthermore there is currently no governing body that oversees these foods.



- The term “cage-free” refers almost exclusively to poultry (eggs in particular), with regards to the hens not being kept in cages, but instead being kept in a large, indoor space.
- The term “free-range”, again, refers almost exclusively to poultry (chicken in particular) and how the animals are raised. To legally use this term for their items farmers must demonstrate to the USDA’s Food Safety Inspection Service that the animals have access to the outdoors. However there are currently no standards as to how often the animals are given this access, nor how much space these animals are given to roam.
- In the case of organic, natural, cage-free, and free-range items it is important to note that the nutritional values of the food is NOT different than that of their “traditionally” produced counterparts.

Resources

- * Find Farmer’s Markets in your area at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/map.htm>
- * United States Department of Agriculture: www.usda.gov
- * National Organics Project: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/indexIE.htm>
- * Your State Department of Agriculture
- * Your local City or County Health Department