Farm-to-table restaurant commits to locally sourced options, sustainability

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“Scratch is one of the rare South Louisiana restaurants.”

“Where you can find something green on your plate?” said Jamie Harson, farmer and co-owner of Scratch Farm Kitchen, aptly finishing my sentence.

Scratch has undergone an evolution from food truck to in-demand brick-and-mortar restaurant astonishingly fast. Their farm-to-table approach to food is igniting awareness of a much-needed change to Lafayette’s restaurant culture.

“Everything’s fried, but people come here and they don’t notice that we don’t fry our food,” said Harson.

The farm-to-table movement is finally starting to generate some interest in Lafayette, a market where health and eco-friendly practices aren’t necessarily a priority. Harson and her business partner and chef, Kelsey Leger, are shifting the paradigm while ignoring anyone who says their restaurant is merely part of an expensive fad.

“A lot of farm-to-table restaurants make their food unaffordable and unapproachable,” Harson said.

There are only a few items on Scratch’s diverse menu that cost more than $10. The portions are generous, and the food is markedly fresh.

“We don’t make ‘farm-to-table’ a thing. It’s not a thing we’re trying to be, we just are,” explained Harson.

Scratch doesn’t indulge itself marketing this fact. Once you experience their food, it’s immediately apparent they’re doing something different and doing it right. Harson, who’s been farming for 10 years, puts an emphasis on sourcing food from local growers.

“We locally source everything we can, and when we can’t, we have to branch out,” Harson said. “But everything we buy is supporting an individual. I want to look someone in the eye and thank them for their hard work.”

Their plates, often packed with an array of seasonal fruits and vegetables, healthy starches and fresh meat, are the work of small farmers, rejecting the factory farms most restaurants purchase food from.

“Scratch embodies everything the National Dairy Council says is sustainable about the farm-to-table approach: (Farm-to-table restaurants) are about making positive contributions to alleviate hunger, improving public health, promoting community vitality, conserving natural resources for the health of the planet and more.”

My experiences with Scratch line up fittingly with this criteria. I can personally thank them for alleviating my hunger (and plenty of other UL Lafayette students who may have been suffering from hunger) with their food truck’s $5 breakfast burritos and cheap lunch options.

Unfortunately, the food truck is no longer going to be on campus, but their new location on 406 Garfield St. is only a few blocks away.

Their food’s quality and cost isn’t the only thing you’ll notice when you’re at Scratch. They will not give everyone at your table water, but you can go to their self-serve water station if you’re thirsty. If you want to take a drink to-go, you certainly won’t get a styrofoam cup; you’ll get a mason jar with the understanding that you’ll kindly return it.

“We’re working with the Green Restaurant Association to become the first certified green restaurant in Lafayette,” said Harson.

The Green Restaurant Association certifies restaurants under a set of standards gauging water efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, sustainable food, energy consumption, transparency and educational value.

“Hopefully it incentivizes more restaurants to follow suit, get rid of straws, styrofoam cups. We don’t need that,” Harson said.

Indeed we don’t. According to cleanwater.org, one of the monomers used to create styrofoam, styrene, was found in 100% of human fat tissues tested in a study. Numerous studies have also documented the detrimental effects it has on marine ecosystems.

Scratch isn’t doing this to be trendy; they’re an active part of a larger fight to increase the awareness of bad restaurant practices negatively impacting the environment.

“I think our role is to be part of the new paradigm, the new consciousness around how you get your food, where your food comes from, and what you do after you consume your food,” Harson said.

In addition to being farmers with a devotion to fresh food and artisans with a stellar sense of taste, they are crusaders pushing for a healthier planet.