

# Supporting Local

## UK College of Agriculture, UK Dining Services to offer local meats to students, community.

by *Aimee Nielson, University of Kentucky*

Interest in local foods is gaining popularity across the country, and Kentuckians seem to be demanding it more and more. Now a partnership between the University of Kentucky (UK) College of Agriculture Meats Lab and UK Dining Services will give the UK community and the general public more opportunities to eat locally produced food.

"This is a unique collaboration," said Gregg Rentfrow, meat scientist for the College of Agriculture's Department of Animal and Food Sciences. "I don't know of any other relationship between a university meats lab and dining services department anywhere."

Rentfrow said the idea came about a few years ago when he began working with UK Dining Services chefs Scott Kohn and Zlatan Prasovic to find sources of local pork and beef.

"We brought them in under our U.S. Department of Agriculture inspection program," Rentfrow said. "It just made sense, and it cut down on a lot of paperwork for them. So we started doing that in June of 2012, and it's been a win-win for everyone involved."

Kohn said UK Dining Services has been expanding the amount of local foods, including beef and pork, for a while now. Their guidelines are that the animals have to originate in Kentucky and be free of antibiotics, steroids and administered hormones, known as A.S.H.-free. They purchase meats from local processor Marksbury Farm Foods and also use meats harvested from UK College of Agriculture farms.

"With the partnership of the meats lab, we are able to train our staff in primal cuts, and it saves us money in the long run," Kohn said. "We've had a lot of test products, and now that we are teamed up with the meats lab, they can move from test products to reality. ... For example, instead of buying genoa salami, we'll be making our own UK genoa salami."

Rentfrow is working with the chefs and with meats lab manager Ryan Chaplin to open a butcher shop, where people from UK and the surrounding communities can come and buy quality local meats.

The shop will offer a variety of products, including dry-aged ground beef, dry-cured bacon, breakfast sausage, ground chorizo and chorizo snack sticks. Kohn and Prasovic have also created some unique items, including a cheese bratwurst they call Wildcat Tail, a bourbon apple bratwurst made with locally produced apples and Kentucky bourbon, dry-cured bacon and an array of spices that are not found at big box stores.

"Ryan and I focus on the science, and the chefs focus on the art," Rentfrow said. "It's a win-win for everyone."

UK students are the ultimate beneficiaries of the partnership, Rentfrow said.

"It gives us a unique opportunity with



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our students to show them what happens beyond the farm gate, and also for dining services students to see what happens beyond the grocery store," he said. "It's a full-circle education."

Prasovic said there is value in every step of the process.

"We plan to teach students how to do everything from carcass breakdown to curing meats," he said. "I use a very old-world way to cure meats that is more natural. It's a dying art, and I want to make sure it's preserved and that students see how it adds value to products."

Rentfrow said the butcher shop is a way to add value to the animals harvested from UK College of Agriculture farms. The profits will go into funding livestock, dairy and meats judging teams and toward facility maintenance and repairs.

The butcher shop will be open in the basement of the Garrigus Building each Wednesday and Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. Its grand opening was Feb. 8.



### Local foods continue to top restaurant trends

The annual National Restaurant Association survey of American Culinary Federation member chefs is one of the industry's leading culinary forecasts. Conducted annually in October and November, the survey provides insight into trends that can equate into market opportunities for entrepreneurs. The Association collected data from 1,834 American Culinary Federation member chefs. For the second year in a row, the top trend identified was locally sourced meats and seafood; this was followed by locally grown produce.

These trends point to increasing opportunity for farmers to add value to their operations by direct marketing to local restaurants. Ben Tirrell, owner of Tirrell Farmstead Specialties in Charlotte, Mich., has expanded marketing of his farmstead cheese and meat products to local restaurants. Tirrell was selected as the Michigan State University (MSU) Product Center Entrepreneur of the Year in 2012 and was credited for his keen marketing skills with local retailers and restaurants.

Nina Santucci and Anthony Maiale, co-owners of Red Haven, a restaurant in Okemos, are local trendsetters. They pioneered the concept of local food served from their Purple Carrot Truck. After a successful run with the food truck, they have now opened a restaurant. The Red Haven menus are based on ingredients from local producers like Tirrell Farmstead Specialties.

The MSU Product Center can provide assistance in business and product development for agricultural producers interested in tapping into the restaurant market, as well as foodservice operations interested in procuring local foods. Innovation counselors located in MSU Extension offices across the state can offer support in these types of entrepreneurial ventures. For additional information, visit the MSU Product Center's website, <http://productcenter.msu.edu/>.

For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>.

— by *Brenda Reau, Michigan State University Extension*

