

Local foods flourish (for now) in campus kitchens

By: Angela McManaman

RECENT GRAD, LOCAL LAWYER AWARDED MELVIN LURIE PRIZES

By Laura L. Hunt

Lindsey Tauber, a human resources specialist at Northwestern Mutual, was recently awarded the annual Melvin Lurie Memorial Prize and Attorney Howard N. Myers was awarded the Melvin Lurie Labor-Management Cooperation Prize by UWM.

The Melvin Lurie Memorial Prize is given to an outstanding student or recent graduate of the University's Masters in Human Resources and Labor Relations (MHRLR) program. It honors the late Melvin Lurie, a former professor and founder of the MHRLR program.

Tauber, a 2007 graduate of the MHRLR program, was chosen for her outstanding scholarship and commitment to the pursuit of knowledge in the area of human resources and labor relations.

The Lurie Labor-Management Cooperation Prize honors individuals and/or organizations for outstanding service in promoting, creating or researching labor-management cooperation. It commemorates Lurie's efforts to foster cooperative labor-management relations in Wisconsin, an effort that culminated in his organization of the first Wisconsin State Conference on Labor-Management Cooperation in 1987.

Myers has a long and successful history as a labor lawyer, mediator and educator in the area of alternative dispute resolution. He continues to contribute to both the Wisconsin Labor and Employment Relations Association and the UWM MHRLR program.

The MHRLR program is taught and administered jointly by UWM's College of Letters and Science and the Sheldon B. Lubar School of Business. It is the only graduate program of its kind offered at a Wisconsin public university.

The awards are made possible by the UWM Foundation, the Lurie family and the MHRLR program.



Peter Jakubowski

Farmers hand-picked these vegetables several hours before they were delivered to UWM from Montello, Wis.

Those who enjoyed the fresh-picked, Wisconsin-grown produce served at the Union Station, Kenwood Inn and Sandburg Café this fall have more than the farmers and chefs to thank.

Wisconsin's fall harvest made its way onto University plates through Gov. Jim Doyle's "Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin" initiative.

And although the Governor's Office announced the program last summer, it's been on the agenda of UWM Restaurant Operations Director Scott A. Hoffland since fall 2007.

That's when Hoffland joined the Institutional Food Market Coalition (IFMC), a project of the Dane County Planning and Development Department, to connect Wisconsin farmers with institutional food buyers.

Grant dollars from the "Buy Local" program helped connect Wisconsin's three produce cooperatives to institutional buyers, while the Department of Administration granted UWM purchasing authority up to \$25,000 to participate in a "Buy Local" produce pilot this year.

As the first UW System school to join on as a buyer, UWM placed a weekly produce order to the Badgerland Produce Coop Auction of Montello. All items were hand-picked the morning of the auction, which also is the day the produce travels 178 miles* to UWM. Every box has a grower's tag, so every piece of produce can be traced back to an individual farmer.

Mother Nature dictated the produce selection: "We picked from a weekly report that listed the produce available, based on the growing season," says Hoffland.

This meant sweet corn, tomatoes and onions during the first weeks of the semester, acorn squash and zucchini in September and October, and apples and root vegetables to mark the end of the growing season.

'BUY LOCAL' GOES NATIONAL

UWM's "Buy Local" pilot filled pots and plates across campus at the same time that books, documentaries and sustainability groups have made "buy local" a catch phrase across the country.

The trend is particularly strong among colleges and universities, where the local and sustainable foods movements drive dining decisions at Harvard and Emory universities, Iowa State and the University of Kentucky, to name just a few of the participating campuses.

Like UWM, many of these schools phase locally grown produce into their dining operations in waves – replacing a small amount of their total produce supply with local or regional products.

Hoffland says that local sources alone may never provide the tons of fresh produce that UWM serves yearly. The coop deliveries will account for less than 5 percent of UWM's total produce purchase for 2008.

Instead, most produce travels to UWM from Arizona, Texas and South America. "It's the same produce we buy all the time in grocery stores," Hoffland says.

"We're not trying to completely replace the produce that comes to us from outside Wisconsin," he says, "but to add value to our food supply."

TASTE MATTERS

Hoffland would like to increase the volume of Wisconsin produce served at UWM next year, if the weather cooperates (the torrential rains of June 2008 shortened the season by about five weeks).

"The quality of this produce, in terms of taste, is obvious," he says. "And I'm confident what we're doing is contributing to the state economy."

"I probably don't think about 'buy local' and where my food is coming from as much as I should," says Mike Marten, a freshman who lives and eats in Sandburg Halls, where Hoffland says Wisconsin acorn squash was a top seller. "But I appreciate that the University does."

"My mom used to serve fresh vegetables from her garden," says the Sun Prairie native, "and this tastes good, fresh, like I remember from home."

*Definitions of the term "local" vary. Some say produce purchased and served within a 150-mile radius of where it was grown is local. Others use a 65-mile radius. The average apple travels 1,555 miles, according to a study by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.