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04/27/2010 by [Eric Faust](#)

At Sara's Table Chester Creek Cafe in Duluth, MN



Jena Modin / Heavy Table

The sign on the building says “Taran’s Market Place,” the menus say “**At Sara’s Table Chester Creek Cafe**,” but to the regulars it is known as the most locally sourced meal you can get in town. General Manager Andrew Mattila says: “When people ask ‘What does your restaurant stand for?’ we say we stand for sustainability.”

Seven years ago, Carla Blumberg and Barb Neubert reopened Taran’s Market Place with the new names “At Sara’s Table” and “Chester Creek Cafe” with the goal of creating a farm-to-table restaurant that was sustainable. “Carla has always been interested in the farmer aspect and the sustainable aspect, getting the good food to the people,” says Mattila. Sourcing 80 percent of food locally in the summer and 45 percent in the winter, a percentage based on the amount of product used in the kitchen, their focus on local foods and sustainability has made Chester Creek Cafe become for Duluth what **Common Roots Cafe** is for Minneapolis.

Bay Produce, **Larry Schultz**, **Thousand Hills Cattle Company**, **Kadejan**, Flying Snakes, and **Stickney Hill Dairy Farms** are among the farms that the restaurant uses. “It grows over time,” says Mattila. “After you’ve met one farmer, they introduce you to someone else.” Mattila has seen the restaurant add more farmers to their menu each year, and this year, “the Duluth Community Garden Club is going to start selling us green onions.” The restaurant’s staff has also started growing their own herbs, sprouts, Swiss chard, and other vegetables on site.

The duck (\$17), a recent menu item, is Mallard sourced from Wild Acres in Pequot Lakes. Whole ducks are purchased; the breasts are used for the dinner entree and the carcass for making duck stock. Beet marmalade accompanies the duck with beets, from Flying Snakes Farm at Chantrelle Woods

Preserve in Bayfield, WI, alongside a mint panzanella salad made with ciabatta from Franklin Street Bakery in Minneapolis.



Jena Modin / Heavy Table

Every six to eight weeks the menu changes. AM Chef Peter Ravinski, PM Chef Bruce Wallis, owners, and managers sit down for a brainstorming session to create new menus. A theme is selected and the menu is based on flavors and dishes that reflect the theme and what is available locally. “Sometimes you have to go with a flavor profile and see what you can find here. We don’t want to import Asian food here; we would rather pick their flavor and try to find something to match it locally,” says Mattila.

At Sara’s Table Chester Creek Cafe has led the community not only in using local foods but also in composting; they are a drop off center for the **Western Lake Superior Sanitary District**. Anyone in the community can pick up biodegradable plastic bags for compost and drop them off at the restaurant. “Very little garbage leaves the restaurant,” says Mattila. Along with recycling and composting food waste, “we don’t use a lot of oil, but our used peanut oil for frying goes to a guy locally who uses it to make bio-diesel.”

The only meat that is not sourced locally is the Alaskan salmon from **Simple Gifts Syrup and Salmon**. The salmon is line-caught by Duluth local Dave Rogotzke. “The salmon is flash frozen and stored in a warehouse in Washington,” explains Mattila. “Sure, we feel bad about shipping it half way across the country, but we are also trying to support this local business.” The salmon (\$20) is served with a miso glaze, black barley pilaf, and house-grown sprouts. The salmon is moist with a light crust from the miso glaze that is both sweet and savory.



Jena Modin / Heavy Table

“Other places in town are trying the best they can [to purchase local and organic], but we feel we are a bit ahead, we are trying to make it our one thing,” says Mattila. As the restaurant continues to work with farms and build community support, their goal of being 100 percent local and organic is within sight. Using more local cheese, finding quality local wines, and using organic butter are part of the vision for the future. Mattila says, “[Local] is like a buzz word now; everybody is saying local is the new thing for this year. And we look at it and say, ‘This year?’”

At Sara’s Table Chester Creek Cafe
Locally sourced food restaurant in Duluth

1902 E 8th St
Duluth, MN 55812
218.724.6811

OWNERS: Carla Blumberg and Barb Neubert

HOURS:

Mon-Sat 7am-9pm

Sun 7:30am-4pm

BAR: Beer + Wine

RESERVATIONS / RECOMMENDED?: Yes / Not needed

AVERAGE ENTREE: \$10-\$20

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1.

Suzanne 04/27/2010 Reply

The BEST place in Duluth for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Plus, they have many vegetarian and vegan options.



2.

Sharyn 04/27/2010 Reply

Yay! Taking a day trip up to Duluth next week and now I know where we'll be eating.



3.

Jess - The Domestic Vegan 04/27/2010 Reply

I went to college in Duluth, and this was a regular hangout of mine. GREAT food, and several veg-friendly things are offered everyday. I love their coffee, too.



4. Stuart B. [04/27/2010 Reply](#)

Where does the name Taran come from and who is it honoring? I know some Taran's from Duluth and they are pretty great people. They are not and were not in the food or restaurant business..at least not that I knew of.



5. Bruce Wallis-chef [04/28/2010 Reply](#)

Stuart- The building used to house a neighbourhood grocery called Taran's Market, owned by the Taran family. They very well could be related to the Tarans that you know. It's always an enlightening and humbling experience when someone from the neighbourhood comes in and says something like "...and now I'm standing right where the produce used to be...". It makes you feel like an extension of something much larger than yourself.



6. Amy [08/18/2010 Reply](#)

The food is DELICIOUS every single time. It's fresh, creative and I always leave satisfied.

However, they also consistently deliver POOR customer service. The wait staff is aloof and not very welcoming. I always get the feeling I'm interrupting their day and they'd rather be doing something else. They're kind of snotty.

It takes a long time for meals to be served. That's what it takes to have a delicious, fresh meal. But be sure you plan at least 60 – 90 minutes for your experience here. See if you can get a server to smile.



7. eric hill [09/14/2012 Reply](#)

just wanted to know, is it possible to order the homemade bread that your chef makes. i live in raleigh nc.



8. [Kirk Bratrud 09/17/2012 Reply](#)

Yes, it is possible to order our homemade bread. It's best to give us a phone call as we do not have a secure internet site for processing credit cards. Our number is 218-724-6811. Thanks for your interest!



9. [John hamilton 02/24/2014 Reply](#)

We ate at your place on sat. We noticed you changed the menu. We liked the old one better. I ordered english muffin toast and received a english muffin. It wasn't worth saying any thing since we had waited 25 minutes for our food as it was. There we only 6 people in the place . My wife had a pancake and it was so small the waiter said we could get another for 5 dollars. We paid 40 dollars for breakfast and weren't full. My son always want's to eat there when he is up from Mpl. I'm sorry but it wasn't worth the 440 dollars. John

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[...] digging through book stores and secondhand stores. And I may just give the sustainability-focused Sara's Table a shot. Any other suggestions? This was written by Sharyn. Posted on Tuesday, April 27, 2010, [...]

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07/06/2010 at 4:14 AM

[...] eggs are used. There are no big signs marketing local or organic, but the restaurant competes with Chester Creek Cafe for the Duluth restaurant using the most local and organic ingredients. It has been a slow and [...]

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[...] and Dives on their last visit to Minnesota. The Minnesota tour included northern spots including At Sara's Table Chester Creek Cafe, Duluth Grill, Gordy's Hi-Hat, and Northern Waters Smokehaus. Twin Cities locations included [...]

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4. *Giving something back to Chester.* | *blinds chester blinds* says:
11/23/2011 at 5:40 PM

[...] please contact me directly on 07513 031602 or contact the office on 01244 630478
<http://www.devablind.co.uk> The people in and around Chester have been very good in supporting Deva blinds of Chester and...my home City and the City that I trade in. I want to help people that would not naturally pick up [...]

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5. *Sara's Table Chester Creek Cafe* | *Duluth Eats* says:
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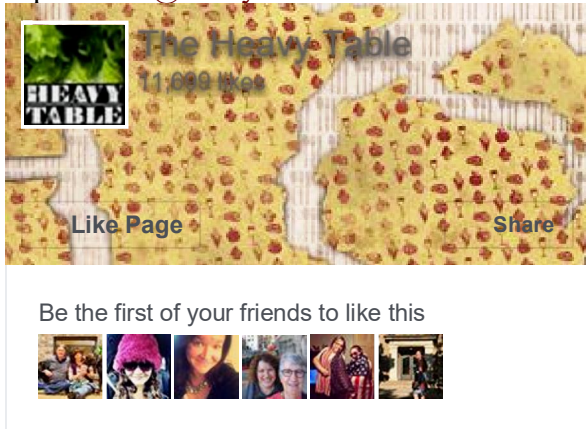
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