



Local Foods Grow on Menus

“Many restaurants are seeking to lower ‘food miles’ and offer fresher, more local food,” reports Michael Oshman, founder and CEO of the Green Restaurant Association, which certifies sustainably operated restaurants. The 500-plus restaurants certified since 1990 include university, government and corporate cafeterias.

The award-winning Uncommon Ground restaurant, in Chicago’s Edgewater neighborhood, maximizes the nation’s first certified organic rooftop farm using just 654 square feet of soil. Combined with its Wrigleyville restaurant’s “sidewalk farm”, client chefs receive 1,200 pounds of fresh produce each year, valued at more than \$5,600. Ingredients not grown onsite are sourced directly from

regional farms, with their names often appearing on the menu. Community education is also part of the program.

According to the “What’s Hot” National Restaurant Association nationwide survey of chefs, hyperlocal food sourcing, including rooftop farms, was the fifth-most-popular trend in 2011. Also in the top 10 were locally grown produce sourced from area farmers, farm-branded ingredients and sustainability.

“Customers now have an opportunity to demand local and organic ingredients as much as possible,” concludes Oshman. More Americans than ever want to know the origin of what’s on their plate.