

FROM THE KITCHEN

A PERFECT FIT

Local, healthy food creations
worth being worshipped at
Eco-Goddess Edibles

BY AMIEE WHITE BEAZLEY



Perhaps it was the chocolate cheesecake that really sealed the deal. After a lunch of delicately sweetened, fresh-squeezed lemonade and delicious line-caught salmon salad heaped atop locally made, organic, six-grain bread, it was the thick, rich chocolate dessert that made me a real believer in Eco-Goddess Edibles.

Chef Lisa Ruoff and her sister, gardener and co-proprietor Lynn Ruoff, are responsible for everything that is good and pure at Eco-Goddess Edibles, a new restaurant in Carbondale serving both lunch and dinner in a casual, intimate atmosphere.

"My focus is on good food and the environment in which it's prepared and grown," says Lisa, who is already well known throughout the Roaring Fork Valley for her personal chef and catering services. "I respect the land and then respect the food in preparing it. It's important that it tastes good and that it is done with love and intent and respect."

Eco-Goddess Edibles is the culmination of several years of work together and apart for the Ruoff sisters. Lisa came to Colorado 17 years ago to visit Lynn, who was living in the valley. She entered the restaurant business, first as a bartender, then a waitress, and eventually the front of the house in management. After seven years, she ventured to Alaska, where she opened her first restaurant and "taught myself the back of the house, in a panic situation." After years in the restaurant biz, stints at wilderness lodges in Alaska and other ventures, Lisa returned to the valley. Lynn had her time away from the valley, too, but also soon returned. "She followed *me* back this time," laughs Lisa.

Lisa's Eco-Goddess catering business took off two years after her return, mostly through referrals made by Lynn who was then working at Sustainable Settings gardening and selling vegetables. As the Eco-Goddess catering business expanded, Lisa set out to find a commercial kitchen and was met with a challenge.

"I started looking for a kitchen to rent and found nothing," says Lisa. "After we found and bought this space (on Dolores Way), we had originally planned for just a commercial kitchen. Then I said 'Why not do a little restaurant, too, and still do my catering?' [Lynn] and I decided to go into this together."

The space they found seems to be perfect for the Eco-Goddess operation. True to their eco-friendly roots, Lisa and Lynn built out their restaurant with reclaimed wood, natural materials and non-toxic paints. It's big enough to create a lively atmosphere, host private parties and continue the busy catering operation, but small enough to make those dining there feel like they've stumbled upon a great secret. Those fortunate diners can delight in crisp salads made with local greens, nibble on fresh bread dipped in smoked chevre and mozzarella cheeses or dig into an entrée of garlic sautéed shrimp over penne with peanut sauce, just to name a few of its satisfying dishes. Seating just 19 people, the bar and tables are full of those who are interested in great tasting food that is also good for their bodies and their environment, whether they know it or not.

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“Yes, I have egg salad and you’re still going to enjoy it because it tastes good,” says Lisa. “We are preparing really good food for people, which is not out of the ordinary. But ... I’m convinced the way the food is grown, and the intention in preparing it, makes a difference.”

When it comes to organic, sustainable and local foods, Lisa and Lynn are truly committed. The menu is mainly vegetarian with sustainable fish options, more than 95 percent organic, they use coffee from Carbondale source Back Alley, and they refuse to buy anything that contains GMOs (genetically modified organisms), down to the garnishes.

BALSAMIC KALE & PARMESAN SALAD

Courtesy of Lisa Ruoff, Eco-Goddess Edibles

6 cups kale, washed and cut into small pieces (organic and local, of course!)

½ - ¾ cup balsamic vinaigrette dressing, depending on personal taste

½ cup grated parmesan cheese (preferably non-GMO)

½ cup toasted walnuts optional

Toss the kale with balsamic dressing and refrigerate overnight. After marinated, toss the kale with the parmesan cheese and top with toasted walnuts. Serve with a dollop of loving intention.

“Our mission is to make a difference possible through organic and locally grown foods,” says Lisa. “There’s nothing here that’s not organic. And everything I try to source is organic. It’s how I eat and have been eating for a long time.”

Eco-Goddess’ sourcing includes items from Osage Gardens, Closer to Heaven Abundant Life Farms, Dava Parr and organic wines from Jack Rabbit Hill, among others. And this summer, Lisa and Lynn began sourcing their food from Eco’s own garden. Planted near the restaurant’s back door, the garden taps into Lynn’s master gardener know-how and supplies Eco-Goddess Edibles with organically and bio-dynamically farmed produce.

“We’ll be planting in accordance with what I think I will need—herbs, edible flowers, beets, carrots and lots of leafy greens,” says Lisa.

It’s been a long, strange trip to get to this point, but with Eco-Goddess Edibles, the Ruoffs seem to have found where they belong, with a mission that suits them both.

“We’re sisters so it’s really challenging sometimes,” says Lisa. “But we’ve been doing this for a long time. We both have the same passion and focus. Given the fact that Lynn is a really good gardener and I’ve been in the restaurant business, it is a perfect fit for us.”

For the rest of us, we’re just lucky to reap the benefits.

“Once people do find me they come back and bring people,” says Lisa. “They are proving to me [that our restaurant] is a good thing. People are really happy.” ☘

Eco-Goddess Edibles is open for lunch Tuesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and dinner Thursday and Friday, beginning at 5:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.eco-goddess.com.

VEGAN CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

Courtesy of Lisa Ruoff, Eco-Goddess Edibles

1 ½ cups chocolate chips (dark for vegans, semi-sweet or milk for others)

1 package tofu (soft and organic)

Dash of vanilla

Maple syrup or raspberry sauce optional

Heat chocolate chips on double boiler until melted. Mix tofu in food processor or blender and then slowly add in the melted chocolate. Finish with blending in vanilla and syrup or raspberry sauce. Refrigerate in individual cups for at least a few hours before serving.

Amiee White Beazley is the editor of edibleASPEN and a huge fan of food that doesn’t taste like it’s good for you. Amiee would love to know your thoughts on this story and others in edibleASPEN. Email her at editor@edibleaspen.com.