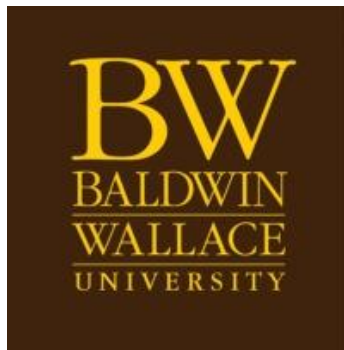


Northeast Ohio Farm to Table Restaurant Analysis

6 December 2016

Baldwin Wallace University

Berea, Ohio



Prepared By

Dr. Krueger's Fall 2016 Green Business Class

Table of Contents

1. Acknowledgments	3
2. Special Thanks	4
3. Introduction	6
4. Inspiration and Purpose of Project	8
5. Method	
a. Steps of Analysis	10
6. Results	
a. Score Card	17
b. Score Card Results	19
c. Explanation of Results	20
7. Northeast Ohio Top 10 Farm to Table Restaurants	22
8. Problems Encountered	33
9. Final Conclusions/Reflections/Recommendations	34

Acknowledgments

Inspiration

Laura Reiley, food critic, Tampa Bay Times

Introduction/Conclusion

Sarah Doppelheuer

Data Analysis

Taylor Kozak

General Editor

Sarah Doppelheuer

PowerPoint

Alexandria Eging, Jonathan Mays, David Tatarowicz

Instructor

Dr. David Krueger



On-site garden at Fat Cat's

Special Thanks

Our Green Business class would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our farm to table report on Northeast Ohio are restaurants. We acknowledge the following individuals who graciously worked with us: Laura Riley, food critic from Tampa Bay Times; employees, owners, and chefs of our project restaurants who provided information throughout our food project; owners and managers of many local farms and vendors who source these restaurants; Dr. Krueger; and our Green Business Class. These contributions made our project possible; we appreciate their time, research, and cooperation that serves not only our own student learning,

but equally importantly the citizenry of Northeast Ohio
that seeks to advance the cause of credible farm to table
best practices for restaurants in our region.

Introduction

Baldwin Wallace University commits its campus, community, and world to identify successful practices that focus on the triple bottom line: people, planet, and profits. The farm to table movement in our Northeast Ohio region is part of a larger local and regional movement to promote and expand local food production. It also mirrors a nation-wide trend that embraces such things as local food production, the growth of organic farming, a commitment to healthy nutrition, and the larger adaption of sustainable practices that embody a “triple bottom line” philosophy of “people, planet, and profits.”

The United States imports approximately 15 percent of our food supply including 50 percent of fresh fruits, 20 percent of fresh vegetables, and 80 percent of seafood.¹ It is estimated that

¹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/international-markets-trade/us-agricultural-trade/import-share-of-consumption.aspx>

an average meal in the United States travels approximately 1500 miles to get from farm to plate. This compares to having “farm to table” food that travels shorter distances before reaching the consumer’s plate.

With respect to the restaurant sector, a localized food system promotes and generates many benefits that include: healthy, fresh, flavorful food that is consumed closer to harvest or slaughter, the direct support of more local economies, reduced transportation footprints for food, the promotion of local pride and sense of place. In areas such as Northeast Ohio where seasonal production is limited by climate, this can be a challenge. Farm to table restaurants here must adapt to the off season and have seasonal menus as well as reliable local suppliers who can provide products to them during limited growing seasons.

Inspiration and Purpose of Project

Our project was inspired by Tampa Bay Times food critic Laura Reiley, who conducted her own deep, extensive exploration of Tampa Bay area restaurants which were making “farm to table” claims (Reiley)². She conducted an extensive, several month analysis of 239 restaurants still in business, 54 were making claims about the provenance of their ingredients. Her analysis generated significant and troubling findings that included numerous instances of outright fraud and deception with respect to restaurants’ claims to be sourcing their ingredients from local suppliers. Through DNA testing, she also found many instances of fraudulent claims with respect especially to animal based protein items (e.g., beef, fish) on

² <http://www.tampabay.com/projects/2016/food/farm-to-fable/restaurants/>

some menus. Many items on menus were not what the restaurants claimed.

We wanted to do a similar study to see how the Northeast Ohio area compared to the farm to table claims many of Tampa Bay area restaurants made. Our goal was to not to uncover and expose fraudulent offenders or “green washers”, but to identify Northeast Ohio’s “top performer” restaurants, especially with respect to the credibility of their farm to table claims as well as other sustainability practices.

Method

Steps of Analysis

Our first step was to identify what restaurants to study. We chose as the basis of our study Cleveland.com's "100 best restaurants in Greater Cleveland: The complete 2016 A-List"³. Using this list as a base we also added a few others to analyze that were well known in the Northeast Ohio area as "farm to table" oriented. As a result, we began with a universe of 107 Restaurants. From this list, we eliminated a handful of restaurants located further away from Berea (e.g., far eastern suburbs of Cleveland, Akron/Canton restaurants) to make our analysis more manageable for our small class size. This

³

(http://www.cleveland.com/toprestaurants/index.ssf/2016/06/clevelands_top_100_restaurants_the_complete_2016_a-list_photos.html)

shrinkage reduced our number of possible target restaurants to 99.

Consistent with Laura Reiley’s process in the Tampa Bay area, the second step of our analysis was to review each restaurant’s website and menu to identify those that made any mention of “local”, “farm to table”, or sustainability claims. This might have included a listing of any local sources of food products, or even simply a mention/claim of “local foods”. This took us down to 37 restaurants that made some sort of online claims.

- Amp 150
- Bar Centro
- Bistro 185
- Blue Door Café
- Bruno's Ristorante
- Butcher & Brewer
- Cabin Club Steakhouse
- Chowder House Café
- Cibreo Italian Kitchen
- Cork & Cleaver Social Kitchen
- Crop
- Dante Next Door
- Fat Cats
- Flying Fig

- Forage Public House
- Great Lakes Brewing Company
- Greenhouse Tavern
- La Campagna
- Lucky's Café
- Luxe
- Morton's
- Noodlecat
- Puravida
- Soho Kitchen & Bar
- Spice
- Table 45
- The Black Pig
- The Rail
- The Root Café
- Toast
- Townhall
- Treehuggers Café
- Trentina
- Urban Farmer Steakhouse
- Vero Pizza Napoletana
- Washington Place
- Willeyville

Our third step was to allocate these restaurants among students and instructor for unannounced on-site visits by one of us. Our minimal goal of each visit was to collect current menus (either hard copy or digital photo) as well as a digital photo of any daily information about menu items (e.g., “chalk board” information about daily specials). Our second purpose, if

possible, was to obtain contact information for a person at the restaurant with whom we might be able to contact for follow-up information.

When doing our initial restaurant visits, it was often challenging to establish rapport and get the contact information we were looking for. Some restaurants we encountered were very open and willing when asked to give information. Many staff members were very knowledgeable regarding their restaurant's aspirations for "local", "farm to table", and sustainability. Others however, were hesitant either due to inability to answer questions or being unsure if they were allowed to give out such information. When it came to direct contact phone numbers needed we were sometimes given the run around and had to call numbers that were not a direct link to the person needed.

Our fourth step was to engage in follow up phone calls with the contacts we had received at each restaurant in order to try to fact check information we had found on websites and menus. We followed up by asking questions in regards to the claims the restaurants had made on their menus and websites. Also, we attempted to verify any information received from our site visits. We also asked for names of their local suppliers and farms.

The fifth step was to call farms and local sources the restaurants claimed to use to try to verify that such supply chain relationships existed and that the restaurants actually were procuring the items that they claimed. Concurrent to this “fact-checking” process, we developed a comprehensive scorecard that would allow us to provide numeric scores with respect to various practices. See scorecard here:

RESTAURANT NAME:					
Student Name:					
Scorecard					
LOCAL SOURCING					
	No [0]	Partially [1]	(Nearly) Fully [2]		
a. Disclosure (does restaurant/intermediary disclose names of local farms?)					2
b. Disclosure (does restaurant/intermediary identify exact locally sources items?)					2
c. Verifiability (are you able to verify restaurant sourcing claims with the source?)					2
	Multiple Instances [-3]	Some Instances [-2]	One Instance [-1]	No Deception [0]	
d. Deception (do you find blatantly false information at the source within the last 12 months?)					0
	Continued Denial [-1]	No Response [0]	Acknowledgement, Correction [1]		
e. Restaurant follow-up (if deception, what is the restaurant's response?)					1
	False Information [-1]	None [0]	Some, but not much [1]	Much [2]	
f. Customer information on website (does restaurant communicate local sourcing info on website?)					2
g. Customer information on menu (does restaurant communicate local sourcing info on website?)					2
	No or Vague Definition [0]	Broad Definition [1]	Definition NE focused [2]		
h. Define "local"?					2

	Less than 10%, mostly/only seasonal [1]	11-25% [2]	26-50% [3]	51% or more, more than 1 season [4]	
i. volume of locally sourced items					4
	None [0]	Some, but not much [1]	Much [2]		
j. organics (does restaurant label organic items on menu?)					2
OTHER PRACTICES					
	None [0]	Only one or two [1]	Many [2]		
a. On-site practices (e.g., butchering, milling, baking)					2
	No [0]	Small/Med. [1]	Large [2]		
b. restaurant-owned agricultural production (does restaurant have its own farm or garden?)					2
	No [0]	Yes [1]			
c. composting (either on-site or third party)					1
	No [0]	Some [1]	Multiple Items (e.g., mixed recycling, paper, cardboard) [2]		
d. recycling					2
	No [0]	Yes [1]			
e. GMOs (does restaurant feature any non-GMO items?)					1
f. ethical methods (does restaurant feature any other ethical sourcing practices, e.g., fair trade)					1
g. Sustainable building practices (e.g., energy efficient lighting, HVAC, green power, etc)					1

POINTS EARNED: 0
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS: 29

Results

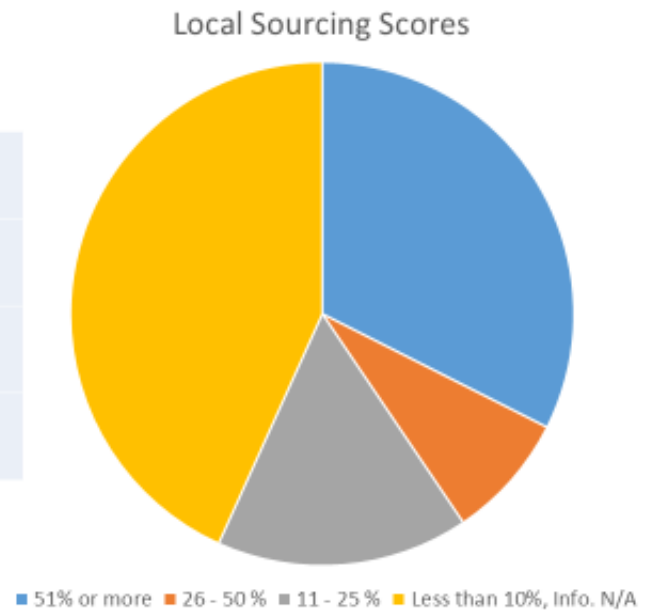
Scorecard

As can be seen, the scorecard is divided into two sections: local sourcing and other sustainability-related practices. Local sourcing starts with three questions regarding disclosure and the verifiability of local sourcing at the restaurant. Next is a question where the restaurant could lose points if they were initially deceptive, but could regain points if they later acknowledged and/or addressed the problem. Next are two questions regarding if the restaurants posted information on local sourcing on their website and their menus. Next was a question asking how the restaurant defined local and how much of their food supply was local.

Volume of Locally Sourced Items

Out of the 37 Restaurants:

51% or more	12
26-50%	3
11-25%	6
Less than 10% / Info. N/A	16



The results from question of the restaurants volume of locally sourced items.

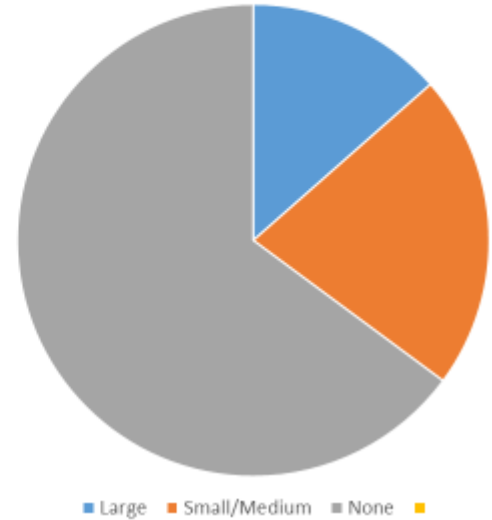
We also included a question asking whether they promote organic items. Other sourcing questions focused on on-site food production, restaurant owned farms or gardens, composting, recycling, GMO usage, ethical methods, and sustainable practices.

Restaurant-Owned Agricultural Production

Restaurant-Owned Farm/Garden Scores

Out of the 37 Restaurants:

Large Farm	5
Small/Medium Garden	8
No Farm/Garden	24



Result of number of restaurants that have a form of owned agricultural production such as farms, or gardens

In sum, this scorecard provided a comprehensive basis upon which to rate each restaurant's performance relative to others.

Scorecard Results

The results of the scorecard ranked all 37 restaurants. We then developed a "top ten" list which we have labeled as

“Northeast Ohio’s Top 10 Farm to Table Restaurants. Below is a comprehensive scoring of all 37 restaurants, with identification of our top 10.



Explanation of Results

During the collection of data, we experienced substantially different levels of response and cooperation from restaurant to restaurant. On the one hand, we had many very positive experiences where information was provided with great

transparency and willingness. However, we also encountered many restaurants which either ignored our many attempts at follow-up information or which had limited information to provide. These cases obviously resulted in lower scores. We can only speculate on the various reasons for this lack of responsiveness (possible deception, possible exaggeration of claims, lack of strong interest in the movement, lack of interest in our project). Notable, though, were a handful of restaurants which have well-known reputations in this movement but which remained unresponsive. The results appear to be almost “bi-polar”, since our restaurants tend to fall either on the high or low sides of the scale and not in between. This is because generally, when a restaurant was willing to share information they would give a great deal, probably because they knew what they were saying was credible and honest. In cases where the person was unsure or uncomfortable disclosing this information, they were

likely to shut down and limit information. As a result, we had many lower scores because of lack of information on critical categories.

The Northeast Ohio Top 10 Farm to Table Restaurants

We now highlight some exemplary practices of our top ten restaurants.



1. Treehuggers Café

Treehuggers Café located in Berea, is filled with staff open and inviting in sharing all information about their farm to table and sustainable practices. A chalk board lists places from which they source, stretching from Vitamix to local farms and free trade coffee companies. <http://www.treehuggerscafe.com/>



1. Great Lakes Brewing Company Brew Pub

Great Lakes Brewing Company's Brew Pub is located in Ohio City. They are firmly convinced there need be no trade-off between sustainable practices and profitability. They seek to partner with companies who share their values of environmental conservation, human rights, local sourcing, and community building. <https://www.greatlakesbrewing.com/brewpub>



3. Spice Kitchen & Bar

Spice Kitchen, located in Cleveland's Gordon Square District, rotates their menu on a normal basis for year-round seasonality. Their menu changes each week. They have their own farm, Spice Acres, located offsite from Spice Kitchen. Staff were highly knowledgeable on the overall goals of the restaurant, including their local sourcing.

<http://spicekitchenandbar.com/>



3. Butcher & The Brewer

Butcher and the Brewer in Cleveland on East 4th Street, illustrates many exemplary practices. They claim to be 90% or higher for locally sourced food. An on-site butcher handles all locally sourced meats. Virtually all furniture and fixtures are from re-purposed materials, often consisting of discarded materials from local farms.

<http://www.butcherandthebrewer.com/>



5. Flying Fig

The Flying Fig, in Ohio City, has their own market connected to their restaurant. They utilize an extensive network of local farms and businesses listed directly on their menu. Their owner/chef is highly knowledgeable about their many practices.

<http://www.theflyingfig.com/>



5. Toast

Toast, located in Cleveland's Gordon Square District, changes its seasonal menu frequently. Local farms used are listed directly on their menus. Down the street is their own small plot of land where they grow vegetables and fruits. As do several other restaurants, they recycle many waste items. Notable and clever was their use of old menus as covers or holders for the patron's bill and receipt.

<http://www.toastcleveland.com/>



7. Urban Farmer Steakhouse

Located in downtown Cleveland adjacent to the Weston Hotel, Urban Farmer Steakhouse devotes an entire page on its website to over a dozen local partners, including many local farms, with active links to those entities and organizations. (One notes the on-going challenge to update these links, as a couple were dead or non-existent.) They understand the concept of "full circle" or "closed loop" repurposing of waste, including making restaurant candles from beef fat and soups from meat bones. Future aspirations include on-site agriculture and expanded composting. <http://urbanfarmercleveland.com/>



8. Fat Cats

Located in Cleveland near Tremont, Fat Cats' owner lives and breathes locally sourced items and has his own garden and compost behind the building. They constantly change their menu based on what is available seasonally.

<http://www.coolplacesto eat.com/>



8. The Black Pig

The Black Pig, located in Ohio City, has their own small garden (8 herb beds) at the chef's house. This restaurant, like a number of others on our list, makes almost everything from scratch, except their bread. Coffee is purchased locally as well.

<http://www.blackpigcle.com/>



10. Forage Public House

Forage Public House in Lakewood, has a very knowledgable chef able to provide much relevant information. They do much recycling, including glass, cardboard, and aluminum. Their menu is considered seasonal sustainable New American fare. <http://foragepublichouse.com/>

Problems Encountered

Throughout our study, we encountered various problems, which included:

Unresponsive restaurants: Many of us experienced difficulty having calls returned. Staff members were often not aware of management's intentions to be local. It did appear however that most of the top performers had staff that was extremely knowledgeable of the restaurant's many local and sustainable practices.

Farms/Vendors: Farmers were sometimes difficult to contact but once contact was made, they were generally extremely knowledgeable regarding whom they supply and their industry in general. Most spoke optimistically about the growth prospects for their local food production industry generally, especially with respect to growth prospects with more local restaurants.

Final Conclusions/ Reflections/ Recommendations

With regard to the results of our analysis, we note one substantial difference from Laura Reiley's extensive analysis of Tampa Bay area restaurants. Where her study found extensive examples of blatant deception or at least questionable or inflated claims, we found very few. While this constitutes a notable difference from restaurants in the Tampa Bay area, we also acknowledge that hidden deception might be the case with some restaurants that did not score high in our analysis. If there were deception, it might be found within restaurants that were unresponsive to our follow-up efforts. Nevertheless, this is only speculation on our part, without verification.

We conclude that our high scoring Northeast Ohio area restaurants were honest when it comes to their local, farm to table, and sustainability practices. Extensive fact-checking verified their claims.

We offer the following concluding observations regarding generic “best practices” among our top restaurants:

1. Most tend to have an “internal champion” who carries the torch for their many efforts.

2. Most have ingrained “farm to table” and sustainable practices deeply within the culture of the organization, as evidenced by staff persons who are highly knowledgeable and can communicate this information easily to their customers.

3. Most, but not all, communicate their practices extensively on their websites, and some on their menus.

4. All have extensive and well-nurtured relationships with their local suppliers, some bringing this connection in-house with their own agricultural efforts.

5. Most see other sustainable practices (e.g., recycling, composting, energy efficiency, repurposed furniture) as extensions of their commitment to farm to table practices.

Finally, we offer some observations and recommendations for “growing this movement” more broadly among restaurants in our region:

1. Success requires commitment at the top. The owner/chef/general manager needs to be on board, committed to the extensive effort to generate positive results appreciated by customers.

2. Developing and maintaining relationships with local suppliers requires much work and patience, and realization that these relationships may continuously change.

3. Northeast Ohio is fortunate to have an extensive, and growing “supply chain” of local producers ready to work with local restaurants as key customers. This was especially strong with respect to animal proteins.

4. A number of challenges remain, including generally higher price points for local sourcing, and underdeveloped networks and infrastructures for some sustainable practices, most notably with recycling and composting or re-purposing of food waste. Clearly, most restaurant consumers probably do not care much about how their food is sourced or whether a restaurant has on-site sustainable practices.

We hope that our study can enlighten individuals and organizations in the region on the importance of “supporting local” and supporting restaurants who support local. We hope that this study, in its own modest ways, might help to grow the movement, not only with respect to restaurants, but also

regarding larger efforts to encourage healthy nutrition,
sustainable agriculture, and the strengthening of our local
economy.