

Making farm-to-plate a short trip

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While Hudson Valley residents often read of the variety of delicious crops growing in the region, the opportunity to sample them is becoming more and more prevalent.

Like some other local restaurants, Valley at the Garrison is utilizing local ingredients in its dishes, and is even dedicating one night of the week to spotlighting them.

The restaurant on Route 9 in Garrison debuted its "Eat Local" menu March 27. The meals will be featured each Thursday throughout the summer.

As part of the concept, the chefs will create a three-course menu that is built around one seasonal ingredient sourced from one or more regional farms. Their first Eat Local menu is an ode to mushrooms, sourced from Wiltbank Farms in Saugerties.

The dishes will be created by Valley at the Garrison co-chefs Brandon Collins and Vinny MocarSKI, along with pastry chef Laura Digiorno.

"When we all sat down to discuss Valley's menus for the 2008 season, the three of us wanted to offer a weeknight menu for the community that showed our deepened commitment to support local farms and their products," said Collins. "This seemed like the perfect idea."

The idea was initially conceived by Digiorno after eating a meal where the chef featured one ingredient prominently throughout each course, including dessert.

"It really works with our philosophy to show our commitment to support farms and it's a great creative challenge for all three of us each week to create a different menu," she said.

The restaurant will be using ingredients grown mostly at Hudson Valley farms for its weekly spotlight, including the Garrison Farm, which is on the restaurant's property. However, the restaurant would consider augmenting its fare with goods from farms in western New York or Vermont.

"I grew up locally and know a lot of local farms that are producing beautiful products and our team wants to be able to showcase that to our customers," said MocarSKI.

In addition to simply using locally grown products in its meals, the restaurant will seek to "push the creative envelope" a bit in creating the dishes, said Collins.

He said one goal is for the chefs "to show our guests different ways to prepare a product than they would typically do at home."

Eat Local is the only menu that will be offered at Valley on Thursdays. The price for the menu is \$40 per person, without tax and gratuity.

Valley's Eat Local menu will be posted on The Garrison Web site each week: www.thegarrison.com.