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Story – Draft

Fresh in the West

With a desire to challenge the dominance of national-chain restaurants in Lubbock, Cameron and Rachel West set their sights on creating the first farm-to-table restaurant in Lubbock. Hence, a new restaurant was born. The West Table fulfilled not only their dream, but their calling.

With more than 20 years of restaurant experience between them and a second child on the way, Cameron and Rachel knew it was time to take a leap of faith. They both come from backgrounds where agriculture and fine dining played key roles.

“I think we are doing a disservice to our population by letting major restaurant chains take over,” Cameron said. “We need to keep the ‘mom and pop’ shops.”

Cameron, whose grandfather worked as a farmer his entire life, said he has an appreciation and high level of respect for the efforts of producers in his local area. With this in mind, he put his culinary talents to work and opened The West Table with his wife, Rachel in October of 2014.

As a native of Lubbock and the descendant of famous cartoonist Dirk West, the inventor of Raider Red and a former Lubbock Mayor, Cameron knew Lubbock would feel like home. Rachel joined her husband’s adoration for Lubbock and for the community.

“He’s a hometown boy,” Rachel said. “I’m familiar with Lubbock as well; it’s actually where Cameron and I met.”

Not only did their roots play a key role in their choosing of Lubbock, but their dedication to creating what they see as the ideal restaurant, one which works alongside agricultural

producers, motivated them to work in agriculture-driven communities. Cameron and Rachel believe strongly that food is not being consumed the way it should be anymore.

The West Table is serving as an experiment from their perspective. To their knowledge, there are no other establishments in Lubbock working as closely with producers as they are. This includes ordering beef from an operation in Wolforth, Texas known as Holy Cow Beef. According to Cameron, Holy Cow Beef process under ten head of cattle per week, making the product more fresh and high quality in his opinion.

“Why fight flavor profiles when you can just get the best product that is out there?” Cameron said emphatically. “If the producers do the job on their side, I don’t have to do anything on mine.”

As head chef of The West Table, Cameron said he believes that their operation falls under the category of farm-to-table. According to The Gasoline Alley Foundation, Farm to Table is the concept of connecting communities to local farmers in order to make healthy food more accessible to more people.

Cameron said he believes that doing so also helps to establish better relationships with customers. Many of whom he said are more than willing to pay \$5 extra for a locally-sourced cut of beef.

“We try to get the best quality products so we aren’t having to do a lot to improve upon it,” Rachel said. “We have found in Lubbock, people appreciate that; they get as excited about it as much as we do.”

According to Rachel, who in addition to co-owner, also serves as manager for The West Table, said they sold out of beef within three days of serving Holy Cow Beef products. Cameron

and Rachel believe there is a market in the Lubbock area which wants a stronger connection to their food and they believe The West Table can provide that.

In addition to beef, The West Table also serves locally sourced vegetables and fish products delivered from fishermen in less than 24 hours. Prominent products on the menu include salmon, pork chops and vegetarian curry. When it comes to what their customer wants, Rachel believes that everyone should be included, such as vegetarians and vegans.

Inside the 'about us' section of The West Table's official website there is a strong emphasis on seasonal foods and varying menu options. Cameron and Rachel believe that the way food should be eaten is when it is ripe and ready for harvest after the growing season.

"It's about the way we are supposed to eat," Rachel said. "You're supposed to eat seasonally with what's grown; you're not supposed to eat frozen and processed foods year round."

If a fruit crop such as blueberries has a bad year and The West Table is unable to get it locally, instead of shipping and processing them from far away regions, Rachel said they will alter the menu to what they have available and what is in season locally. She believes that working with the farmers is important for understanding the value of their products and building relationships with the individuals that provide them with those products.

"If your local farmer gets a crop of black eyed peas, but his potatoes were bad, we will work with what we can get," Rachel said. "People are used to getting the same dish every night, all year."

Cameron and Rachel want to not only change the way that food is consumed, but the quality that comes with it. They believe that the best products will always come directly from the producers who dedicate themselves to making it.

- Possible Pull Quote:

“It’s about the way we are supposed to eat,”

- Sources:

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