

FOOD & BEVERAGE

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EPICUREAN GROUP

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OFFERING SUSTAINABLE, FARM-TO-TABLE DINING TO CORPORATE AND INSTITUTIONAL CLIENTS ACROSS NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND BEYOND

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In the crowded and fragmented food-service industry, many companies find it hard to differentiate their services. Epicurean Group has done just that through its unique business model.

Founded in 2003, Epicurean Group specializes in providing sustainable and locally sourced meals to corporate, government and academic campuses and fine arts facilities throughout northern California. Located in the corporation-dense Bay Area with headquarters in Los Altos, California, Epicurean Group serves more than 50 customers with an experienced staff of more than 450. The company has recently expanded into the Oklahoma City marketplace.

A UNIQUE BUSINESS MODEL

Epicurean Group's roster of clients includes many of Silicon Valley's leading corporations. "There is an increasing demand, even in corporations, for local and sustainable food," says Mary Clark Bartlett, founder and CEO of Epicurean Group.

"People are starting to understand that not everyone does what we do," she adds. "We have a unique business model – we work with the community to source as much as we can locally."





"WHEN IT'S IN SEASON, IT ALWAYS TASTES MORE DELICIOUS. AND, BECAUSE THE SUPPLY IS THERE, THE PRICE IS LOWER"

- MARY CLARK BARTLETT, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF EPICUREAN GROUP

That sourcing process begins with finding producers within a 150-mile radius of each dining facility operated by Epicurean Group. While it can often be a challenge to accommodate specific client requests, the geographically limited sourcing model helps to ensure quality, price and sustainability.

The model also guarantees that Epicurean Group customers get their pick of the freshest in-season produce. "When it's in season, it always tastes more delicious. And because the supply is there, the price is lower," Clark Bartlett says.

The Arcade Café in downtown Santa Clara is one of Epicurean Group's recent partnerships. Opened in June 2014 and located in a multitenant office complex, the spacious facility is open for breakfast, lunch and special events, offering true farm-to-table cuisine in a relaxed atmosphere. Like all Epicurean Group chefs, chef Anthony Kresge changes the café's menu daily based on whatever is fresh and in-season and he avoids processed or canned ingredients.

Although it produces many of its own items from scratch, including kale chips and granola bars, the company is always on the hunt for new partners — artisanal producers like bakers and cheesemakers — that can help Epicurean Group deliver the highest quality product to clients. While there are many artisanal food producers throughout northern California, Epicurean Group's challenge is to find those who match their own high standards, eschewing artificial flavoring, coloring and preservatives in favor of healthy options like honey and agave, as well as limiting sodium, fat and fiber content.



“BIG ENOUGH TO GIVE THE BIG BOYS A RUN AND SMALL ENOUGH TO CARE”

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Epicurean Group and Galli Produce Company Inc.

The statement, *“big enough to give the big boys a run and small enough to care”* that is not a catch phrase by any means with either one of our companies but I think it speaks the truth.

Where corporate dining has been, and where it is now, allows the national based companies to absorb the once private local companies, and all the decisions are made across the mahogany desks in Philadelphia, Chicago and Europe. Many decisions from that group are often incorrect, insufficient or just too slow. Being a closely held company allows a fluidity and agility that has served both our companies well.

Mary and her group have seen firsthand the potential for mediocrity in quality and service that develops when so many are serviced by only a couple of big box providers. That, in my opinion, is precisely why Epicurean Group has flourished. It is by no means the only reason for their success, but again, in my opinion, a cog in the wheel nonetheless.

In the realm of the Greater Bay Area corporate dining circle of talent, so many of the operators on all levels in EG's family we remember from years past. These men and women who were in food service with other corporate dining providers have migrated to their new home loaded with experience.

As a supplier to food service industry in the Bay Area since its inception in the late 70s, Galli Produce has been part of the fabric in regards to product expansion and development. Even more refreshing is having an open line of communication with Mary, Rey Hernandez, Marvin and all the DMs.

Our emphasis on local sourcing alongside Epicurean Group is key.

A large part of food service still must have a meat and potatoes component and always will. Keeping on top of new ideas or trends, new product lines from cuisine around the world has Galli Produce always moving forward with Epicurean Group.

By Jeff Pieracci
Galli Produce Company Inc.



**Galli**
P R O D U C E

Distributor to the Food Service Industry



GOING GREENER

Epicurean Group also has found a niche on college campuses, where students are demanding healthier, more sustainable dining options. A recent study by the Partnership for a Healthier America found that nearly 20 percent of high school students would be likely or extremely likely to apply to colleges based on the school's health and wellness offerings.

The finding is especially pronounced among female students, over half of whom described healthy food options at on-campus dining facilities as "absolutely essential or very important" when it came to deciding on a school.

These findings give the Epicurean Group team confidence that they are miles ahead on what will soon become sea change in dining. "We believe that savvy millennials are going to drive the change in the food industry," says Clark Bartlett.

While students tend to be on the forefront of new trends in health and sustainability, Epicurean Group is working to educate all its customers on the benefits of its offerings through its Go Greener! campaign.

Created in 2013 by Epicurean Group vice president of communications, Peg Champion, and launched in more than 30 Epicurean Group restaurants and cafes, the program seeks to educate patrons on the benefits of healthy, sustainable food through humorous tips. Tips include "Kick The Can," which encourages consumers to use reusable drinking vessels as a means of eliminating waste.

"The campaign explains what our customers can do at work and at home to eat sustainably and healthfully through a rotating series of tips posted in all our cafes," says Clark Bartlett.

As an active business member of the growing Slow Food movement, Clark Bartlett was a U.S. delegate to the Slow Food International Conference, Terra Madre, in Turin, Italy. A global grassroots organization, Slow Food promotes biodiversity, the preservation of regional cuisine, and sustainable farming and sourcing practices. With more than 150 countries represented at the conference and at Salone del Gusto, the concurrent food and wine fair, Clark Bartlett was able to sample some of the world's best regional foods. "These heritage foods and historical preparation techniques are steeped in tradition," says Clark Bartlett. "They are delicious alternatives to the industrial food that's found in the U.S."

OLD-WORLD TRADITIONS MEET NEW IDEAS

Clark Bartlett was trained as a chef before switching gears and graduating with a degree in economics from the University of San Francisco and completing Stanford University's Graduate School of Business Leadership Program. Salone del Gusto provided a chance for Clark Bartlett to dive back into the world of classic European cuisine that first sparked her passion in food. "I now plan travel each year to the French and Italian countryside to study and really experience the food," she says.

In Clark Bartlett's opinion, Americans have a lot to learn from Europe when it comes to sustainability and sourcing. "Genetically modified (GMO) foods are illegal in France and Italy, but people in the U.S. are just starting to realize all the issues that come from GMO and processed foods," she says.

Clark Bartlett believes educating the consumer on the benefits of a Slow Food diet will go a long way toward increasingly overall community health. "The more demand we have for better food, the greater the supply and, eventually, the lower the cost," she explains.

Back home in Silicon Valley, Clark Bartlett established the GreenTown Co-op, supplying compostable takeout containers at a discount to Bay Area restaurants as part of a larger statewide waste reduction effort. "Eliminating non-compostable plastic and food waste are both important parts of our resource conservation and waste reduction programs," Clark Bartlett says. Since the start of the co-op in 2010, Epicurean Group has helped divert an estimated 147 tons of waste from Bay Area landfills.

In October, Epicurean Group sponsored the second annual GreenTown Los Altos Farm-to-Table Dinner, raising nearly \$30,000 to help support the nonprofit. The company followed up the GreenTown benefit days later with another charity effort, sponsoring the Taste of Santa Clara Valley, a benefit for San Jose's Community Alliance for Family Farmers (CAFF).

"Family farms and the whole farm-to-table



movement are important to us, because we believe we should be eating like our grandparents did,” says Clark Bartlett. “Epicurean Group supports and promotes family farms and the Slow Food movement.”

As the company grows beyond the northern California market, Epicurean Group continues to make slow, sustainable food the backbone of its business. “Epicurean Group is more than a company; it’s part of a movement to create a new, sustainable food system — one that provides food that’s good for our bodies and good for the environment,” Clark Bartlett says. •

