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What's Cooking?

By Rona Berg



The LEED of Fine Dining

Sustainable building has LEED certification. Organic bedding has the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS). Personal-care products can get certified by USDA, EcoCert, Na True, among others. And now, fine dining has SPE, a new certification program for restaurants that qualify by offering “nutritious and delicious” meals, says David M. Eisenberg, MD, Associate Professor of Nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health, and advisor to SPE.

SPE stands for “Sanitas Per Escam” or “health through food.” Founded by restaurateur Emmanuel Verstraeten in Brussels, SPE made its debut in the US at Rouge Tomate (rougetomatenyc.com), a Michelin-starred restaurant in midtown Manhattan. “SPE builds a bridge between nutrition and the culinary worlds,” Verstraeten says. SPE executive chef Anthony Moraes and culinary nutritionist Natalia Hancock, R.D. (pictured above), consult with chefs to create recipes that are nutrient-rich, seasonal and locally sourced. Similar to LEED, restaurants can choose from four levels of certification: certified, silver, gold and platinum.

It's a great idea and certainly timely. According to a new study by the Rand Corp., about two-thirds of Americans are either overweight or obese. By 2030, experts predict, one out of two Americans will be obese. And, the average American eats five meals per week in a restaurant. So

it makes good sense that there is now a certification system in place to help us make healthier dining choices.

SPE put together a high-powered committee of scientists and health experts from Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition, Baylor College of Medicine, and the Harvard School of Public Health to “build a better future by bringing together, science, sustainability, and great food,” says Dr. Eisenberg.

In addition to Rouge Tomate, the SPE-certified roster includes top restaurants like Seasonal, in NYC; The Living Room at the Maidstone in East Hampton; La Becasse in Maple City, MI, and more. Wouldn't you love to see SPE on the spa restaurant menu, too? SPEcertified.com



Above: Brook troute a la plancha from the Rouge Tomate Restaurant in New York City.



Healthier Indulgences

This is the time of year when we all indulge those comfort-food and drink cravings, but why not look for healthier versions that don't sacrifice flavor? Here are some of our favorites. Enjoy them all year long!

GRANOLA. Everyone loves granola, which should be healthy, but too often is not. That's why certified holistic nutrition counselor Elizabeth Stein created Purely Elizabeth granola. Organic and gluten-free, it is sweetened with unrefined low-glycemic coconut palm sugar and loaded with super-grains like amaranth, chia, and quinoa. Yum! purelyelizabeth.com



CARAMELS These little sweeties substitute organic tapioca syrup for high-fructose corn syrup. They are insanely delicious and come with some tasty messages wrapped around each piece, from Willa Cather (“Where there is great love, there are always miracles”) to Nelson Mandela (“It always seems impossible until it's done). Sweet! goodkarmal.com

COFFEE When the founder is Bob Marley's son, it already attracts a lot of attention. But there is more to this story. Rohan Marley owns the first farm in Jamaica to be certified organic. Marley Coffee is grown and harvested locally, and, according to CEO Brent Toews:

“Our commitment to Rohan and Jamaica is that we leave all the work there, and keep it local!” From Ethiopian Yirgacheffe blends to luxurious Blue Mountain, it's delicious. Stir it up! marleycoffee.com

