



From Farm to Vending Machine

Vending machines typically have been affiliated with junk food, but a Chicago-based entrepreneur hopes to change that image with automated, refrigerated kiosks that contain healthy food.

The company's first kiosk, called Farmer's Fridge, just opened at Garvey Food Court, 201 N. Clark St., Chicago. Additional locations are scheduled to roll out in the Chicagoland area this fall.

Menu items, including gourmet salads, breakfast items and snacks, are made fresh each morning and delivered by 10 a.m. to an automated kiosk. The meals are packaged in recyclable plastic jars. The company said it follows Environmental Working Group guidelines for using organic ingredients, and buys from local farms when possible.

Wrapped in reclaimed barn wood, Farmer's Fridge kiosks aren't just any old vending machine. They feature a touch-screen design, as well as an on-site recycling bin for empty plastic salad containers.

The company also provides catering to businesses in the Chicago Loop area. Salads start at \$7.99 with a weekly special "Jar Du Jour" for \$6.99. All salads can be paired with proteins for \$2 and salmon for \$4. Snacks are \$3.

Farmer's Fridge selections are composed of high-quality, nutrient-dense ingredients selected to provide the whole grains, fruits, vegetables, quality proteins and healthy fats needed for lasting fullness, according to the company.

"Finding fresh, healthy food shouldn't be hard," noted company founder Luke Saunders. "Sure, you can find healthy offerings at a sit-down restaurant or a grocery store, but people don't always have that kind of time. I want to make it fast and easy for someone to choose a delicious, nutritious smart meal when they are on the go."

Farmer's Fridge has also joined forces with SPE Certified to expand its healthy meal options with third-party validation of its merits. SPE stands for Sanitas Per Escam, or Health Through Food in Latin.

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