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One World gives customers control, ability to set own prices

By Candace Mercer - 5 Apr 2009

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From the outside, One World Everybody Eats looks just like an ordinary brick building. But after walking through the doors, customers can tell it is a different kind of restaurant. Located in the heart of Salt Lake City, One World is a “pay-what-you-want” cafe, built on the concept of providing healthy meals to anyone, no matter what they can afford to pay.

One World was started by Denise Cerreta in 2003. Cerreta envisioned, in what she calls her “Field of Dreams moment,” a restaurant in which people could get a healthy, hearty meal. They could choose the size of their portions and then set the price they thought was fair.

“This is how I could eliminate hunger,” Cerreta said.

“What you can pay” means a variety of things. Most people stick to the traditional cash payment, but other options include helping prepare food or washing dishes, or donating the operating supplies necessary for the cafe to continue to function.

Cerreta says that most people pay for their meal, but that there are always service opportunities available.

“If they have a food handler’s permit, then volunteers would work in the kitchen. Or they could work in the garden or crochet blankets or even pick up trash in downtown,” Cerreta said.

One hour of service is suggested for each meal.

The menu is different every day, with the restaurant offering a number of soups, breads and salads. Hot entrees are served with a variety of grains and meats, fish, poultry and tofu.



Photo by David Scott

Shawn Stradley, right, a server and community member, works at the One World Cafe in downtown Salt Lake City on Saturday afternoon. Stradley, a BYU graduate, enjoys working at the cafe.

The menu offers anything from green curry soup to roasted sweet potatoes with balsamic vinaigrette.

The cooks at One World “cook with the seasons” by using fresh fruits and vegetables that are currently in season.

With an ever-changing menu, One World is open to new ideas and recipes.

“Tell us your family recipes. Tell us your cultural favorites. We want to try new things,” the One World Web site says.

Cerreta said the cooks are encouraged to be creative and create entrees with the supplies they have to work with.

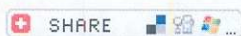
There are restaurants similar to One World operating around the country in cities such as Denver, Spokane, Wash., Durham, N.C., and Arlington, Texas.

For those interested in starting a “pay-what-you-want” restaurant, The One World Everybody Eats Web site has a training manual.

“The best way to eliminate hunger,” Cerreta said, “is to help those in your own communities.”

For more information on One World Everybody Eats, visit its Web site at www.oneworldeverybodyeats.com, or the restaurant located at 41 South 300 East in downtown Salt Lake City.

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