

CATALYST

RESOURCES FOR CREATIVE LIVING

Saturday, May 13, 2006 | [Advertising](#) | [About Catalyst](#) | [Member Login](#) | [Conta](#)

- » [Current Issue](#)
- » [Archives](#)
- » [Events Calendar](#)
- » [Newsletter](#)
- » [Community Resources](#)

search catalyst

Chef Profile: One World Revisited

New owner/chef Dan Cantu carries on the cafe's motto - "Everybody Eats"

By Mandy Jeppsen

[[post a comment](#) | [read comments \(1\)](#)]



If you're a regular Catalyst reader, you may already be familiar with One World Cafe. And, if not, here's the skinny: The main concept is to serve healthy, organic food to anyone who's hungry. In addition, the cafe is designed to reduce waste by allowing customers to choose their own portions; and one of the coolest things about the place is that customers are also able to choose their own prices. The cafe was

founded in 2002 by Denise Cerreta, and is now owned by chef Dan Cantu.

Cantu, an Omaha native, began his culinary journey at a young age. Working restaurants and bakeries, he says he always had a strong attraction to food. "My curiosity is the thing that got me interested. It's a lifetime of learning with food, because there's so much out there. Food is very fundamental."

Cantu's curiosity led him to a position at Wild Oats, where he began a love affair with organic produce. "The thing that got me hooked on organic was simple—apples and bananas were more flavorful. Then I started to see and feel a difference in myself after eating organic. Now my body can definitely taste a difference between organic and lower quality or overly processed food."

Working for Wild Oats in Salt Lake, Cantu met Beau Dean, a longtime One World employee and friend who introduced him to Denise Cerreta. When Denise decided to depart Utah to write a book, she left Dan the cafe. (Cerreta is currently finishing her book, "Spirit in Business!" and plans to open One World cafes in several U.S. cities by 2007).

One World has truly expanded the landscape of local cuisine. Only a handful of other restaurants serve mainly organic food, and none of them allow customers to name their own price. Cantu says he has regulars who eat three to five times per week. He knows many customers personally, and says he has a strong base. Along with those who can pay for a meal, One World's motto is "Everybody Eats," which means that Cantu offers a trade-for-food option for those who would like to work for a meal.

One World is a great place to sample foods that may seem foreign, or that one may not know how to prepare. Foods like quinoa, couscous, seaweed, collard greens and all types of beans and lentils are regularly incorporated into delicious, wholesome dishes. Remember that most restaurants rely on large food suppliers

like Sysco to provide ingredients; many of which are prepackaged and processed. One World serves home-cooked dishes using as many local ingredients as possible—from their own garden as well as from local farmers.

"We're trying to change people's connection with food," he says. "Growing up in the U.S., with the convenience of everything around us all the time, we can take things for granted. Most people don't know where their food's coming from or the process it goes through to get to the table. That's the biggest thing we're trying to help change."

Selections like quiche with potato crust, meatloaf, pasta salad with steamed vegetables, baked chicken or fish and cooked tofu are regularly on the menu, which changes daily. Fantastic desserts like apple cake or the everything cookie packed with nuts, chocolate chips, dried cranberries are also available, along with soups and beverages.

One World provides 15 to 18 dishes daily for lunch and dinner, which seems amazing given the size of the prep and kitchen space—about the size of a small closet. Cantu says the small kitchen is a blessing—it helps him get creative with his cooking. Overall, he says he is most proud that there is very little food waste at One World. "We only use a 10 gallon trash can and it never gets full in a whole day. I'm really proud of that. Plus we recycle and compost a lot of our usable food scraps." He hopes to eventually become a One World trainer for future restaurants in other cities, but for now, he is happy to make a positive contribution, "I love to share the goodness with everybody. There's no line between the kitchen and the tables, so we get immediate feedback. It's been wonderful, seeing so many smiles. It's more impacting than any other job I've ever had."

Post a comment

Name

Email

Remember personal information?

Yes

No

Your comments

Post Comment