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SENTINEL ARCHIVES

Saturday March 5, 2005

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Web posted Friday, September 19, 2003

Odds & Ends

Empathy is a main ingredient at eatery

SALT LAKE CITY -- Salt Lake City's One World Cafe breaks two of the most fundamental rules of the restaurant business: It has no menus and no prices.

Diners eat whatever sparks the culinary imagination of owner and chef Denise Cerreta. Most days she offers soup, one or two salads, quiche, a main entree and a dessert, all of which are inspired by the fresh, organic produce and meats she buys that day.

Customers can fill their plates with as much, or as little, as they want and pay what they feel their meal is worth. In place of a cash register, Cerreta has a brown basket where patrons place their money.

"I'm a for-profit business, but I operate in a sort of nonprofit mode," says the 41-year-old Cerreta, who opened the cafe in April with the mission of serving not just quality, unprocessed foods, but her community as well.

She encourages her customers, many of whom are vegetarians and vegans, to share plates.

And she doesn't mind if you want just a "sliver" of her double espresso brownie. With diners deciding how much food to eat, Cerreta says there's little waste and no need for her customers to overeat just to get a good deal.

Cerreta admits it's a strange business model in today's capitalistic society.

"The essence is that everyone can eat," she says. "And I can make a difference."