Investing in food is investing in community

By LEILA SERAPHIN

The impact of cooking and good food extends past our immediate health; it’s important for bonding with others, sharing commonalities and feeling nourished as a group or partnership. We also see the emotional impact of people when they act in self-determined and self-sufficient ways.

Cooking and eating with intention in a sense can be an immediate and rewarding accomplishment; we can feel good about it. When we take time to care for ourselves and invest in our enjoyment, our quality of life enhances.

Despite the fact that we have become rushing to be a normative aspect of a “successful life,” we also find that stress is a direct inhibitor to real efficiency and health.

So, take time to eat well.

Food in itself has been categorized as one of the biggest factors for self-identity. “Eating is an intensely personal act. What we eat communicates to others our beliefs, cultural and social backgrounds and experiences,” (from Culture Decanted, “Eating Yourself”), or as coined by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, “Tell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are.”

What you eat and cook is not just about moments of feeling accomplishing or nourished, but understanding a greater sense of who you are and what defines you in this world. Food, in other words, comprises a community.

In honor of cooking, we’d like to commend the recent series in Norwood called “Cooking Matters;” a collaboration between Tri-County Health Network, the Local Food Initiative, Christ in FOCUS Church and community educators in Norwood.

The series was a national curriculum focusing on re-integrating healthy cooking into American households, with an emphasis on cooking quality meals on a budget. It lasted six weeks with hands-on activities and nutritional lessons and was free to all students. Each student got a free meal, take-home food, a cookbook, chef knife and $35 worth of food vouchers for use at the FRESH Food Hub and Clark’s Market.

Other amazing cooking activities include the cooking demo at the Norwood Farm & Craft Market with Diane Butler. Sponsored by UMC and the Local Food Initiative, it gave locally sourced meals free to the public. We thank the market for organizing this, and Diane for encouraging health in a fun and interactive way.

Also, UMC partnered two weeks ago with Neighbor to Neighbor, the Local Food Initiative and the Tri-County Health to launch the “produce prescription program,” so patients can purchase produce at the Hub.

Other food, farming and cooking events coming up in the community include the cooking demonstrations at Clark’s Market.

The Norwood Farm & Craft Market is held every Wednesday at 5 p.m. (starting at the Livery), the Grain and Milk Mill where the new seed library can be viewed. To register, call 970-327-4385.

On Nov. 4, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Livery, the Grain Mill takes place. Taught by Rocky Mountain Seed Alliance, it’s hosted by Blue Grouse Bread, the FRESH Food Hub and CSI Extension through the Paradox Community Trust. You’re invited to learn about ancient grains, how to grow, mill, market and bake — and why these grains are so valuable to health and the ecosystem. Class is hands-on. Cost is $50 and includes lunch. Scholarships are available. Call 970-560-5480 to enroll.

We can work as a community to bring back cooking and the importance of food as cultural identity and health. We can be an example to many, not just as a group of gardeners and farmers, but as people who have a deep understanding and connection with the food we eat, where it comes from and why this practice is so invaluable for quality of life and future generations.

DEAR EDITOR,

Questions are important. Part of being human is the ability to ask questions and discover the answers. While not every question has an easy answer, the process of discovering the answer can be just as rewarding.

With this in mind, local pastors in Norwood are inviting you to write in with questions. They will respond in a monthly column in The Norwood Post.

The questions can be about anything that interests you, and great effort will be made to answer any and all questions. The purpose will be to inform, educate and primarily to engage in discussion about topics that affect us all and our town.

Please email your questions to justin.m.williams85@gmail.com.

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