

BASEBALL • CENTERVILLE • FARMERS MARKETS

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M.J. Adams' Corn Exchange Bistro

She's a friend to local farmers

TO ME, A GREAT CITY should have a great downtown, and that should include a great farmers market," says M.J. Adams, owner and chef of Rapid City's popular Corn Exchange.

Adams buys meats, poultry, eggs, vegetables and fruits from local producers, who sell their wares on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in a park along Omaha Street. Farmers voted her onto the market's board of directors because of her staunch support.

She once served noon lunches as well as dinners in her 32-seat bistro at 727 Main St., but she didn't have time to shop locally and still prepare lunch. Rather than shorten her market trips, she closed for lunch and now opens only in the evening.

"The restaurant was never about money," Adams says. "It's about a passion for good food, and a great restaurant really tries to highlight what's good around it." Ironically, she says, that isn't as easy as it should be in farm country.

"So many people are accustomed to buying their foods off a truck, frozen and already prepared for them — both at home and at our restaurants. Families have two people working, and nobody has the time to sit down and eat, let alone go shopping for local foods."

She believes the effort is worthwhile. "There is such a difference, in taste and in color," she says. "By using farm

fresh eggs, for example, our crème brûlée has a beautiful richness, plus it has the color of sunshine." Adams' crème brûlée gained national acclaim when a food critic for *Elle*

Magazine ranked it among the very best.

Adams buys steaks from the Hogens at Newell, fish from Clark's Trout Farm in Spearfish, vegetables from Moonrise Mountain Ranch at Belle Fourche and bison from the 777 Ranch at Hermosa.

Aside from taste, she believes farmers markets are good for the local economy, support family farms and save energy by reducing food transportation costs.

Certainly, local foods have made the Corn Exchange a highly acclaimed culinary treat. Adams studied theater before attending the French Culinary Institute in Manhattan, and then worked as a chef in New York City. She returned to South Dakota to start the Corn Exchange in 1996.

She still enjoys every evening. "The curtain goes up when the door opens, and there's drama every night as we create just the right food and the right atmosphere," she says. "Then I get to stay up late at night and have a glass of wine and meet wonderful people."

And in the morning she gets to shop at a farmers market.

— By Bernie Hunhoff

