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Local Flavors

Deborah Madison, the celebrated cookbook author and local-food advocate, feeds us with her monthly reflections. Her book *Local Flavors* is newly out in paperback.



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By Deborah Madison
August 3, 2009

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Eating at the Corn Exchange

A gem in Rapid City

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Despite evidence that there's good road food, it's darn hard to find unless you deliberately plan your route to intersect with some known café. I speak from experience — earlier this month we drove 2,000 miles over the edges of the Great Plains. There was nothing to eat.

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Until we got to Rapid City, that is. There lies a gem, a small bistro called the **Corn Exchange**. Owner M.J. Adams grew up in South Dakota, but also spent time in New York. There she attended the French Culinary Institute, cooked in restaurants, and worked as a volunteer at the then-fledgling James Beard House before returning home to open her restaurant some 14 years ago.

The Corn Exchange has been featured in *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit*, and Adams recently cooked at the Beard Awards. Still, its name may not be on the tip of every tongue. Come to Rapid City, and you'll definitely want a reservation for dinner.

Patrick and I had both our dinners there, and between us, we enjoyed local grass-fed beef, a bison bolognese, a vegetarian tofu curry with local vegetables, a very tasty house-smoked trout pancake, lovely salads, and some terrific desserts, including a moist brown-sugar cake with a rhubarb compote.



A good spot to eat in Rapid City.

As much as possible, Adams uses local ingredients. Other quality foods are brought in. In order to have good olive oil, marinated anchovies, organic **Straus** dairy, and cheeses and olives more interesting than those found in Safeway, Adams jumps through hoops and brings food in.

I'm sure her Fed-Ex bills equal what's in the boxes. When I went with her to the farmers' market, it was clear to us both that there wasn't enough produce to supply the restaurant without depriving other shoppers of a crack at a bunch of beets or one of the two Cheddar cauliflowers present.

Connections to local suppliers are not necessarily dependable, and the wine rep doesn't let her taste wines (despite which, she has a very reputable list). Come to dinner at the Corn Exchange, and you will enjoy civilized food and drink. You will leave well-fed and refreshed — and relieved to finally be out of the realm of frozen breakfast potatoes and tasteless eggs.

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