



TODD BERKEY

Fresh Harvest

Taking a new approach to dining

Fresh Harvest Restaurant is taking an innovative approach to its dining experience. The farm-to-table restaurant, located on the campus of Laurel View Village at 1600 Cambridge Drive in Davidsville, uses the top trends from the restaurant and hospitality industries and then adapts them to the guests they serve.

It has moved away from the traditional cafeteria-style dining and toward bistro-like dining, giving residents and the community more options. "Everything is made fresh and made from scratch; we really put the love and care into every item that comes out," says Kelsey Vann, catering manager with Cura Hospitality, which runs the restaurant. "People get a taste of all these fresh ingredients and they're hooked."

Fresh Harvest Restaurant was originally the Oakwood Restaurant for seven years before the transition in April 2017.

"We had residents who were on a committee who helped develop this idea, so this was resident driven and they wanted this type of style," Vann says.

She says they switched to a farm-to-table menu because it's healthier for the residents living at Laurel View. "That's our biggest thing, we want to give the best we can to the residents," Vann says. "We know exactly what's going into everything. A lot of the diets for the residents you have to know their calories and sodium, so we have full control over all of that. It was a better option for everyone living here to switch to this style."

The restaurant features as its centerpiece a chef's demonstration table – known as The Chef's Table – where guests can view live cooking demonstrations.

The Chef's Table is open Tuesday, Friday and Saturday during dinner hours.

"That always switches and we do different themes," Vann says. "It's all interaction with the chef and he'll cook everything in front of you so you get to see it being prepared."

Along with some signature items, the restaurant features seasonal menus and rotates its food offerings to keep it new. "We pick the menus according to what the trends are that we see coming and from requests we're getting from the public and residents," Vann says.

Josh Truitt, who has been the executive chef since October 2017, says he tries to make the menu as fresh as possible and experiments with food pairings to get that enhanced flavor.

"We make as many things in-house as we can," the IUP Academy of Culinary Arts

graduate says. "I also like to take things and put a twist on them and make them more localized to the area."

Truitt says they offer specials three days a week for lunch and dinner.

"That's one of our biggest sellers and a lot of the times they are 80 percent of our sales that day," he says. "It's always nice to come up with that new stuff while still offering our standards."

Vann says she hopes those who dine with them will walk away having had a fantastic meal. "We want this to be a place where people will want to bring their families," she says. "We want them to have a great evening out – that's our goal to offer a personalized dining experience."

The restaurant also offers banquet facilities where they can host a variety of gatherings including wedding receptions, wedding showers, baby showers and business meetings that can accommodate up to 300 people. They also offer catering services.

Fresh Harvest Restaurant hours are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sundays. Brunch is offered from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday.

For more information, call (814) 288-2880 or visit www.freshharvestrestaurant.com.

By Kelly Urban