

A day for reflecting on food

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Happy Food Day to you.

That's right, Oct. 24 has been dubbed "Food Day" by the Center for Science in the Public Interest. Its goal is simple: to promote healthy, affordable food produced in a sustainable, humane way.

Across the country, folks have organized small community events. Some aim to combat hunger, others to support local agriculture.

To take the pulse of our own local food scene, I checked in with Daniel Brewster.

He's not a farmer or a chef. Six days a week, no matter what the weather, the 29-year-old climbs on his bike at 5:30 a.m. and pedals for five or six hours straight.

His first stop is The Sparrow Bakery, where hot pastries are pulled from the oven and loaded into the cargo carrier of his bike.

Next, he picks up loaves from Bread LaVoy and more pastries from Nancy P's. Then he delivers the goods to about 25 coffee shops and restaurants throughout town.

And yes, according to Brewster, the sweet aroma accompanies him the whole way.

He founded Cascade Couriers almost five years ago as a traditional messenger service, carrying packages to the post office or documents to lawyers' offices.

But his business evolved. Now, most of his cargo is food.

"Everything else is faxed or emailed. You can't email an Ocean roll," he says, referring to Sparrow Bakery's uniquely spiced croissant.

Six weeks ago, Brewster expanded his business by purchasing a Sprinter van that runs on biodiesel. His goal is to transport food from other parts of Central Oregon into Bend, then distribute them around town using cargo bikes.

Brewster has already launched a Thursday food route. He brings kombucha — a fermented tea — from Kombucha Mama in Bend to restaurants in Sisters. Then he drives to Redmond and Prineville, where he picks up goods from farms including Last Stand Farm, in Crook County. Eventually, he circles back to Bend and distributes the produce via bike. He plans to add stops in Madras, too.

Central Oregon Locavore — a year-round network that sells locally made and grown goods online directly to consumers — is encouraging its participating farmers to take advantage of this new delivery route.

“It gets their food here for less than they would spend on gas, and it allows them to stay on the farm instead of having to drive into Bend,” says Nicolle Timm, founder of the network.

It’s just one more reason that Central Oregonians are likely to find more fresh food from more local sources.

Recent years have seen a boom in local food production, from organic farms to artisan cheesemakers to small-scale goat ranches. Farmers markets have opened in NorthWest Crossing and outside of Bend.

That’s not to mention the growth in locally roasted coffee and craft-brewed beer.

Fancy downtown restaurants now tout their use of local ingredients, often listing farms and ranches by name on their menus.

Brewster says that he and his wife recently went to Jackson’s Corner for the restaurant’s “burger night.”

He looked down at his plate and realized that he’d delivered the lettuce to Jackson’s Corner earlier that week. And the brioche buns that morning.

For people like Brewster, Food Day might as well be every day.

“It’s a little bit like having a Beer Day in Bend,” he says with a laugh. “It’s Bend — every day is Beer Day.”

That doesn’t mean local growers or distributors are having an easy time, especially in this economy.

Even Brewster, who loves his job and just expanded his business, works grueling hours, many of which involve pedaling in the cold.

But our appetite for local foods has never been greater. And that alone is worth celebrating.

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