

Making Ripples

NWA Ethical Eats

by Amanda Bancroft

Northwest Arkansas is lucky to have a variety of restaurants, delis, food trucks and farmer's markets that go beyond tasty. These businesses add sustainable practices into their mix of usually local, organic, or in-season ingredients. Whether you're looking for something gourmet or a quick snack to go with some beers, whether you crave meat or need a place that's vegan or vegetarian-friendly, options abound. Throughout the years, many ethical food places have come and gone. But a few have achieved a permanent place of popularity here, while new businesses continue popping up.

Summer is just around the corner, and there are cool treats available from places like Pedal Pops, Native Nectar, and Berry Natural. As a drive-through vegan and vegetarian organic juice and smoothie bar, Berry Natural has a plethora of menu selections. They get much of their produce from local farmers and also compost. The big red Pedal Pops vehicle offers frozen flavors like "Blackberry Pineapple Mango," "Lemon Basil Watermelon," and "Rainbow" without preservatives, added colors, sweeteners, or thickening agents, using only fresh fruit and stevia. Unique, locally-made popsicles from a bicycle freezer are sure to brighten anyone's day! Especially since their "adult pops" contain alcohol. Native Nectar offers a 100 percent organic menu of juices, nut milks, cleanses, and detoxes. With juice mixes entitled "Kale-ifornication" and nut milks like "Johnny Cashew," it'll be fun just ordering something.

Fast food is a nice indulgence now and again, but health-conscious restaurants are a more sustainable choice. Try Greenhouse Grille in Fayetteville, nationally famous for its black bean slider and renowned for its on-site garden, local, seasonal, and organic offerings, and veggie-friendly options. They also have a food truck on Dickson Street and a "Backyard" family friendly outdoor eating place behind their restaurant on the bike trail! Kind Kitchen is a food truck that can be a little elusive, but if you can find it, it's well worth the trip. Their juice is amazing, the baked goods incredible, and the food wholesome, plus almost everything is vegan and gluten-free. The Farmer's Table, also in Fayetteville, is a crowded breakfast-served-all-day destination with great American fare. Bentonville's Eleven restaurant located within Crystal Bridges gets some of their ingredients from the Bentonville Farmer's Market. Fresh: Farm to Table in Eureka Springs offers seasonal gourmet to-go meals and Sunday brunch.

Besides restaurants, there are plenty of farmer's markets in the region which are now open for the 2016 season: Bentonville, Springdale, Rogers, Eureka Springs, Gravette, West Fork, Winslow and Fayetteville all offer a farmer's market. Visit OzarkSlowFood.org/northwest-arkansas-farmers-markets to check the schedule for the market closest to you. And nowadays, it isn't hard to find a natural grocery store, with a variety of business models from Fayetteville's local cooperative Ozark Natural Foods to popular chains Whole Foods, Natural Grocer's, and in Rogers, Cook's Market and Fresh Market. Of course, many people have kitchen gardens or backyard organic farms. What's your favorite way to eat ethically in Northwest Arkansas?

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Mt. Kessler. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.