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**FIELD OF BEANS** (<http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/business/25675574-41/beans-says-beauchamp-café-yumm.csp>) |

### **Café Yumm! will fill its bowls with Oregon-grown, organic**

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Early next year, those shiny black beans in the Café Yumm! rice and bean bowls will be Oregon-grown, says Mark Beauchamp, who owns the Eugene-based restaurant chain with his wife, Mary Ann.

“So what’s the big deal?” consumers who are accustomed to eating locally grown food might wonder.

Well, for starters, Oregon is not known for producing beans. Fresh green beans, yes. But dried beans? No.

Café Yumm!’s quest for a year’s supply (100,000 pounds) of homegrown black beans began nearly a year ago, and it took a restaurant owner, a distributor and a farmer — all with a deep commitment to organic, locally grown food, to pull it off.

They say their experience shows that when there’s a will, companies and institutions, with the right partners, can deliver food — even food crops no longer commonly grown in Oregon — to Oregonians’ tables.

The rewards are many, Beauchamp and other local food advocates say.

The practice helps Café Yumm! achieve its goal of offering more local, organic and sustainable foods to customers who value those foods. It forges a direct relationship between the grower and the end user and supports the viability of smaller, often family-run, farms in the state.

It reduces the environmental toll of shipping food long distances. It can improve soil health because organic farmers rotate beans and other legumes, which fix nitrogen into the soil, with other crops.

It does cost more to do business this way — Beauchamp won’t say how much more. But he says the company will absorb that cost, and that he won’t pass it on to consumers.

The immediate opportunity — and potential for sourcing other food ingredients this way — was simply too good to pass up, Beauchamp says. And the extra cost was within reason, he

says.

“It’s hard to explain,” Beauchamp says. “We have to do this. We have to do this because it’s the right thing to do.”

“So the interests of the farmer, (Eugene distributor) Hummingbird Wholesale, Café Yumm!, our customers and the community are aligning to make this happen,” he says.

It all started in February when Beauchamp found a seat at the Local Food Connection conference at Lane Community College. The conference tries to link farmers with the distributors, retailers and restaurants who will buy their products.

Beauchamp happened to sit next to James Henderson, farmer liaison for Hummingbird Wholesale. The Eugene natural foods distributor’s warehouse is just down the road from Beauchamp’s office, but Beauchamp says he had never heard of Hummingbird until then.

Beauchamp “was wanting to buy local if he could, but he didn’t know any farmers,” Henderson says. “I knew all the farmers, but didn’t know any big buyers.”

Beauchamp’s focus fixed on beans later in the day, when he attended a session by the Southern Willamette Valley Bean and Grain Project, an initiative by farmers and local food security advocates to reintroduce crops, such as dry beans, that had been grown traditionally in the Willamette Valley.

“Being in the grain and beans business, I was surprised to find there was such an organization here,” Beauchamp says. “What they said resonated with my business.”

They said the Willamette Valley used to have more than 20 world-class food-processing plants. Locally, Agripac’s plant, where the sleek U.S. Courthouse sits today, was the last to go.

In addition to learning about the lack of local processing facilities, Beauchamp says, he became aware of other hurdles the group would have to overcome to be able to grow and sell beans and grains: warehousing, distribution, and ultimately someone to buy their products.

“All the flags and whistles started going off in my head because here we have a distribution system, we have storage and we are an end user,” Beauchamp says. Café Yumm! has 10 restaurants, and one under construction in downtown Portland. It is scheduled to open in April.

So Café Yumm! enlisted Hummingbird’s help to find a farmer who could grow sufficient quantities to meet Café Yumm!’s needs.

No Willamette Valley farmers were able to supply a consistent product in the amounts Café Yumm! uses, Beauchamp said.

Eventually, however, Hummingbird connected with Williams Hudson Bay Farm, a certified organic farm about seven miles west of Milton-Freewater, near the Oregon-Washington state line.

Brothers Tom and Ray Williams raise dairy replacement heifers and a variety of crops, including wheat and different forages, on their 3,000 acres, Tom Williams says.

Last spring, Hummingbird Wholesale called Williams, and asked about having him grow a number of crops, including dark northern spring wheat and beans.

Before long, Williams had a contract to grow 100,000 pounds of black turtle beans for Café Yumm!

Williams says the contract doesn't represent a huge slice of the farm's annual revenues — it's about 5 percent. But he values the diversity it brings to his farm.

“There are enough variables, things that happen that you have zero control over, so you definitely cannot put all your eggs in one basket,” Williams says.

Organic farmers have to do a lot more marketing than conventional farmers of commodities such as wheat, he says.

“A conventional wheat grower in our area belongs to a local grain grower co-op,” Williams says.

“When they want to sell, they call up the co-op and say, ‘Sell this.’ They can have the check the next day. With organics, it's completely different, You have to go out and find the end market.”

Williams says he enjoys working with the end user, instead of selling to “a middleman, or a series of middlemen that nobody knows.”

And when he's slowly navigating his tractor and cultivator among the bean rows to control weeds instead of just spraying the field, as conventional farmers can do, it helps to think of the Oregonians who will be eating his product and who appreciate his efforts, he says.

*“We have to do this. We have to do this because it's the right thing to do.”*

*— Mark Beauchamp, co-owner of Café YUMM!*

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