



What's On Your Plate?

Locally owned business helps meet surging demand for organic products

More Americans are clamoring for organic food than ever before. Reasons for growth in organic food sales have to do with the food itself, as well as the positive environmental impact of sustainable farming methods that go along with it.

Organic means food is grown without pesticides, fertilizer, hormones, antibiotics or biotechnology. U.S. sales of organic food have grown 15 percent to 21 percent a year, compared with only approximately 3 percent growth in total food sales, according to the Associated Press.

Valparaiso-based Au Naturel Market has been meeting the growing demand for organic food and beauty products since September 2004. The largest full-service organic market in the area is now celebrating its third year in business with a lot of fanfare.

Owner Diane Nelson says customers shop at her organic market for a number of reasons. "Some are trying to reduce the chemicals and toxins their family is ingesting. Many love our unique selection of merchandise—foods, supplements and beauty products.

Some feel it's a good environmental choice. Most of my customers just want to live healthier lives and rely less on traditional medications."

Whatever the reasons, shopping at Au Naturel Market is different than large chain grocery stores, even those that carry some organic foods. Trained staff greet customers and answer questions. Customers find it to be a pleasant atmosphere. Shoppers can stop and have a free cup of tea, or if they are in a hurry, they will be quickly assisted and checked out.

Au Naturel Market is truly a part of the Valparaiso community. It has supported more than a dozen charities such as homeless shelters, Mothers for Porter County Children, Toys for Tots and more. The store also offers monthly seminars, an annual Spa Day and sometimes yoga, weight loss or other classes. "We want to give back to the community that supports us," says Nelson.

August 13th will mark the seventh anniversary of Au Naturel Market. To celebrate there will be a storewide sale along with a cook out. Come on out and join the fun! Save 15% store wide and sample organic beef, buffalo and chicken. Enter to win door prizes and find samples and demos throughout the store.