

LOCAL HERO: INNOVATOR

Amanda of Amanda's Feel Good Fresh Food

Photo by Eve Fox

We created this extra award especially for Amanda West of Amanda's Feel Good Fresh Food for her part in helping reinvent the idea of fast food.

"I think of it as slow food for fast people," she says, as she keys in an order for a hormone- and antibiotic-free hamburger on an organic whole wheat bun with oven-baked sweet potato fries and an organic agave-sweetened cola.

West came up with the concept for a "sustainable" fast food restaurant in the summer of 2004 while interning at Niman Ranch's headquarters in Alameda after her first year at Stanford's Graduate School of Business. She had in mind to run a business with a social and environmental mission, but it was not until she read Eric Schlosser's book *Fast Food Nation* and watched *Supersize Me*, the documentary film by Morgan Spurlock, that she realized how great the need was for healthy, environmentally conscious food options that would appeal to a majority of Americans.

"I got to do some ride-alongs on the Niman Ranch delivery trucks that summer. As we stopped at Chez Panisse and Whole Foods, I realized that this quality of food was not reaching many people, and definitely not reaching the people Schlosser writes about in *Fast Food Nation*," said West.



She spent the next four years turning her vision of "Whole Foods meets In-N-Out Burger" into a reality. She researched her business plan extensively, rounded up investors, conducted a challenging search for the right location, and then called on nutritional experts and seasoned chefs to help design a healthy menu that would not sacrifice taste. Through it all, Amanda's passion and enthusiasm drove the project.

In July of 2008, Amanda's Feel Good Fresh Food opened for business on Shattuck Avenue just above the Downtown Berkeley BART stop. West's focus on the health of her customers, the community, and the environment is visible throughout the restaurant. For example, everything Amanda's sells is 100 percent compostable—the restaurant's green garbage bins feed directly into Berkeley's city composting program. The menu, which emphasizes fresh, seasonal ingredients, is also designed to help diners create 10 different meals that contain 600 calories or less.

As West had hoped, the restaurant draws a diverse mix of customers: construction workers, UC students, professionals, young families, security guards, Berkeley High students, and hippies all seem equally at home there. This mix is an encouraging sign given her hopes to expand the restaurant to other Bay Area locations in the near future.

Says West, "We want to bring this food and this sort of feel-good environment to lots more people."

—Eve Fox

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LOCAL HERO: EDDY AWARD WINNER

Mary Tilson,
local radio
personality
and regular
contributor to
Edible East Bay



Mary's article "Cooking with Big Mind: How I survived Zen Cooking Boot Camp" published in our Spring 2008 issue, won the Edible Communities Best Editorial: Food or Cooking Focused award for 2008. Each year at our annual meeting of the 60+ Edible publications, Edible Communities Inc. hands out this and other awards for excellence. If you missed the article, you can read it here: edibleeastbay.com/content/pages/articles/spring08/cookingWith.pdf

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