

Chefs promote farm to table philosophy to Central Otago foodies

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Otago Polytechnic's Central Campus cookery lecturers Chris Smith and Bill McDonald with Annabel Langbein and visiting chef ambassador William Dissen who owns and runs Market Place restaurant in Asheville, North Carolina.

Celebrity cook Annabel Langbein and a United States chef ambassador showed Central Otago foodies how to bring the farm to the table at a cooking demonstration.

Langbein and chef William Dissen, who owns and runs Market Place restaurant in Asheville, North Carolina, treated students and the public to a cooking demonstration at the Otago Polytechnic's Central Campus in Cromwell on Thursday.

The pair visited Central Otago and Queenstown following their participation in the Wellington on a Plate Festival, and got a tour of the polytechnic's operation prior to the demonstration where they gathered fresh herbs and vegetables to cook.

"I haven't been here before. It is so exciting and it is incredible to think that this is all happening just here and it is so sustainable," Langbein said.

"You've got a composting plant, you've got chickens, all of this being able to be grown inside. From the point of view of the student, it is that real farm to table experience that you can teach them."

Working from farm to table also made you more resourceful, Langbein said.

"This is your palette, this is what you have got to work with."

Dissen said a lot of students might not have had experiences on the farm, so to get them connected what is in season and to be able to harvest herbs and vegetables and take them into the kitchen and cook them -"that's what it is all about".

Dissen there was a strong parallel in the way his farm to table philosophy and approach to food, aligned with New Zealand's food culture

"There is this idea of taking very fresh food and what's in season and really letting the ingredients shine. That's for me what fresh food is all about . We manipulate as little as possible so we can put directly from the farm to table and taste that life of the food...so you are eating greens that are almost still alive."

The pair had been involved in a Southern Soul Series which focused on ingredients, ideas and food of the South-East of the United States and the parallel between that and the South Island, he said.

"There is a similar mentality growing local, eating local and eating in season and I think fortuitously that's why Annabel and I were put together."

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