

# HEALTHY Eats

## Organic options for tasty cuisine

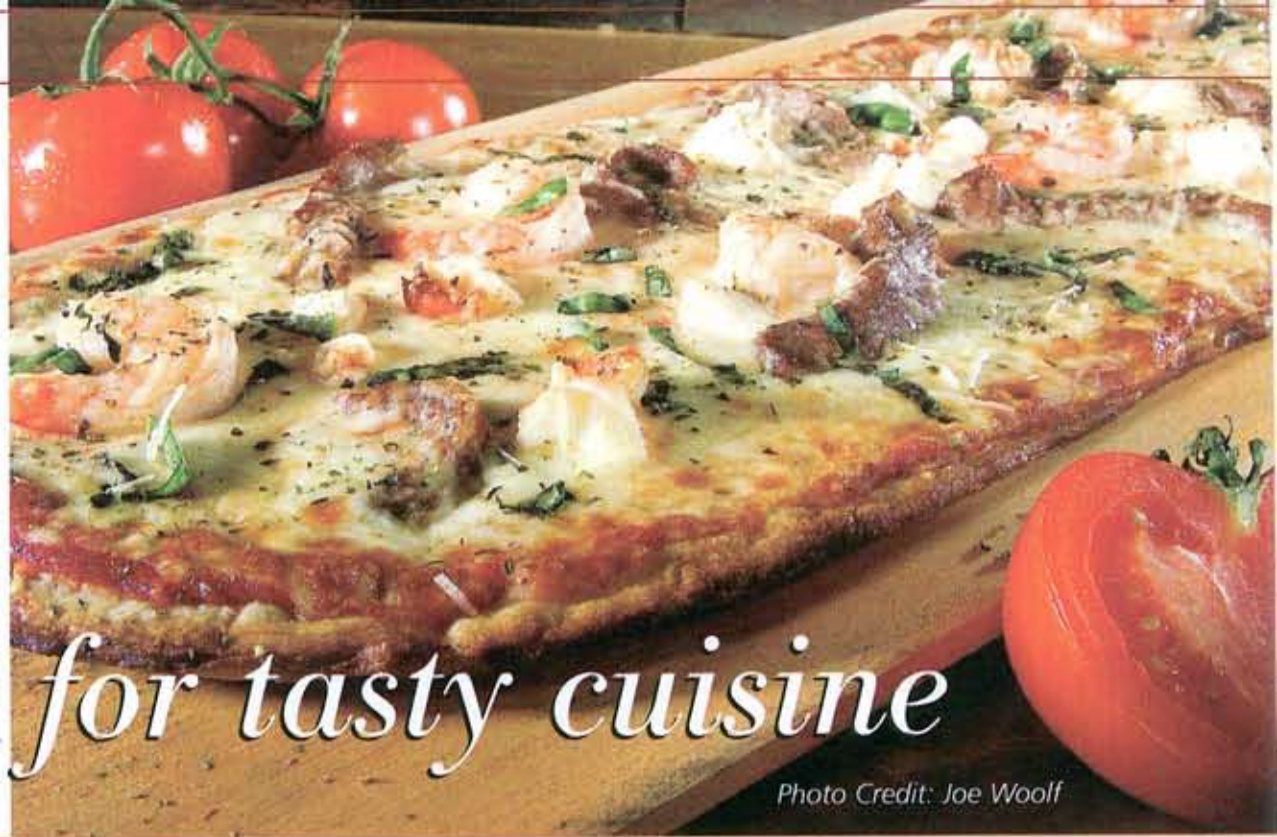


Photo Credit: Joe Woolf

By Sharon Levinsohn

When you think of healthy and organic food, do you focus on tofu patties, packaged organic greens and fruit, and shots of wheat grass? Thank goodness the natural food offerings have come of age. Whether you desire a piece of organic salmon or freshly caught Maine lobster, or a slice of pizza made with organic ingredients, your taste buds are in for a treat. The South Florida eateries profiled here show us great organic eats run the gamut—from casual to upscale—serving up meals that are tasty and good for you.

### THE DETAILS

Pizza Fusion is an incredibly clever concept. While the newest location of this chain-let of eateries opens this month in Palm Beach Gardens, this franchise concept is posed on the edge of explosive growth. Pizza Fusion mixes extremely tasty, mostly organic food along with eco-friendly business practices. The concept and the stores are the creation of two former Florida Atlantic University fraternity brothers, Vaughan Lazar and Michael Gordon, who combined their love of organic and natural foods with earth-friendly business principles. Even their motto is creative: “Saving the earth, one pizza at a time!”

These friends and business partners (who also have franchised shops in Deerfield Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Weston, with 55 more stores scheduled to open this year) have tapped an incredibly lucrative market. In addition to recycling—a novel concept for many restaurants in Florida—they print their menus and other paper materials on post-consumer, recycled paper and papers made with alternative fibers. They also give their customers discounts for returning their pizza boxes for recycling.

### THE CUISINE

Pizza Fusion serves a terrific array of yummy items and 75 percent of the menu is organic. There are gourmet surfboard-shaped pizzas, sandwiches and wraps, bountiful salads, and several tempting desserts. All

### featured restaurant

Pizza Fusion

4783 PGA Boulevard, #101, Palm Beach Gardens

(additional locations in Deerfield, Fort Lauderdale and Weston)

share an emphasis on fresh, natural, and organic ingredients. This means you can enjoy healthy, delicious food without preservatives, growth hormones, pesticides or nitrates.

When it comes to the delicious oval-shaped pizzas, the choices (19 at last count) are abundant and the ingredients are impressive. The pizza dough is made from certified organic flour and topped with fresh,



Photo Credit: Joe Woolf

organic ingredients. (There is even a gluten-free crust for individuals with celiac disease.) Even the sauce here is special and comprised of 100 percent certified organic ingredients: Christina’s organic tomatoes, Florida Crystals’ organic sugar (from the only organic sugar farm in the United States), and Spectrum organic olive oil, as well as organic salt, herbs and spices. You can choose from two sizes: medium pies are 18” x 9” and large pies are 28” x 9.”

My favorite specialty pizzas include the Surf & Turf (large only), which is comprised of cheese and sauce, 100 percent certified organic New York strip steak,

wild caught Key West shrimp, and wild caught Maine lobster; The Founder with organically raised chicken, tomato sauce, mozzarella, sliced Roma tomatoes, kalamata olives, and red onions on a multi-grain crust; the Seattle, which mimics bruschetta with freshly chopped plum tomatoes, red onions, fresh basil, garlic, balsamic vinegar and olive oil with a light amount of mozzarella and Parmesan cheese; and the Wild Caught Key West Shrimp & Pesto with Parmesan, light mozzarella, pesto sauce and oregano with tasty shrimp. If you are a vegan, you will adore the Organic Veggie Medley with tomato sauce and a variety of seasonal organic veggies. All of the pizzas are available with certified organic mozzarella for a bit extra.

In addition to pizza, this kitzchy spot also serves a nice assortment of focaccia sandwiches and wraps filled with a great array of organic veggies and/or turkey, ham, prosciutto, and roast beef—without hormones, antibiotics, or nitrates. The New York Strip Sandwich on focaccia bread includes spinach, caramelized onions and tri-colored peppers. I also enjoyed noshing on their gourmet bread sticks which come with a variety of tasty dips, such as olive tapenade and crushed tomato marinara; oversized salads such as a nifty organic pear and gorgonzola, organic baby spinach, and a Caprese, with fresh mozzarella, organic beef steak tomatoes, basil, and a drizzle of olive oil on an organic mix of spring greens. All of the dressings here are certified organic.

At the end of your meal—or just for a snack—you can order up organic, vegan or gluten-free Melt-In Your Mouth Brownies, as well as a bag of Newman’s Own organic chocolate chip cookies.

### THE SETTING

The Pizza Fusion in Palm Beach Gardens channels a hip, lounge vibe with a color theme which mimics pizza

## delicious dish

red, cream and green. The contemporary interior features polished, pale wooden floors, suspended mod lighting fixtures, and metal and wooden tables and chairs, along with one stone slate wall and one faux grass wall. There are also boxed, wooden shelves, which offer a variety of enticing products including soy candles, organic cotton tee-shirts, wine and chips. The atmosphere is fun and friendly and you can eat-in take-out, or opt for delivery in one of Pizza Fusion's hybrid delivery vehicles. Don't be afraid to ask questions. The friendly owner, Linda Wilson, and staffers are always happy to educate you about the menu and the mission.

This is the first Pizza Fusion store which is built according to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification standards of the United States Green Building Council. The eateries employ energy efficient tactics and eco-friendly prod-

ucts. Furthermore, the interior design features both sustainable and recycled materials, such as tabletops and cutting boards comprised of reclaimed wood, countertops made from recycled plastic detergent bottles, seat cushions made from soybean oil, compact fluorescent bulbs (which save energy), and slate walls.

The folks at Pizza Fusion also use a greywater system that recycles waste water from the sinks in the kitchen into their toilets, which saves one-third of the restaurant's water usage each year, and they recycle the heat from their ovens to heat the water in their store (eliminating the need for water heaters). Even the insulation is made from recycled blue jeans.

### LIBATIONS

You can order from a menu of organic beer and wine including Butte Creek Organic Ale, Stone Mill Pale

Ale, Stellar Live-a-Little Red Wine, Badger Mountain Chardonnay, Dixon Peak Cabernet Sauvignon and Frey Natural White Wine.

There is also a wide assortment of all-natural and organic drinks made of pure ingredients such as organic tea leaves, herbs, spices and fruits, and evaporated cane juice. Consider trying Tazo Organic Green Tea, Boylan's All-Natural Black Cherry Soda (my personal favorite), Naked Juice, Vitamin Water or Volvic Water.

### THE EXTRAS

Each delivered pizza box is hand-stamped and signed by the pizza chef—nice touch. Please phone Pizza Fusion at the following locations: *Palm Beach Gardens at 561.721.0123; Weston at 954.641.5353; Deerfield Beach at 954.427.5353; and Ft. Lauderdale at 954.358.5353. Additional information is available at [pizzafusion.com](http://pizzafusion.com).*

## Featured restaurant

Cero

St. Regis Resort

1 North Fort Lauderdale Beach Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale

### THE DETAILS

If your idea of Fort Lauderdale beach is centered on spring break bars (and the kids who love them) and ho-hum casual eateries, you are in for a treat. Thanks to the progressive folks at St. Regis Resorts, you can dine in style. Cero is a truly sublime restaurant with indoor and outdoor dining right across from the famed Fort Lauderdale beach. The restaurant and the hotel exude understated elegance and feature gorgeous interiors, incredibly attentive staffers and a truly hospitable ambiance. This deluxe property—the first St. Regis in Florida—debuted on May 1, 2007, and Cero is the jewel in the crown, thanks to celebrated and supremely talented Executive Chef Toby Joseph. His impressive culinary pedigree includes being named one of the "Top Hotel Chefs in America" by the James Beard Foundation when he was the top chef at the St. Regis Hotel in Houston. Under his direction, this restaurant also snagged the Mobil "Four Star Award" and AAA's "Five Diamond Award."

Chef Joseph is incredibly passionate about creating delicious, memorable modern American cuisine with local produce and fish, and plenty of natural and organic ingredients. His innovative menu is full of inspired dishes which will tantalize your palate.

### THE CUISINE

Be prepared to be wowed by Chef Toby Joseph and his talented crew, which includes Chef de Cuisine Joseph Eisenbuchner and Sous Chef Jason Coperine.

These gentlemen consistently create extraordinary dishes using the finest and freshest ingredients that are available. Their repertoire, under Chef Joseph's definitive direction includes day-boat, line-caught fish—which reaches their door (and your plate) in less than 24 hours without any preservatives—free-range chicken and beef, organic salmon, organic greens, vegetables, and fruits—*sans* pesticides—organic eggs, and dry-packed diver scallops (also without added liquid or preservatives). They also make all of their own dressings, so expect ingredients such as organic yogurt and extra virgin olive oil, naturally. The difference is palpable—not only does each dish feature an explosion of taste and texture, but you feel good after dining here. Thank you, Chef Joseph!

Cero is another name for a Spanish mackerel, and treats from the sea are prominently featured. For starters, order up the sautéed, house-made baby gnocchi served with spicy heirloom tomatoes, first-press olive oil, and black truffles, or the best layered sashimi-style blue fin tuna and hamachi I have ever tasted, served with a frothy wasabi rice foam and a mild jalapeno gelée. For those looking for a "kick," try the spicy, citrus poached prawn cocktail served with remoulade sauce. Or opt for the cream of lobster and

she-crab soup, which is equally delightful *sans* the spice.

The entrées inspire the same adulation and gratitude. I adored Chef Joseph's signature dish of butter poached lobster. This inventive palate pleaser is served with caramelized stone fruit (peaches, plums or apricots) and dressed with walnut tarragon foam and some candied walnuts. This dish is the best of its class—scrumptious, subtle and satisfying. (I never knew that perfectly poached Maine lobster would go so well with warm peaches. This could become addictive.)

The diver scallops are also best in show, perfectly seared and served with creamy corn polenta and white truffle oil. Also order the herb-crusted organic salmon served with a spicy green papaya salad with roasted red peppers and jumbo lump crab; the lemon-scented halibut with an organic potato crust served with sautéed fresh organic spinach with lobster *beurre blanc*; the grilled free range veal chop, which is served

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