

Published May 11th, 2011

## Whole Foods Welcomes Shoppers Soon

By Cathy Tyson



(from left), front row: Steve Shargots, Gary Ramirez, David Hales, Chris Mc-Clung, Jane Shafer, Greg Severn; back row: Gerard Krug, Marc Rubenstein, Jeanette Bloss, Renee Diskowski, Eryn Smyth, Norm Winters Photo Andy Scheck

Mark your calendars, on May 18 at 10:00 a.m. Lafayette's Whole Foods Market will be officially open for business. Lamorinda Weekly staff got a special sneak preview while the store was still nearing completion. This will be the fifth East Bay location for the Austin, Texas based natural and organic food retailer.

"Whole Foods Market is so excited to be a part of the Lamorinda community," said Gary Ramirez, Store Team Leader for Lafayette. "We look forward to being a trusted neighborhood resource where folks can learn about healthy eating, pick up nutritious and delicious foods for their families, take a break from cycling and enjoy lunch on our gorgeous outdoor patio and really feel at home."

A special celebration is planned for Lamorinda residents on Sunday, May 15 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the parking lot featuring local vendors sampling their delicious products, arts and crafts, even sneak-peek store tours. Hungry carnivores can nosh on a variety of locally sourced barbecued meat at the parking lot party: Field to Family air chilled chicken, Diestel turkey, Panorama 100 percent grass-fed organic beef and Pozzi grass-fed lamb.

Management brings its green philosophy into the building itself, using reclaimed Douglas Fir from Ukiah and fifty-percent recycled content tile from McIntyre Tile in Healdsburg; they also chose an environmentally friendly glycol refrigeration system.

Marketing Team Leader Jane Shafer has already been busy reaching out to the community. Whole Foods will be catering the dessert portion of the Taste of Lafayette, and in search of local partners and their products, checked out the wares of vendors at last week's Farmers' Market. Orinda beekeeper Steve Gentry of Steve's Bees recently got the okay to put bee hives on the roof.

She estimates that sixty percent of the employees transferred from another store and forty percent are new hires. Norm Winter of Moraga will be shortening his commute. He used to work at the San Ramon store. Now as Premium Care Product Team Leader, he can be found somewhere between the "Kiss My Face" Cardamom Mint Self Foaming Soap and Badger SPF 30+ Baby Sunscreen. He's happy to explain the uniqueness of Whole Foods product standards. They even carry no-ammonia hair color and a plethora of flax seed products. Jerry Krug, Produce Team Leader, coming from the San Jose store, emphasized a commitment to buying local and is excited about jams and stone fruits coming from Frog Hollow in Brentwood and flowers from Full Belly Farm. He's looking into a partnership with Terra Bella Family Farms of Pleasanton after meeting them at the Farmers' Market.

Jeanette Bloss came all the way from Chicago to open the store. She's an experienced Grocery Team Leader in charge of the grocery, frozen, dairy and bulk departments. "This is the seventh store I've opened," she said, adding they're expecting a crowd that could wrap around the building.

With a host of new products launching at the almost 25,000 square foot store, management is looking forward to having more than 250 local (Bay Area) vendors. Bloss describes the INNA jams delivered via BART and bicycle from Berkeley as, "really awesome." Other highlights include Lafayette's own Thoughtful Foods - granola; El Viejo Foods of Martinez - salsa and guacamole; Soul Food Farms of Vacaville - eggs; and gelato popsicles from Gelateria Naia of Hercules.

At press time there were still trucks in front with a final delivery of landscaping plants, no shopping carts in sight, and lots of merchandise in boxes, but it wasn't hard to imagine the artisan bakery, or the extensive selection of prepared food ready to roll. This is definitely not the old Lucky's or Albertson's.



Barry Hunau

Reach the reporter at: [cathy@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:cathy@lamorindaweekly.com)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA