



Plantronics Celebrates Special Cityblooms Partnership with a Hyperlocal Barbecue

Submitted by Uriah Paiva, Café Manager

Many Bon Appétit chefs are lucky enough to have strong relationships with Farm to Fork growers. But Café Manager Uriah Paiva and his team at Plantronics in Santa Cruz, CA, count themselves especially lucky. They have a farm just 200 yards from the café door and a farmer willing to grow specialty crops at the drop of a seed for them!

Since 2014, Plantronics associates have enjoyed the ultimate in fresh produce from a hydroponic microfarm installed by Cityblooms. The automated mini greenhouses (a.k.a. “growbots”) are powered by solar energy, virtually eliminate the need for pesticides, and improve water efficiency by up to 90 percent compared to conventional methods.



Balsamic vinegar and Cityblooms basil-infused olive oil

“Cityblooms has been really amazing to work with,” says Uriah. Cityblooms CEO/Farmer-in-Chief Nick Halmos consults regularly with Uriah; in addition to numerous heirloom varietal lettuces, microgreens, and herbs, Nick has grown many specialty crops

by request, including micro chervil and red and green shiso (a Japanese mintlike herb), and soon *fraises des bois*, a truly unique French wild strawberry.

On a recent balmy summer afternoon, the Bon Appétit team and Cityblooms collaborated on a special Flavors of Barbecue event at the café garden for Plantronics team members. Cityblooms staff gave tours, explaining how the growbots worked, showed all the varieties of greens they are growing, and passed out free heads of lettuce and take-home microgreens.

The menu focused on Carolina-style barbecue, with slow-cooked smoked pulled pork and pulled Mary’s Chicken, plus a vegetarian portabello mushroom with just-picked Café Garden peppers, all served on soft Le Boulanger bakery slider buns, with Café Garden mustard micro slaw, Southern-style creamed corn, Southern pickled green beans, carrot salad, and a salad of Café Garden micro lettuces. Dessert featured Frog Hollow Farm peach cobbler with Chantilly cream. Even the beverages went local, with basilico (heirloom Greek basil) and shiso spa waters offered alongside sweet lemon tea.

That’s something Uriah’s been working on — pulling the Café Garden greens out of the salad bar and featuring them in other areas, including daily spa waters. There has been lots of positive feedback from the Plantronics employees about



Line Cook Jesse Ramirez riding the Tranquility Rover bikemobile



Café Manager Uriah Paiva putting together a pulled pork slider



Café Garden mustard micro slaw



Shiso spa water



Cityblooms' solar-powered mini-greenhouse "growbots"

how much they love these new healthy additions to the Tranquility Base Café (as it's known, in a nod to Plantronics' headsets being used in space). Uriah has also begun to make infused olive oils from the garden's herbs to flavor dishes and as an alternative to salad dressings.

At the barbecue, the first lucky 40 guests to arrive enjoyed free frozen treats delivered by the Bon Appétit Tranquility Rover, a bikemobile. Everyone enjoyed being outside on the beautiful day, dining on delicious hyperlocal food amidst greenery as they learned about sustainable farming practices.