

The Future of Food

Finds a Home in UA

Written by UA resident **Kristin Greenberg**
Photos courtesy of **John Fahlgren**

If only the bright red tomatoes served at The Shops on Lane Avenue's newest restaurant **SŌW Plated** could talk. Their background, along with their ravishing appearance and succulent taste, truly embodies the philosophies that motivated owners John and Sunny Fahlgren to open their one-of-a-kind lifestyle eatery in our community.

SŌW (pronounced *so*) stands for sustainability, organic and wellness, the three pillars that form the foundation for all the restaurant's activities. Fittingly the verb, sow, means to scatter seeds across the earth.

"We believe that people should eat food as close to its source as possible and that you can never eat enough plants," states John.

Before the non-vegetarians lose interest, be assured that the menu offerings include fish, chicken and Wagyu beef, the latter widely known for its superior quality. In fact, all diets and allergies can be accommodated in SŌW Plated's dining space so everyone can enjoy chef-inspired meals that change seasonally to capture ultimate freshness and the richest of flavors.

This nod to healthy eating may not seem unique to the restaurant scene today, but John's overall vision for his venture is. Slowly and meticulously he is unveiling his big ideas to us, gradually incorporating them into the fabric of the enterprise.

Take the surprising story of where that tomato, and many other ingredients at SŌW Plated, are sourced. It just so happens that the



world's first fully-automated indoor farm is but a short car ride away, outside of Cincinnati at 80 Acre Farms. "This is a revolutionary concept for farming, not being at the whim of weather, controlling 100% what touches the plants and employing safe and sustainable methods," says John. There is no out-of-season indoors, allowing for the quick delivery of flavorful staples all year long.

It is also Sunny and John's intention that the community comes to regard SŌW Plated as far more than just a restaurant. "Our wellness pillar means more than just eating food that is good for you," John explains. "That's physical health, but mental and spiritual health are just as important." Once-a-month yoga class offerings and a quarterly speaker series – last January's featured Mike Zelkind of 80 Acre Farms – are just the beginning of extensive plans focused on overall well-being.

In turn, SŌW Plated is giving back to the local community through their Round It Up for the Kids campaign. Behind the scenes and through the generosity of several area businesses, the difference between each guest's check and the higher flat dollar amount is donated to The Christina and Ryan Day Fund for Pediatric and Adolescent Mental Wellness at Nationwide Children's, part of the On Our Sleeves™ movement. A Wall of Hope was recently established inside the restaurant to raise awareness of this program and further advance the conversation about mental health.

The goal is to encourage a passionate, emotional connection between you and your food. This extends to the interior décor which John describes as "southern California meets UA." Light,



bright and contemporary, this inviting space prompts patrons to put down their devices and be present to savor the food, conversation and experience.

John, a long-time Columbus resident and part of the Fahlgren Mortine marketing and communications agency, deliberately chose Upper Arlington to launch his enterprise. "UA is the heartbeat of Columbus," says John emphatically. "When you do good things here, it resonates across the region." Our proximity to Ohio State and downtown, convenient access to highways, easy parking and a terrific sense of community are just a few of the positives John eagerly noted about our city.

In addition to the great food and good works, SŌW Plated offers plenty more for customers. Their numerous juice combinations are available by the growler to take home and enjoy – within 48 hours, please, as no preservatives are present (naturally)! Happy Hour discounts on wine, beer and cocktails are in effect Monday through Saturday. Looking for private dining space? A separate dining room holds up to 12 and is equipped to handle A/V needs. The outdoor patio can be reserved for parties of up to 75.

As for the future? "This is just the beginning," John teases. "We are early on in explaining our thesis; just wait and see."

Follow SŌW Plated on Instagram or see sowplated.com for more information.

