



## Pocono ProFoods: A FRESH approach

Just outside the conference room of Pocono ProFoods, employees hustle through the hallways, boxes of products whistling around corners. This is a typical morning walk for Kara Snyder, Pocono ProFoods' culinary specialist, and third-generation member of the Driebe family. "My grandfather founded the company in 1940 when he moved from the family produce market in Scranton to Stroudsburg," she reflected. For three generations Pocono ProFoods has grown and fostered relationships with long-time area establishments like Camelback, Stroudsmoor, and Woodloch, as well as relative newcomers to the area, including Aquatopia and Kalahari Resorts. Kara, however, did not immediately seize the opportunity to work in the family business. "After college I moved to New York City to study opera," she said. While pursuing her operatic dreams, Kara realized a familiar passion was calling her to return home. Her family's business and their strong ties to the community led Kara back to the Poconos after culinary school, joining the family enterprise and embracing the passion Pocono ProFoods lives by.



*The watermelon painting which hangs in Kara's office was a gift from local artist Sterling Strauser to Kara's grandfather, Edward Driebe, who was an avid supporter of the arts. It was created after Mr. Driebe told Strauser about a dream of a beautiful watermelon.*

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Anywhere you look, Pocono ProFoods can be found alongside numerous area establishments, a testament to the relationships the family has formed in the community. "When we were kids, we would play in the kitchen at Woodloch with the Kiesendahl kids," Kara reminisced. "We've worked with them for years; they're one of our best customers. We are very proud of our relationships." In an effort to foster such relationships Pocono ProFoods offers chef demos to customers to help them enhance their offerings. "Many restaurateurs and chefs are working so hard at running their establishments that they aren't able to get out very often. Our demos allow them to get out of the kitchen for a few hours and experience some new ideas." In doing so, Pocono ProFoods offers insight on popular trends among restaurant goers. "Right now, sustainable practices and locally-grown food are hot," Kara commented.

And so, in keeping with these trends, Pocono ProFoods connects with local farmers to bring clients only the freshest seasonal items, through their local and sustainable produce program Greener Fields Together. GFT is a national program that connects local farmers with local produce and food purveyors. Such locally-grown meals have earned renown for restaurants like Mikuna Kitchen, a Pocono ProFoods client, in East Stroudsburg. Their menu offers delicious gluten free, vegetarian, and vegan friendly dishes all in keeping with what many people are looking for today. If you ask Kara, these efforts are right on the money: "Gluten free is here to stay and vegan isn't going anywhere."

Home chefs will rejoice at an exciting addition to the Pocono ProFoods lineup: this fall, Pocono ProFoods will be opening its doors to the community hosting culinary classes. "Knife skills... learning how to sous vide... a night in Paris," Kara says will be some of the classes food enthusiasts can look forward to. Other future plans include a market area where community members can purchase specialty foods directly from Pocono ProFoods. "We want to continue to be a resource for the community. Currently anyone with an account can purchase from us but we are enhancing what we do by making it easier for people to walk in and purchase items," she said. With an appetite for relationships, culinary innovations, and the best quality, Pocono ProFoods is positioned for another successful 75 years – and more!

*By Nathaniel Leies*