

FOOD

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Green B.E.A.N. trying to change the way people eat

Supplier delivers organic food to members' homes.

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When Linda Thompson sits down to dinner at home with her husband and twin 10-year-old girls, she wants to know that the food on their plates not only tastes good, but is good for them, too.

"A few years ago, I started becoming more aware of what I ate, and became even more so when I had kids," she said.

Getting natural, organic and locally grown food was possible, but time-consuming.

"I'd see it at stores, but I'd still have to go to two or three different places to complete my list. I would try to get to the farmer's market, but that's also hard to get to some weeks," said Thompson, who works full time.

For the past eight months, the Dayton resident has opted to order groceries through Green B.E.A.N. delivery, a Midwest organic food and natural grocery supplier, which delivers to members' homes on a weekly or bi-weekly basis throughout the year.

The company was founded in 2007 by the husband and wife team of Matt Ewer and Beth Blessing.

The couple became familiar with organic farming and sales while living

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in Seattle for a few years and decided to bring some of those concepts back to their native Indiana.

The company has since expanded to include Ohio, including the Greater Dayton and Greater Cincinnati areas, and northern Kentucky.

How it works

To participate, customers register for free, agreeing to make a minimum \$35 purchase.

Using an online (greenbeandelivery.com) order form, they can purchase a weekly produce bin, which can be customized, as well as a wide variety of grocery products, including meat and dairy options.

Food is put in coolers with ice and deliveries are made later in the day to cut the amount of time the food is sitting out on porches.

They do their best to provide local food, when in season. "We start as close to home and work out from there," said John Freeland, vice president of delivery.

The company works

closely with a network of small and mid-sized local farmers, and vets all potential suppliers with visits to farms to ensure they are producing food in a sustainable fashion, with no pesticides.

"We're encouraging farmers to know there's another whole market out there for them to reach customers. We're able to pay a fair price for wholesale," Freeland said.

Keeping costs down is key to attracting new Ohio customers, Freeland said, many of whom may be leery of a home delivery service.

"This isn't a luxury service, but a replacement of what you'd be spending elsewhere. We have close to 500 grocery products now for people who want to use us for everything," he said.

What customers are saying

For some of their customers, including Lauren Boudie of Dayton, that's a big part of the appeal.

"We try to spend as much of our dollars locally, for everything, to sup-

port the local economy," said Boudie, a mother of two small children.

She has used the service for almost a year. "For food, it's better for you if it doesn't spend a lot of time on a truck or boat."

Thompson finds she's spending less by using the service. "I never thought I'd be the type of person to have groceries delivered," she said. "But I do find it affordable. I can walk through a grocery store and end up spending \$300, but with this, there's no impulse buying."

Jan Danner of Cincinnati started ordering from Green B.E.A.N. after her neighborhood grocery store closed.

Danner is blind and had to rely on volunteers to transport her to other stores before signing up for this service.

"I used to spend more at my local grocery store," she said.

Price aside, what she appreciates is the taste of the food.

"All of it is so good and fresh," she said.

"Organic is important and local is important to me, but what really matters to me is that the food is full of flavor. Every Wednesday when the box arrives, we call it Christmas. I'm always excited to see what I'm going to cook this week."

Danner has recommended Green B.E.A.N. to four of her friends, and said she's been seeing more and more of the bins popping up in her neighborhood.