When University Dining announced local food truck vendors now serve NC State in four locations, I was among those delighted to have yummy food brought to us. Not only do vendors’ trucks offer interesting alternatives to brown bag and fast food lunches, these are also part of a regional trend. Nine months ago Raleigh passed its first citywide law easing restrictions on where food trucks may set up across town.

To help our readers, the Bulletin has diligently explored the food truck scene at all four locations: Administrative Services II, Biltmore Hall, Venture II-A and Venture II-B on Centennial Campus. Here is a critique of some of our favorites.

**Only Burger**

At Centennial Campus a pack of hungry carnivores — 40 people at least — stalk the Only Burger truck. One customer says she’s eaten from the Only Burger truck every day since it rolled in. I ask if it’s better than Cook-Out and she looks mad. “Way, way, way better,” she insists.

For my taste test I order the Single Burger Lunch Special. I love the fresh pickles, delicately flavored and crunchy, but then I grew up in New Zealand where everything was homemade. That’s probably why the homemade fries also appeal. The beef is devoid of steroids or hormones and is ground daily by their local butcher— delicious.

My critique: $8.57 for a burger and fries seems pricey, but Only Burger is a fine tasting meal. The service is friendly and fast.

**Hibachi Xpress**

Hibachi Xpress is fast food, Japanese-style. At Centennial Campus two Fridays ago, 15 people line up for lunch consisting of rice, chicken or beef boxes with house or teriyaki sauce. I order the stir-fried beef with vegetables.

Here’s my critique: Generous portions and speedy service. At $9.50 for the regular lunch special, the price feels high.

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It’s Saturday morning at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and fellows from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences staff a booth, earnestly filling pots with dirt and fielding questions from children. Javier Brumos, a post-doctoral researcher, is part of Plants 4 Kids, an NC State outreach program through the Department of Genetics. The goal is to help children fall in love with science and plants, and the effort is attracting lots of attention.

It’s my sons’ turn now and Brumos carefully helps them plant pea seeds while explaining how best to ensure their growth. At home we follow his instructions carefully, watering and resting the pots on a sunny windowsill. Four days later, the boys are ecstatic to see little leaves poking up.

“We want kids excited about planting things,” Brumos says. “It’s important to get children interested in genetics while they’re young and this program fosters that.”

Plants 4 Kids, now on its second year, tours Raleigh museums, science fairs and elementary schools and participates in Darwin Day and Biotechnology Day museum exhibits. The monthly demonstrations effectively market Plants 4 Kids and its concepts. But the real promotion is the program’s website which suggests a series of plant-it-yourself experiments such as growing seeds in clay or sand versus soil. Another suggests placing a seedling somewhere sunny and another under a bed to see which grows best. Children are also urged to grow leftover seeds from melons, pumpkins and tomatoes in recycled cups and containers.

There her father built a modest getaway home and garden where her family grew enough herbs, fruits and vegetables to be completely self-sufficient.

Alonso was raised in Spain where four generations of his family farmed olives, oranges and artichokes.

“Children could identify an apple seed and knew where apples came from,” he says nostaligically. “Today, children think food comes from a supermarket.”

The geneticists were equally inspired by the eagerness of their own children and their children’s friends to help plant vegetables at their Cary home.

“We realized children are fascinated with growing things and decided to make

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Best Value – Again

Newly released rankings from U.S. News & World Report’s annual Best Colleges Edition give NC State high marks as a national best value – a measure that reflects academic quality and affordability – and point to NC State as an “up-and-comer” that has recently made the “most promising and innovative changes in the areas of academics, faculty, student life, campus or facilities.”

NC State was the fifth highest rated U.S. public university in the best value ranking, known as “Great Schools at Great Prices,” and was among the top 10 public universities listed as an up-and-comer.

NC State was ranked in the top 29 national universities with the lowest debt load for its students upon graduation. U.S. News also highlighted NC State as one of the top 21 universities in the “Writing in the Disciplines” category – a distinction that helps drive student success, according to the magazine.

In discipline-specific rankings, NC State was tied for 16th among public universities, and 30th overall, in undergraduate engineering.

NC State ranked 51st among public universities and 106th overall on the list of top-tier private and public doctoral universities. Rankings and methodologies are available online.

Confirming its status as a leading university making “promising and innovative changes,” this latest ranking follows NC State’s recent announcements of both a record fundraising year and record research expenditures. Within the last week, the university also announced a prestigious National Science Foundation Engineering Research Center funded by an $18.5 million grant from NSF – making NC State the only university in the country currently leading two active NSF ERCs – and an innovative $10 million agreement with Eastman Chemical Company to conduct joint cutting-edge research.

NC State consistently performs well in a wide variety of rankings, including best-value ratings that combine academic quality with affordability – like those appearing in Princeton Review and Kiplinger’s publications.

Join NC State’s Federal Update Listserv

Will Defense 6.1 funding be cut or grow in FY13? Will Congress pass a Farm Bill? Did Congress increase NSF funding in FY13? These and other pivotal questions will be answered if you join the Federal Update listserv.

The NC State Federal Update summarizes happenings in Washington, D.C. that affect university research, scholarship, regulation and financial aid. This information gives university stakeholders overviews of issues and events at the federal level that could affect NC State.

The Federal Update comes from NC State’s Office of Federal Research Affairs and is sent out several times or once a week, depending on when Congress is in session. To join the listserv send an email to matt_peterson@ncsu.edu

Go Smart and Take the Challenge

Leave your car at home and win a laptop, commuter bike or even cash. Log your carpool, cycle or bus trips in the new GoTriangle Commute Calendar to qualify in the new Smart Commute Challenge 2012. The challenge, which runs from Sept. 1 to Oct. 15, is hosted by GoTriangle, which serves as a regional partnership linking the Triangle’s local transit service providers.

To qualify for those terrific prizes, contestants must pledge to try carpooling, biking, taking the bus or teleworking at least one time between Sept. 1 and Oct. 15. The following resources will help:

> An online ride-matching service links you with people living nearby with similar work hours to help facilitate carpooling.
> Smart commuters can check bus commutes by calling 485-RIDE or use the new online trip planner to find bike routes and how to rack your bike on the bus.

There are weekly challenges including Pedal vs. Metal (Sept. 10 to 16), Try Transit Week (Sept. 17 to 23), Parking Week (Sept. 24 to 30) and Battle of the Brains (Oct. 1 to 15). Winners will be announced by phone or email. Visit http://smartcommutechallenge.org.

Enter Our Statewide Short Story Contest

Are you a writer with a potentially award-winning story? Then enter your idea in the 2012 NC State Short Story Contest, sponsored by the Creative Writing Program.

All N.C. residents may enter, aside from UNC system tenure-track professors, previously published book authors and previous winners. The NC State Short Story Contest is one of the largest free literary competitions in the South with an Oct. 1 deadline for all submissions.

Contestants may enter in the longer fiction and shorter fiction categories for a chance to win $500 or $250 in prize money.

This year’s guest judge, author Tony Earley, will announce the winners and read from his own work at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 7 at Thompson Hall. Earley is the author of several coming-of-age novels, short story collections and essays. His work has appeared in magazines including Harper’s, Esquire and The New Yorker.

Visit http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/creativewriting/story_contest.php

Helicopter Landing This Friday

The NC State chapter of the American Helicopter Society launches its first meeting of the semester on Friday, Sept. 14 from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. To celebrate, the group is hosting a Eurocopter EC135 operated by WakeMed Hospital’s AirMobileOne. The helicopter will land at the vacant lot north of the Innovation Cafe and BTEC building at 2:30 p.m.

Once on the ground, the pilots and medical personnel will discuss their challenges and experiences with flying the aircraft. There will be time for Q&A and a chance to explore the aircraft. The event is free and open to all.
Make Friends through Reading

The Office of Faculty Development is hosting a Reading Circle this fall. Assistant Director Erin Robinson seeks groups of five to seven people to meet periodically to discuss “What the Best College Students Do,” a book by Ken Bain highlighting the importance of critical and creative thinking. Sign up and share your free times here by Friday, Sept. 21.

Don’t Miss Chancellor’s Forum

Mark your calendars for the annual Chancellor’s Fall Forum and State of the University Address on Oct. 17.

The forum will provide an opportunity for the campus community to hear directly from Chancellor Randy Woodson on the most important topics impacting the university, including successes over the past year, the significance and impact of our 125th Anniversary, progress toward the Strategic Plan and looking ahead to the future of NC State.

Chancellor Woodson will deliver a keynote address at 10 a.m. in Stewart Theater at the Talley Student Center. Stay tuned for more information closer to the event.

Show Wolfpack Pride on Red Fridays

A friendly Bulletin reminder to enjoy the warm glow of public approval by wearing red on Fridays. That’s right, every Friday is Red Friday, a day to show your Wolfpack pride and make the campus a more spirited environment.

You won’t be alone. Red Fridays are being enthusiastically supported by students, faculty and staff across campus. Plus, watch for promotions and special events on Fridays this fall to add even more excitement to the new tradition.

If you need to enhance your wardrobe of red garments, visit the NC State Bookstores for official Wolfpack merchandise and clothing.

Food Trucks

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Chirba Chirba

This Chinese-style dumpling maker is the favorite pick of CALS news editor/media specialist Natalie Hampton. Chirba Chirba’s dumplings are delicious, she says, with interesting sauces and flavors such as the Bayside Chive. The steamed edamame make a great, nutritious side.

Here’s her critique: “Buy the five dumpling portion versus 10. This is deceptively filling. The food doesn’t travel too well however, so best eat it there. The pork dumplings are delicately seasoned and wonderful.”

Klausie’s Pizza

I never ate at Klausie’s Pizza, but Kenneth Cash, the main delivery driver from the Business Services warehouse loves the crispy base and quirky flavors, including pepperoni, red onion and red pepper flakes or the “fire belly” with hot Thai chili butter and pineapple purée. Slices cost $3 to $5.

Here’s his critique: “This is a great, cheap lunch out. I’ve been four times this week.”

Chick-N-Que

This is one of the newer trucks on campus. It is Eastern North Carolina-style barbecue with a twist — sandwiches using pulled chicken versus pork and a nice, tangy coleslaw. I tried it out.

Here’s my critique: If you like Eastern North Carolina-style barbecue, which is based in pepper and vinegar, this is great food. I liked the freshness of the coleslaw. This is a good and fairly filling lunch.

Deli-icious

Deli-icious offers paninis, salads, vegan and vegetarian food for a low price. This is admirable given that the menu contains local items such as fig jam. One enthused customer from Human Resources weighs in.

Here’s her critique: “Delicious, like the name says, with fresh, interesting sandwiches. I’ve returned five times in two weeks. How do I budget for this lunch versus brown bag? I don’t tell my husband.”

Plants For Kids

Continued from page 2

something more formal that others could use,” Stepanova says.

“Our goal is developing scientific thinking. If one plant grows taller than the other, children ask why. It could be different soil, conditions or a damaged seed. Kids are observant. They notice differences.”

Rewarding Work

Fitting Plants 4 Kids around their teaching work challenges the professors, and the program requires regular updates and management. Recently Alonso and Brumos translated the website into Spanish to better reach Latino children.

Linda Robles, a post-doctoral researcher and Plants 4 Kids manager, also works hard establishing new demonstrations and seeking the best seeds and soil for the experiments. The Plants 4 Kids seeds my children grew came from a Latin food market, Robles tells me. Some grew two inches within one week.

But the work feels noble and rewarding, especially when children share updates and questions about their experiments.

“Seeing the children’s excitement makes this program worthwhile for all of us,” Stepanova says.

The Bulletin is the official faculty and staff news source at North Carolina State University and is available online at ncsu.edu/bulletin. To submit information and story ideas, send an e-mail to bulletin@ncsu.edu. Upcoming events should be posted to the university calendar, which automatically feeds the Bulletin home page.

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