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The magazine of
the Mizzou Alumni Association

[Home](#) » [Fall 2010](#) » [Alumni Profiles](#) » [Blue Bird Bistro](#)

Alumni Profile

Blue Bird Bistro

Jane Zieha remembers buying fresh milk from the University of Missouri dairy with her father, Eugene, an accounting professor at MU from 1964 to 1985. “I was raised eating fresh food from local farms,” says Zieha, BS BA ’76. “Once I got older, I realized that everybody didn’t eat the way my family did.”

Her desire for locally produced food is still strong.

After graduating from MU, Zieha worked as an accountant, but when an opportunity came for her to buy Blue Bird Bistro, she took it.

Operating in Kansas City, Mo., since March 2001, Zieha’s restaurant focuses on serving local, organic food from more than 40 farmers near Kansas City. Blue Bird Bistro was named one of the 10 best places to eat healthy on the road by USA Today in 2007. But the restaurant had a bit of a rough start.

“I thought everybody would love the idea of local and organic food,” Zieha says. But the reaction was, “‘Oh, I don’t want to eat granola.’ People would hear organic and think of Birkenstocks and hairy legs.”

So, Zieha put on the suits from her days as a CPA and headed out to promote her restaurant as a place to get “wonderful, flavorful food” — not just local and organic.

Her hard work paid off.

Now the local, organic food movement is taking off, and the organic products industry is one of the fastest growing areas of the economy. “More and more people are concerned about






Jane Zieha, BS BA '76, has loved local food from an early age. Today she spreads that love from the [Blue Bird Bistro](#) in Kansas City, Mo. Photo by Rob Hill

what they consume,” Zieha says. During the peak growing season, the only items Zieha serves that are not produced locally are things such as coffee, sugar and certain spices, none of which grow in the Midwest.

Now, that’s fresh. — Josh Chittum

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Last updated: Feb. 15, 2013