

## Spotlight on Juniper Restaurant, Ridge Spring, S.C.

For centuries Juniper berries been used for medicinal purposes and even today ‘Juniper’ is a cure for another ailment – an empty stomach. This Juniper is a restaurant in the town of Ridge Spring and member of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture’s Fresh on the Menu program.

Juniper’s owners, Brandon and Jeanne Velie, opened the restaurant five years ago on East Main Street and since then it has been well-received in the community. Their restaurant is housed in a building with a past just as colorful as the local artwork that adorns the walls. Built in the 1890s, this building was once a hardware store and an auto parts store. Today, Brandon and Jeanne have turned it into a dining destination in this rural community.



**Jeanne and Brandon Velie  
Juniper’s, Ridge Spring, SC**

“We felt we could have a positive impact,” Jeanne Velie said. “People are very receptive to what we do here.” That reception extends to beyond the local area and people come from neighboring towns, across the state, and as far away as California to sample the local fare.

Only the freshest ingredients are used and those come from a variety of places including local farmers markets or farmers delivering directly to the restaurant. The farmers who supply Juniper are recognized weekly on the restaurant’s menu with the name of their farm next to the dish that uses their product.

“We try to source as close as we can,” Jeanne Velie said of their food coming from local farmers. “We feel it’s very important and it makes sense.”

With shopping local farmers markets and farmers bringing what is in season directly to the restaurant the Velies can not only experiment with new food items, but they can be flexible with what’s on the menu. They change the dinner menu every weekend. And any given week the names of local farms changes as the items on the menu change.

“We’re so fortunate to be in an area with a wide variety of produce that’s available,” Jeanne Velie said. “Food is better when it’s in season and local.”

Brandon studied culinary arts in the U.S. Marines where he learned to cook, and Jeanne has worked in varying positions in the restaurant business for years, but this is the first time owning a restaurant. Before moving to Ridge Spring with their children, they lived in Virginia where together they learned to appreciate local farmers markets and buying locally grown. That appreciation has translated into their selections for the meals served.

They joined Fresh on the Menu recently after the program began in 2008. To be a part of the Fresh on the Menu program, restaurants promise to serve at least 25 percent of their dishes from local sources (when in season). At Juniper, Brandon Velie said they strive to achieve at least 50 percent from local sources.

The menu is always changing, depending on what’s in season. So if you’re ever in Ridge Spring, stop by Juniper for lunch or dinner, call them at 803-685-7547 or stop by any time.