MBA grads go whole hog into new venture

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The local food movement is gaining popularity among foodies nationwide. In Louisiana, it seems like old hat. Whether they are eating fresh-caught shrimp, creole tomatoes or Ponchatoula strawberries, Louisianians feel that locally originated food is better. Two 2012 Freeman School MBA grads are hoping they can bring Louisiana meat into that number.



Freeman grads Seth Hamstead and Simone Reggie are the founders of Cleaver & Co., a locally sourced, whole animal butcher shop.

This summer, Simone Reggie and Seth Hamstead are opening Cleaver & Co. in New Orleans, a locally sourced, whole-animal butcher shop. The idea is to buy whole cows, pigs, chickens and ducks from South Louisiana farms.

“Our rule of thumb is 200 miles, whenever possible,” Hamstead says. “We know that sometimes we may have to go a little bit farther, but we want to make sure that we can tell the consumer exactly where it’s from.”

Hamstead calls the practice of buying whole animals and butchering them here “a more sustainable business practice” that benefits both the supplier and the consumer.

“We’re making sure the farmers are getting as much as they can out of that animal,” Hamstead says. “We’re also able to choose the farmers who are doing things in the way we think is right. The animals aren’t coming from confined feedlots; they’re not being raised in industrial conditions.”

The result, say Hamstead and Reggie, is a better-tasting product — something residents of food-obsessed New Orleans should appreciate.

While both admit that beef doesn’t usually come to mind when people think of what Louisiana does best, they say there is a long tradition of cattle ranching here that has been “pushed aside by the industrial food system.” They hope they can take New Orleanians’ zeal for local seafood and translate that into a desire for local, “land-based protein.”

“There’s such a market for local seafood,” Reggie says. “You see the signs for Louisiana seafood everywhere, and that’s great. We’re looking to make a movement for Louisiana meat as well.”

For more information about the business, visit Cleaver & Co.