

## More Than Meats the Eye

Flagstaff has always been a meat-and-potatoes town, so the arrival of Diablo Burger was no surprise. It's the restaurant's way of doing business that'll turn your head.

By NORA BURBA TRULSSON

FIVE YEARS AGO, DERRICK Widmark was a writer and a commercial filmmaker, living a comfortable urban life in Manhattan. Today, he's running a burger joint in downtown Flagstaff. Yes, this is a success story, both for Widmark and his hungry patrons.

Widmark opened Diablo Burger last year, and, almost instantly, foodies began lining up for his gourmet twists on an American classic, ordering the Vitamin B, a burger topped

with bacon, beets and blue cheese, or a DB House, which comes layered with homemade pesto and an egg over-easy. All of the burgers are served on English muffins branded with the Diablo Burger logo and a side of Belgian-style *frites*. What burger eaters might appreciate most about the restaurant, however, is that everything is served on a bed of sustainability. Widmark's vision is to make Diablo Burger one of the greenest restaurants in Arizona.

The road to sustainable gourmet burgers began in 1993, when Widmark traveled to Arizona. "I came through Flagstaff and remarked that I could see myself living here someday," he recalls, "words I never uttered anywhere else." By 2006, he was looking for a greener

lifestyle and began searching for jobs in the Southwest. He landed a position as communications director for Flagstaff's Diablo Trust, a collaborative land management group spearheaded by two historic Northern Arizona ranches, the Flying M and the Bar T Bar.

Not long into his new job, it occurred to him that the open-range, antibiotic- and hormone-free beef raised on those ranches wasn't being served locally. A light bulb went off, and Diablo Burger was born.

Armed with the motto, "All About Local," and a desire to consider eco-friendliness in all decisions, Widmark found a pocket-sized space in downtown's Heritage Square and set about refurbishing it. The 30-foot diameter, cylindrical space once supported the old J.C. Penney's parking garage. "Our walls are made of 16-inch, rebar-enforced concrete," Widmark says. "More than a few of our customers have joked that should we ever get bombed, they'd like to reserve a seat in our restaurant." With copper-topped tables, a cozy, curving bar and walls decorated with vintage concert posters, the small space encourages conversations between groups of guests.

With Diablo Trust beef as the centerpiece of the eight-burger menu, green also colors just about everything else at the restaurant. Lettuce and vegetables for the house salad come from local farms, as does the bacon for burger toppings. Wine comes from Verde Valley wineries. Used french-fry oil gets recycled as biodiesel fuel. And, keeping an eye on the West's most precious resource, water, Widmark skipped the dishwasher and instead uses recyclable/compostable cutlery, cups and paper goods. Even the payment method is green — cash only, which Widmark notes keeps costs down and money in the community.

Eco-friendliness aside, it's the burgers — like The Blake, topped with Hatch chile mayo, more green chiles and cheddar cheese — that keep 'em coming back for more, especially on weekend nights. "Come early or come late on weekend nights to get a seat inside," Widmark recommends. Or, try the greenest way to enjoy a

Diablo Burger: Get it to go and enjoy it in Flagstaff's wide-open spaces.

Diablo Burger is located at 120 N. Leroux Street in Flagstaff. For more information, call 928-774-3274 or visit [www.diabloburger.com](http://www.diabloburger.com).



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