

Chef and Restaurateur Talk Food Insecurity and Building Alton's Culinary Scene Through Flock

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - Two new names have arrived on Alton's culinary scene, and they hit the ground running at Flock Food Truck Park and Bar this past weekend.

Lasse Sorenson and John Michel are excited to expand Alton's foodie scene and bring more culinary culture to the Riverbend while fighting food insecurity. Their mission has started with [the permanent installation of two food trucks, Byrdies and Space Shuttle Café](#), at Flock. Sorenson, the host of the Emmy-nominated television show "Food is Love," and restaurateur Michel will oversee operations at Space Shuttle Café.

“At the heart of everything is using food as a way to connect and bless people,” Michel explained. “We didn’t create food trucks, we just changed the way that we employ them. When you combine it with people passionate about food, it’s magic.”

Michel is the previous owner of Space Shuttle Café, a converted DC-3 airplane that once flew missions in World War II. When he appeared on Sorenson’s show two years ago, the pair connected over their interest in fighting food insecurity. Michel and Sorenson have collaborated to send food trucks to food deserts and provide free meals to unhoused community members and other organizations throughout St. Louis.

John Simmons and AltonWorks brought the duo to the Riverbend to set up Byrdies and Space Shuttle Café at Flock. In Alton, they hope to spread awareness about their mission while also cultivating the culinary landscape.

“I’m so excited about being a part of the plan turning Alton into a culinary destination, but I will say that it’s going to take a village,” Sorenson said. “We’re going to have to get to know everybody and all the players, and we’re also here to help what’s here now. We’re interested to hear what locals are interested in food-wise, what they want to see...Maybe if we can raise the bar for everybody, we’re going to have more people coming over here, and that means there’s going to be more demands for restaurants and everybody’s going to thrive.”

Sorenson said he loves Alton so much that he’s planning to move his family to the city in the next few months. In the meantime, he’s been busy collaborating with Michel and Laura Windisch, who oversees operations at Flock, to get the food trucks up and running.

Flock opened with Byrdies and Space Shuttle Café on Friday, April 12, 2024, and they had a successful opening weekend. The food truck park and bar will be open every day throughout the 2024 season. While they will have a rotating guest list of food trucks, Byrdies and Space Shuttle Café will always be onsite to provide fresh food to customers.

Sorenson and Michel will also be at Flock throughout the season to talk with people about their goals for Alton. Sorenson said they have an “open-door policy” and look forward to receiving feedback.

The duo also promises to share plans with the community as they develop, including information about how they will fight food insecurity and bridge the gap between food deserts throughout the Riverbend. Until then, they encourage people to stop by Flock and check out the new food trucks.

“It’s a very efficient truck with the way it works, so it lends itself as a perfect incubation lab, as a perfect conversation-starter, and really I think it reflects the spirit of innovation, opportunity, great food, hospitality, everything we’re about,” Michel said of Space Shuttle Café. “I guarantee what they are going to get is smiles, great service, a wonderful experience, and they’re going to know what the words ‘food is love’ mean when they go to Flock.”

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