

Meet Chef David Lee

David Lee is the co-founder and president of the Field Roast Grain Meat Company.

In the late 1980's, Chef David Lee decided it was time to change his path and do something good for people. He left the fine dining restaurant circuit to establish Seattle-based FareStart (originally named Common Meals), a culinary job training program with the mission of serving and supporting the city's homeless and disadvantaged populations. His innovative approach involved cooking nutritious, culturally authentic and familiar foods for those in need.

While he grew FareStart into a highly successful nonprofit, David launched FoodCircle, which was the first and longest running online community of professional chefs and cooks from around the world.

His interest soon turned to creating vegetarian meats — specifically, how Buddhist monks developed Mien Ching, or “Buddha’s Food,” which perfectly aligned with their values of kindness to all beings. David began experimenting with Mien Ching ingredients. His European culinary background and love of strong, bold flavors helped inspire the creation of Field Roast, a charcuterie-style vegetarian grain meat.

In 1997, he established Seattle-based Field Roast Grain Meat Company with brother Richard Lee. Field Roast vegetarian meats quickly gained national attention, and David has become recognized as a leader in the fast-growing segment of vegetarian food products. Field Roast products are now sold in grocery stores nationwide, and are widely available at restaurants, universities and stadiums.

David is a long-time supporter of animal rights causes and organizations working to end farm animal suffering. In 2011, his work culminated in two humanitarian awards: Farm Sanctuary's Corporate Leader in Compassion Award and the James Beard Foundation's Humanitarian of the Year Award, given to FareStart and accepted by David on behalf of the organization.

David is a dynamic public speaker whose work has been featured in Food Arts Magazine, Seattle Times, NPR, Food Product Design Magazine, as well as many other media sources.