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News

**Restaurant focuses on super fresh, local ingredients**

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Tom Burfield

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VO: TOM BURFIELD  
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Tom Burfield

Erik Cutter (left), managing director of Alegria Fresh in Laguna Beach, Calif., and Frank DeLoach, executive chef at NEApollitan Pizzeria and Birreria in Laguna Beach, examine Japanese black trifele tomatoes at Alegria's quarter-acre hydroponic vertical farm. The facility provides a wide range of

LAGUNA BEACH, Calif. — Alegria Fresh, a quarter-acre hydroponic vertical farm, is offering a handful of local restaurants and health-conscious consumers nearly four dozen kinds of greens and vegetables that grow up — not out.

The Alegria Fresh farm has more than 170 hydroponic towers that grow 10,000 plants without toxic pesticides, said managing director Erik Cutter.

The company can deliver nearly four dozen kinds of salad greens and fresh vegetables daily.

The Alegria Fresh facility is the first West Coast demonstration center that showcases what



products that are grown pesticide free and delivered to a handful of restaurants and individuals within hours after they are harvested.

Cutter characterizes as “high-performance urban agriculture” using the Verti-Gro Inc. system.

Verti-Gro has been up and running on the East Coast — including the Epcot theme park at Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Fla. — for 16 years, he said.

The system uses 90% less water, 50% less fertilizer and 70% less land than traditional row crops, he said.

A chef himself, Cutter teaches others how to get the most out of his product, which includes nearly two dozen varieties of salad greens, several kinds of zucchini, tomatoes and chili peppers and blue turban water squash.

Cutter said he’s talked to a half a dozen area eateries about installing their own Verti-Gro systems close to or adjacent to their restaurants.

“There’s a tremendous interest in this and very little information out there about it,” he said. “That’s what we’re trying to change.”



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MEXICO CROSSINGS THROUGH ARIZONA, CALIFORNIA AND TEXAS DISTRICT — Crossings (32-43-41) — Movement expected to remain about the same. Trading slow. Prices lower. Flats of 12 6-ounce cups with lids \$7-8. Includes palletizing and cooling. Wide range in quality. Prices include some half dry pint containers.



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