

Local News

January 30, 2009

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Going Local North Dakota Summit – January 13, 2009

It was a fruitful day

With temperatures a mild four degrees, having risen from the overnight low of minus ten on Tuesday, Jan. 13, foodies flocked to the Bismarck Civic Center for the first local foods summit. It was held in Bismarck in tandem with the 20th annual Marketplace for Entrepreneurs.

A beautiful day with more than five inches of snow falling from dusk to dawn provided more than moisture for a growing itch to begin planting vegetable seeds.

Fertilizing thoughts of spring, green leaves and sunshine warming the earth were keynote speakers Pat Garrity and Bob Waldrop.

Garrity spoke on “Local Foods – Not just a fad,” and Waldrop explained the workings of the Oklahoma City Food Cooperative distribution site found at: www.oklahomafood.coop/retail.php.

Following Waldrop, Holly Mawby from the MSU – Bottineau Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture presented a preliminary report on the distribution system study for North Dakota local foods. A printed copy of the report will be available in the near future.

Issues of hunger and diet were addressed before and during lunch with guests Steve Sellent and Kelly Ask from LSS Great Plains Food Bank, and Dr. Gerald Combs, from the USDA Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Center.

For afternoon sessions on winter gardening, greenhouse construction, food safety, community gardens, selling to restaurants and grocers and farmers market selling savvy Carol Ford, Chuck Waibel, Kenan Bullinger, Tracy Stuart, Kent Morrow and

Tom Kalb joined the morning speakers.

The summit was well received by all participants and included a special visit by Agriculture Commissioner Roger Johnson and Sara Garland, Senator Kent Conrad’s chief of staff.

Conrad and Johnson are sponsors of the Marketplace event.

Survey comments on the summit were very positive. Many would have liked to have had more time to network, really enjoyed the breakout sessions in the afternoon and thought the lunch was great.

Comments directed towards specific classes included hearing more of Chuck Waibel and Carol Ford’s presentations; more specifics on Bob Waldrop’s permaculture techniques; and of course, the reviews on the restaurant promo by Annie Carlson were enthusiastically received.

Overall, North Dakota’s first food summit was a success in spite of the uncertain forecast.

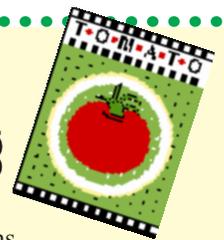
The video tapes of the keynote speakers and some of the breakout sessions have been edited and will be posted on the ag department website. Some of the handouts will also be made available for review.

Local foods information, surveys and other ag related information can be at: www.agdepartment.com.



Ready for gardening?

It’s not too early to begin your planning



What: Organic Gardening Workshop

When: Saturday, Feb. 7, 2009, from 10 am - 4 pm

Where: FARRMS Training Facility, Medina ND

Cost: \$10 (includes lunch)

Topics to be covered: seed selection, rotations, weed control, mulching, and companion planting. The workshop will be taught by experienced organic gardeners from North

Dakota. And there will be time for questions.

Registration for the workshop is \$10 and includes lunch. Please register by February 2, by calling FARRMS at 701.486.3569 or emailing info@farrms.org.

This workshop is sponsored by FARRMS Foundation. For more information about our educational opportunities, visit www.farrms.org.





Updates on local foods projects in
North Dakota communities

Localmotion

LOCAL FOODS MEETING PLANNED IN GRAND FORKS AFTER WELLNESS FAIR

The public is invited to attend a local foods meeting from 6 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 3, in the Oriole Room of the Alerus Center in Grand Forks.

The meeting follows a wellness fair which runs from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. and is hosted by the Grand Forks Public Schools Child Nutrition Program.

The purpose of the wellness fair is to educate those attending on the abundance of local foods available to them and how to better use local foods when planning menus.

Following the seventh annual fair themed "Going Local and Healthy" will be information about the "Going Local North Dakota" initiative presented by Chuck Fleming of the ND Dept. of Agriculture.

The ag department will also be one of the wellness fair vendors.

EVERYONE who is interested in local foods, growing, processing, food service, etc. etc. is invited to attend these free events.

BOWDON/HARVEY and surrounding area

Area residents will be meeting for a third time at the Bowdon Community Center to discuss progress on the assessment surveys and other local foods projects.

The meeting will be held at 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 16. Everyone is asked to bring an "as-local-as-possible" dish to share.

About 15 people attended the meeting Jan. 19 to discuss potential projects for local foods such as a fruit stand, niche crops, food processing and developing sources for products currently imported.

The three topics selected were:

1. Education programs
2. A Highway 200/52 Produce Stand
3. Expanding Farmers' Markets

Several people from the Carrington area also attended the meeting. They were invited to participate with Wells County people until an initiative could be pursued in their own area.

GRANT COUNTY will be reporting its progress in the near future.

NAPOLEON CHECKS OUT LOCAL FOODS AS A NEW HORIZONS COMMUNITY

More than 40 residents attended a meeting at the Downtowner in Napoleon to hear USDA representatives talk about possible financing for projects and to learn about the Local Foods Initiative.

In addition for qualifying for the third round of Horizon's Communities, the city will also be celebrating its 125th anniversary this summer.

Progress on the any local foods initiatives planned will be reported as work continues. Carmen Rath-Wald has been heading up the Horizon's Community work and will be sending out local foods surveys.

HAZEN/BEULAH and surrounding area

After a December meeting on local foods in Hazen that opened with a hot bowl of stew compliments of Duke Rosendahl, about a dozen people began talking about local foods initiatives for Beulah, Hazen and the surrounding area.

Heading up the local foods campaign Rosendahl, staying in close contact with the participants, shared some goals for the community.

Plans are to begin monthly seminars in April dealing with various gardening subjects. One community is currently seeking space to begin a community garden. Several members of the group attended the local foods summit in Bismarck on Jan. 13.

In the near future, the group will gather to begin work on the community surveys (available at www.agdepartment.com under local foods link at the bottom of the page.) Also, a soon-to-be producer has expressed interest in a producer coop which Rosendahl thinks is a "great idea."

Anyone in that area who is interested in joining the local foods movement can contact:

Duke Rosendahl - Hazen Community Development, Inc.
P. O. Box 717
Hazen, ND 58545-0717
701-748-6886
www.hazennd.org

Need some assistance organizing your
community's local food initiative?
Call 1-800-242-7535 or 701-328-4763



Local light

Going local in January

Only a clipping of the Moon remains, keeping company with Antares, the brightest star of Scorpius, the scorpion, in the sky at dawn. It's not too difficult to be star gazing at the crack of dawn in January in North Dakota. The sun doesn't rise until after 8 a.m. Of course, by comparison to the length of days before the winter solstice in December, we have gained about 10 minutes of daylight each morning as we begin our day.

Abundant snow covers the earth like sculpted white frosting hiding the color of the cake beneath; bare ground so scarce the pheasants are desperately scratching around the trees near our yard seeking food and gravel to survive. Some will not make it to spring.

It's a bit difficult to think of local food this time of year. Short of eating one the many pheasants, rabbits or deer cutting tracks across the fields of snow like clockwork each day at dawn and dusk.

As far as my local foods, there remains a squash from my Uncle Ed's garden on the cupboard, some local chickens, rhubarb and sliced apples in the freezer, flour from North Dakota mills, one quart of tomatoes from two summers ago, pickled beets, chokecherry and plum jellies and six pints of green tomato salsa in my larder.

Yep, it's hard to think local in the middle of winter in the northern plains.

But winter is good for hunkering down and catching up on the stack of books on my dresser that grew so tall I had finally to hide a few to keep from feeling overwhelmed with words.

Saturday, I began reading "The Red Convertible" by Louise Erdrich, a local author. Let me rephrase that, "a wonderful, wonderful author from North Dakota."

That meant I finally finished "Animal, Vegetable, Miracle" by Barbara Kingsolver before adding her book to my ever growing library.

Sue B. Balcom photo



A fat pheasant scratching at a patch of bare ground underneath a pine tree north of Mandan.

Kingsolver's book ended with a few thoughts on how we can eat responsibly. It is not realistic to expect many families to accomplish what hers did in their "year of food life."

Her guidelines are thoughtful and can be used to begin baby steps in local foods.

She suggests visiting a farmers market, that's it. Don't go with the goal of buying anything, but check it out, learn, ask questions, get to know a farmer. Educate yourself.

✓ Pay attention to what's in season. Look for regional strengths. What you learn at a farmers market may be used in a grocery store to make some better food choices for you and your family.

✓ If items are available, and in season, get them from a farmer, or ask the grocer to stock local, in-season produce.

✓ Learn to cook. Plan your meals with the season. Find recipes and then make a shopping list for those ingredients.

✓ Use your energy instead of the industry's. Food processing takes energy in preparation and then transportation. The fewer the ingredients, the less energy is used to produce a product. Prepare your own foods.

✓ Buy fruits and vegetables grown as close to your home as possible. An example would be choosing Washington State apples over New Zealand apples.

✓ Consider using dried fruits over fresh ones, saving transportation costs for moving water across the globe. Remember, tomatoes are 95 percent water.

✓ If something needs to be refrigerated, or frozen, extra energy was used to keep it that way as it made its way to your dinner table. Something to consider.

✓ Support the organic industry. Organic farming methods have reduced pesticide loads in our soil and water. It should be a consideration.

How local is local? Well, start small - a journey of a thousand miles begins with that first step.

To learn more about the Kingsolver family, visit www.AnimalVegetableMiracle.com.



By Sue B. Balcom

Don't miss the upcoming

NPSAS Conference Feb. 13-14

The Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society will be celebrating its 30th Anniversary at its annual winter conference, Feb. 13-14, in Huron, S. Dak.

Visit www.npsas.org/events.html for a complete schedule, registration forms and more information.

Local foods education website project in planning stages

Maggie Adamek, from the University of Minnesota, and Sue Balcom from the North Dakota Ag Department, have started discussing a cooperative local foods project with South Dakota, Minnesota and North Dakota.

Adamek, who coordinated a local foods summit in Breezy Point, Minn., early last November, would like the three states to coop on writing a SARE grant to create a web-based education site pertaining to local foods.

She said, that North Dakota is making some strides and it seems Minnesota is slower in promoting local foods initiatives. At the same time, communities are facing infrastructure issues and people in all three states are asking the same questions. So, rather than reinvent the wheel, Adamek suggested working together on a web-based local foods site with information such as how to start a farmers market in your community and good

agricultural practice training.

Using the Web, information would be available to anyone at any time day or night. There would also be POD casts for download and review on the go. The site could be used to link an entire library of information and resources on local foods.

Printed publications, seminars and webinars are also potential spin-offs of the Web proposal.

A second conference call has been set for 9 a.m. Friday, Feb. 13. Adamek will be contacting her colleagues at South Dakota state to join in the conversation at that time..

Any thoughts or ideas on visions you have for such a project can be e-mailed to suebalcom@nd.gov.

Comments can also be made by calling the North Dakota Department of Agriculture at 701-328-4763 or 1-800-242-7535.

Meats: Another North Dakota local food opportunity

North Dakota Department of Agriculture marketing staff held a meeting with Dr. Andrea Grondahl, director of the North Dakota State Meat and Poultry Inspection program, in December to discuss the finer points of meat processing in the state. The department's goal is to incorporate this information into a "how to" sell locally guide to be published this spring.

Like most regulated entities, North Dakota can impose stricter regulations on processing plants, but not less restrictive than the federal regulations.

Basically there are three types of meat processing plants in North Dakota. However plants may be a combination of kinds of processing.

1. Custom/retail exempt
2. State inspected
3. Federal inspected

There are 95 custom exempt processing plants in North Dakota, and most also sell retail product.

A custom processor can process animals that are to be consumed only by the owner of the animal. That ownership must be maintained from start to finish. The end product cannot be sold to other consumers by wholesale or through retail stores. These meat processing facilities must meet the requirements of the state for construction, lighting, equipment, sanitation and related items; they are exempt only from the inspection processes involved in the preparation of the meat.

If a plant is custom/retail exempt, it can retail meat products to consumers if the products processed at the plant are made from state or federal inspected meats. Most businesses in North Dakota are so small that it may not be feasible to slaughter animals because the whole animal cannot be use. Most plants

purchase federally inspected meat in boxes for processing. Custom plants are required to follow local and state health codes.

Official state inspected processing and slaughter plants operate under regulated inspection either through the state or federal grant program.

The ND Department of Agriculture issues the state grants. Meat with the state stamp may be sold only within the boundaries of North Dakota. There are 15 state inspected processing plants after the official opening of house ribs in Medina last week.

Only six plants in the state inspection program slaughter animals, the number of live animals going into plants is quite small. The largest plant is located in Enderlin – Maple Creek.

With a federal grant from the Food Safety and Inspection Services, USDA, a plant can sell its meat across state lines. There are 20 such plants in North Dakota with eight plants dealing with live animals.

Buffalo and elk do not fall under federal regulation programs, but North Dakota requires those animals to be inspected if they are to be sold.

Poultry producers may sell their birds as an official state slaughter and/or processing plant or must qualify for a federal exemption.

Certain exempt producers may grow, slaughter and process 20,000 birds in a calendar year if they meet the facility sanitation requirements set by the state. Only one annual exemption per producer is allowed. This allows a farmer to sell wholesale and retail direct if they work under the proper sanitary conditions.

If you have questions about meat processing or the sale of meat products, contact the Department of Agriculture's state meat and poultry inspection program staff at 701-328-2231.



Calendar of upcoming events and opportunities

FEBRUARY 3 Local Foods meeting 6 to 9 p.m. at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks, following the Grand Forks Public Schools wellness fair. The meeting is free and open to the public. Please spread the word.

ONGOING **Growing Power workshop series - Milwaukee, Wis.**

“Growing Your Community Food System from the Ground Up” workshop series features hands on workshops to learn, plan ,develop, operate and sustain community food projects. Topics include bee keeping, community project design, living biological growing systems, hoop house construction, year round production and marketing, animal health and aquaculture/aquaponics.

Dates for the upcoming workshops are:

- Feb. 21 and 22
- March 7 and 8
- April 18 and 19 (special training date April 17)
- May 16 and 17 (special training date May 15)

Cost is \$325 per person and includes five meals

For more information e-mail katie@growingpower.org.

APRIL 23-24 **National Small Food Manufacturers Conference – University of Nebraska Lincoln**
At the Holiday Inn, downtown Lincoln, Neb.

This is the first national conference designed specifically for micro and small food manufacturers throughout the country. It includes current topics and industry recognized national speakers which will educate and motivate participants. Attendees will:

- Learn from national industry respected, knowledgeable speakers
- Learn how to expand and grow their businesses
- Participate in interactive sessions
- Explore new opportunities
- Network with peers and industry experts

To take advantage of the **Early Bird Discount**, register before **March 1**, and the fee will be **\$159**. After that, the registration fee is \$189. VISA, American Express or MasterCard will be accepted. On-line registrations will be taken until **April 15**. For more information, contact Jill Gifford by e-mail at jgifford1@unl.edu or call 402-472-2819.

Container Gardening Website Launched

University of Illinois Extension has launched a new website to help create special gardens to fit any situation. “Successful Container Gardens” contains a wide array of information. The new website discusses choosing a container, selecting soil mixes, choosing and combining plants, fertilizing, watering and grooming basics.

Container gardening may be an option for urban gardeners. “In a world of limited time and space, container gardens seem to make more and more sense,” said Greg Stack, U of I Extension horticulture educator and one of the new website’s authors.

<http://search.live.com/results.aspx?q=Successful+Container+Gardens&FORM=SOLTFD>

Is your community planning a local foods meeting or event?

Send your information to suebalcom@nd.gov or go to <http://goinglocalnd.ning.com/> and add your information to the calendar of events.

In 2006 Rhode Island farmers sold

544 bushels of apples to schools and

1,700 pounds of potatoes

0 quarts of strawberries

0 gallons of apple cider

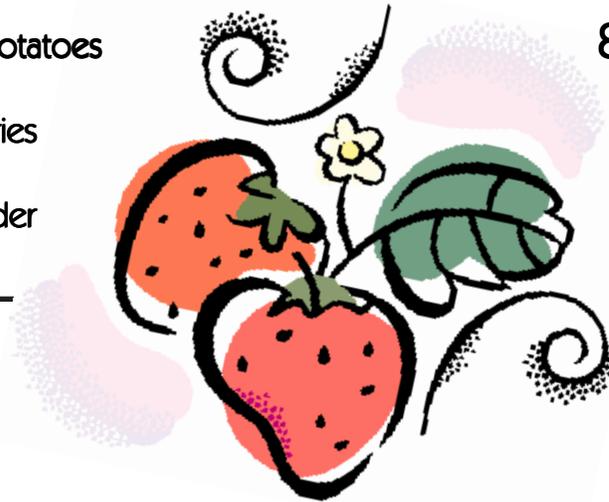
In 2007 Rhode Island farmers sold

13,162 bushels of apples to schools

8,800 pounds of potatoes

260 quarts of strawberries

252 gallons of apple cider



Community Food Security Coalition hosts distribution and source identification learning call

Members of the national Farm to School community took part in a conference call on Jan. 20 to discuss product source integrity or systems for farm to school programs.

Discussion centered on how to trace products to the source and verify “local” claims made by distributors.

Dorothy Brayley, executive director of Kids First in Providence, R.I., presented her ideas first. The Kids First program was started to improve nutrition in schools and child care facilities.

Since the state is so small, Rhode Island has adopted a local foods policy that includes any foods produced or grown within its boundaries.

Both Brayley, and the second guest speaker Jamie Moore, director of sourcing and sustainability for Eat’n Park Hospitality Group/Parkhurst Dining emphasized the fact that food service directors must be able to purchase local foods from distributors. Moore’s guideline for local includes any product grown or produced within 125 miles of the distributor.

However, Brayley said, “You cannot assume the distributor will be honest,” when it comes to identifying local products. She cited personal experience in tracing back products that did not come from the source identified on the box. It takes a commitment between the school and the farmer too.

Schools need passionate school food service directors to make a good connection between school lunch and farmers, she said. It’s called the “eyeball factor” or face-to-face. Even though a distributor may pick up and deliver farmers’ produce, lunch directors in Rhode Island are encouraged to call the farmers, and vice versa.

Building a relationship with the producer will assist in double checking sources on fresh sheets and data bases kept by the food service directors.

Signage in the lunch line with the farm’s logo or face of the

farmer also engages the community in source accountability. Many times parents or students will recognize someone they know or will get to know because of what they are growing for school lunches.

Moore said you need to find a distributor that understands local foods and makes a conscious effort to source local products only. He receives a produce market report from each distributor on Monday morning based on farmers’ input on what is available by Friday evening.

Ultimately, both Moore and Brayley agree, tracing the produce to its source begins with the name of the farmer or farm on the packaging. If that’s impossible, a sticker on the produce could be used.

However, Moore said a packing date on the back of the farmers business card tucked into a box will also help identify the produce if distributed with other farmers’ wares. He also has developed a regional booklet of farms they regularly purchase from that includes a profile, photo of the farmer(s) and a growing list.

“Distributors need to understand the importance of local. The buyer and the owner of the company develop a marking price, he said. “To market local products, customers must demand local.”

*Schools
need
passionate
school food
service
directors...*

**Dorothy Brayley
Executive director**

Hard work pays off

Montana Extension Agent **Bruce Smith** received recognition from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ed Schafer for his Community GATE's Farm-to-Table Project.

The Glendive, Mont., Farm-to-Table project is committed to getting fresh, local food into the hands and mouths of local residents in eastern Montana and western North Dakota. Smith and area volunteers have formed an agricultural marketing cooperative to help farmers and ranchers market their food products locally. There's also a community garden in Glendive and the organization houses the local food bank. The group has also opened a small food manufacturing business that uses locally grown products to make flours and soup and pancake mixes.

In letters of recognition, Schafer specifically highlighted contributions by community volunteers that included Glendive's Farm-To-Table project.

Farm-To-Table volunteers were honored for their part in the national Fight Hunger Initiative created by Schafer. He launched this initiative and patterned it after North Dakota efforts that raised 80,000 pounds of food bank donations when volunteers were asked to "fill the dome" of a local sports arena.

Smith can be reached by e-mail at: awextn@middrivers.com.

Orders being taken for Garden Goddess greenhouse guide

Chuck Waibel and Carol Ford were a huge hit at the first annual Local Foods Summit held in January in Bismarck.

Information from most of the summit presenters will be put on a web site or sent to participants who make the request to the ND Department of Agriculture. However, since Ford and Waibel have signed a book deal, the information from their workshops has been embargoed.

Copies of the couple's new book, "The Garden Goddess Passive Solar Greenhouse Manual: How to build your own and what produce to grow throughout the winter in northern climates," is available on a preorder basis.

The book is slated to be released on Earth Day, which is April 22 this year. It will feature many photos and diagrams, lists of construction materials and greenhouse tools and insight from seven years of experience and research.

E-mail Waibel at newworld@fedteldirect.net and include your name, address, e-mail address, telephone number and the number of copies you wish to reserve.

The cost of the book has not yet be determined.

