

Local foods good for nursing homes

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LOCAL NEWS
A North Dakota Department of Agriculture Initiative  Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring

Food service directors who have concerns about using local produce in nursing homes should be glad to know that North Dakota health authorities endorse the use of locally produced fruits and vegetables.

“There are fewer points of contamination when purchasing locally, and many other reasons for the support from our department,” says Angela Hetland, a health facilities surveyor with the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH).

According to the F371 sanitary conditions regulation in the health department’s “red book,” nursing homes “must procure food from sources approved or considered satisfactory by federal, state or local authorities.”

Kenan Bullinger, director of NDDoH’s division of food and lodging, said other surveyors in the division of health facilities agree that locally-sourced produce is acceptable for use in facilities. He said he and other staff from the health department and the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) will work to ensure the information is passed along to food service directors.

Most nursing home food service directors contacted for NDDA’s community assessment surveys said they understood the use of local produce, donated or purchased was unacceptable.



Cucumbers in November???

Tony and Barb Braun, Napoleon, have extended their cucumber season with a “Chuck Waibel” inspired greenhouse.

See page 2 for the story and more photos.

Farmers market directory to include local food producers

Producers of locally-grown foods will soon have a new venue to promote their products.

“We are adding local foods to the annual farmers market directory published by the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA),” said Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. “Anyone who is direct marketing beef, poultry, pork, vegetables, fruits or baked goods from their farm or ranch is welcome to be included in the new directory.”

Goehring said information forms have been sent to known producers of local foods. Interested persons, who did not receive a form, should contact Sue Balcom at (701) 328-2231 or suebalcom@nd.gov.

The 2010 Farmers Markets and Producers Directory will be published in May.

For the love of pickles

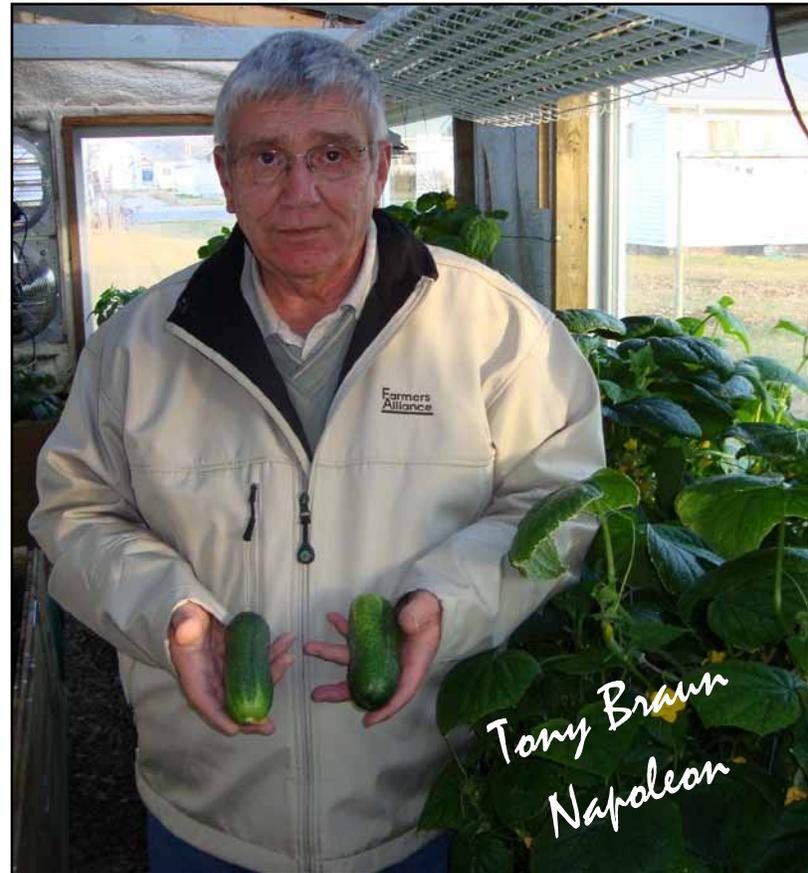
BY CARMEN RATH-WALD
LOGAN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT
NAPOLEON

Tony Braun has had a love affair with cucumbers for as long as he can remember. He starts his plants early in the spring protectively nestled in a sunny spot in the garage long before the outdoor temperatures permit germination. He tends them with the solicitousness of a new mother.

When Tony and his wife moved from their dairy farm to Napoleon he began planning to share his love of gardening, particularly cucumbers, with his family. Every spring they continued to plant a garden. Of course the cucumbers were started from seed. As the neighborhood and their own remodeling projects evolved the seed of an idea for a greenhouse began to germinate.

Finally, in the summer of 2009, Tony was ready to commit to a plan. He started with a visit to the local city council and requested a variance to build a greenhouse. Actual construction started in August.

Tony knew the greenhouse had to face south, knew he wanted skylights, double paned windows and blown insulation. He considered heat, humidity, exhaust fans and lights. He talked with neighbors, and is, and was, appreciative of their support. Although Tony said, "No way will I ever charge or take any money for our vegetables," he looks forward to the day when he can share the hottest of peppers with the city judge and cucumbers and tomatoes with friends and family.



According to Tony, his wife Barb "makes the best pickles!" Barb and Tony put up no less than 60 quarts every fall. Tony likes the pickles best when the cucumbers are not too large and haven't been in the jar for too long. He wanted to start pickling cucumbers five days before Christmas putting up one quart each day until Christmas. He thought that way when all five of his kids, their spouses, and the grandchildren were all together to celebrate the holiday, they would get to open a fresh jar each day.

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Nov. 8, 2009



Greenhouse proves to be cost effective and productive

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With a few glitches and such, the pickles won't be available this year, but there was hope for enough for Barb's famous cucumber salad at the Christmas feast. Tony and Barb's children got constant updates on the progress of the greenhouse as it transitioned from an idea to the real deal. Somewhat bemused by his enthusiasm for his fledgling first cucumber from the greenhouse, they got together to send him a bouquet of flowers on November 16, the day after he had eaten the first of the crop. The card read: Congratulations on the new addition to the family and was signed with the names of each of his five children. The new addition was the cucumber!

Currently in the greenhouse, Tony has cauliflower, peppers, cucumbers, carrots, beets and radishes, as well as beans, lettuce, tomatoes and Swiss Chard. Next year he plans to add strawberries, raspberries, flowers (especially roses so he can pick one for his best girlfriend, his wife, Barb) and maybe even a banana tree!

In August Barb and Tony both began classes at the Logan County Extension office in the Master Gardener program. Tony says he had to talk Barb into it, but they both enjoyed the class very much and he feels it was a tremendous help since he got to know horticulturalists Ron Smith and Tom Kalb. Of course many others were involved with the different aspects of getting the greenhouse up and growing. Tony bought seeds locally and ordered from Johnny's Seed, and Gurney's. Local contractors worked with Tony to construct the greenhouse, and although some teased him he never lost sight of his dream. In fact, when Tom Kalb told him: "Cucumbers? Good Luck!", he didn't let it slow him down. In fact he told Barb, "I don't care how much this costs, if I can eat one cucumber this year, it will be a success to me."



Braun's greenhouse appears to be an extension to the house.



Braun's greenhouse at night.

The greenhouse is all electric and Tony figures it has added \$10 to \$15 a month to his electric bill. It has all been worth it to Tony. He says, "I've had lots of fun with it. I really enjoy it, plus it costs less than a snowmobile or motorcycle and it's a lot healthier for me!" Tony is obviously looking forward to next year's garden and greenhouse.

Is your community planning a local foods meeting or event?

Send your information to suebalcom@nd.gov
or visit our networking site at <http://goinglocalnd.ning.com>

Registrations mailed for annual farmer market meeting, local foods conference

A recognized authority on local foods, Ken Meter, will be the main speaker at the sixth annual membership meeting of the North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association (NDFMGA), Feb. 19-20, at the Gladstone Inn and Conference Center in Jamestown.



Meter

Meter, president of the Minneapolis-based Crossroads Resources Center, directs the proposal review process for USDA Community Food Projects. His "*Finding Food in Farm Country*" studies have promoted local food networks in 45 regions in 20 states.

Meter taught economics at the University of Minnesota, and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He also directed the public input and indicators selection process for Minneapolis' Sustainability Initiative. His latest publication, "Mapping

the Minnesota Food Industry," is available at www.crcworks.org/mnfood.pdf.

Held in conjunction with the second local foods conference, the NDFMGA annual meeting will be two days of workshops, networking and other learning opportunities for people interested in growing, selling or eating more locally grown vegetables and fruits.

For more information about the conference, the NDFMGA annual meeting or to register, please email sssinner@nd.gov or suebalcom@nd.gov or call the North Dakota Department of Agriculture at 800-242-7535. More information is available at www.twitter.com/GoingLocalND. Use #goinglocalnd in all "tweets" to find relevant posts.

A block of rooms has been reserved for event attendees until Feb. 5. Call the Gladstone Inn at 701-252-0700 or register online at www.gladstoneinn.com.

USDA launches toll-free help desk for small meat & poultry processors

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture now has a help-desk to serve as a "one-stop shop" for owners and operators of small meat and poultry processing plants who have questions about agency requirements.

To contact a staff specialist, call 1-877-FSISHelp (1-877-374-7435) or send an email to InfoSource@fsis.usda.gov. The help-desk is open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. CST, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

FSIS staff will provide information and guidance materials that best meet callers' needs. When an answer is not readily available, the staff will research the issue and follow up with the caller. The help-desk will provide a portal to other services, such as AskFSIS, the agency's internet service offering official agency responses to inquiries on agency policy. State and local food regulatory agencies can also access the help desk.

By helping small processors to reduce the time and expense of dealing with agency requirements, the help desk supports USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative. More information on the initiative can be found at: www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer.

More than 90 percent of the 6,000 plants inspected by FSIS are considered small or very small.

The local scoop

Are local foods more expensive than their conventional counterparts?

Research conducted last summer by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture showed few differences in price for Iowa-grown vegetables, eggs and meat compared to similar non-local products. The survey included farmers' markets and supermarkets in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Ames and Iowa City.

Read the report "Is Local Food More Expensive?" at www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs/staff/prices.html