



the wisconsin foodshed

Home Grown on the menu

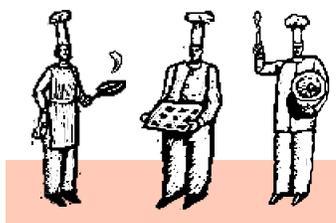
New cooperative brings together local farmers and chefs

Local fruits and vegetables are making a comeback in Madison restaurants, thanks to a new enterprise bringing together local growers and restaurateurs. A handful of area restaurants now serve produce supplied in part by Home Grown Wisconsin, a new Madison-area cooperative of 16 local farmers and nine Madison chefs.

Steve Pincus of Tipi Produce and Deb Boehm of Deb and Lola's restaurant in Madison are leading the effort with the help of the Madison Chapter of the Chefs Collaborative 2000, an affiliation of chefs committed to sustainable agriculture. Joe Sonza-Novera, a private consultant, and Bobby Golden, a private wholesaler, are coordinating the brokerage and distribution of produce from farm to restaurant.

Greg Lawless, an outreach specialist with the UW Center for Cooperatives, hopes the new cooperative will boost the supply and demand for locally and sustainably grown produce in Wisconsin. His "Farmer-Food Buyer Dialogue Project" provided the impetus for Home Grown Wisconsin. The project, in collaboration with UW's Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS), was funded by a grant from the Sustainable Agriculture Program of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

Lawless and CIAS used focus group interviews, surveys, workshops, and farm tours to learn from farmers and food buyers in Wisconsin, eastern Minnesota, and Chicago about the challenges and opportunities for enhancing local food systems. Farmers were targeted who claimed to use sustainable production



practices, and whose food products could be marketed directly to food buyers in Wisconsin and neighboring cities.

Through the surveys, many retailers and chefs expressed interest in sourcing more foods locally. Of the food buyers responding, 16 percent agreed, and 62 percent strongly agreed that there is "market value" in being able to tell their customers:

"This food is locally grown."

Some food buyers noted the real or perceived high quality of local farm products, particularly fresh produce. Others identified social or environmental benefits of buying local produce. These chefs and retailers say they recognize and cultivate customer loyalties to their regions, as well as consumer support for family farms and a healthy, clean environment.

They indicated that they would buy more local food products if consumer educational materials were provided that discuss the value of local foods and if most of their needs in season could be met with "one local phone call."

continued on back page

Welcome to the foodshed

This new publication is a way for people working to create more sustainable, just, and local food systems—in Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest—to learn from and network with each other.

It's published by the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW-Madison. CIAS's work in regional food systems is well established, so we'll sometimes report on CIAS research, education, and communications initiatives. However, this is NOT an organizational newsletter. It will be a place for researchers, practitioners, activists, organizations, and eaters to share news, information, and activities.

Regular features will include:

g new and interesting resources on food systems

g event announcements

g interesting facts about food systems

g research and project updates

Which brings us to your part in the feast. We invite you and your colleagues to contribute articles, news stories, event announcements, and research or project updates. Got a dish to pass? Contact us if you'd like to submit something.

To learn more about food systems work at CIAS, contact Steve Stevenson at (608)262-5202 or John Hendrickson at (608)265-2704, or visit our World Wide Web site at: <http://www.wisc.edu/cias/>

Eat well,

John Hendrickson, CIAS

What's for Lunch?

news on seminars and meetings

Community-university partnerships tackle food security in Wisconsin

Community activists and university faculty met at an October conference to form new partnerships to fight hunger in Wisconsin. Dane, Eau Claire, Milwaukee, and Winnebago County residents involved in food security met with faculty from six UW campuses representing the departments of sociology, nutrition, business, nursing, and social work.

Much of the day was spent in small groups allowing residents and faculty from each county to discuss specific needs and opportunities in their communities. Each group developed their own priorities and plans including:

- g** Assessing the need for pantry and home-delivered meal services in remote, rural areas of Winnebago County
- g** Studying food spending and decision-making among low-income residents in Milwaukee County
- g** Involving students in education programs in Eau Claire County that teach low income residents about food budgeting, nutrition, and health care
- g** Promoting food security as a student "service learning" priority at UW-Madison.

The conference, in conjunction with World Food Day, helped to bridge the gulf that often exists between universities and the communities around them and to explore ways to work together to solve problems. Featured speakers emphasized two areas for collaboration: research on the dimensions of hunger in local communities and service projects for students to learn outside the classroom while helping their communities.

The event was co-sponsored by UW-Cooperative Extension, The Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee, and the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems. For more information contact Jane Voichick at (608) 262-3718, or Steve Stevenson at (608) 262-5202.

Daniel Kemmis visits UW-Madison

How can cities encourage development that brings equitable economic growth and gets people involved in their own communities? How can urban and rural areas work together rather than compete for resources and jobs?

In an October lecture in Madison, Daniel Kemmis, the former mayor of Missoula, Montana, stressed that solutions to these issues may lie in part on emphasizing the capacities and limitations of the places where people live. This means paying closer attention to natural systems and local resources and developing a sense of community and civic participation.

Kemmis explored the lost idea of the "body politic," which refers to citizens being conscious of their potential roles and responsibilities and actively involved in positively shaping their communities.

Kemmis is the author of two books, *Community and the Politics of Place* and *The Good City and the Good Life*, which explore regional economic development, rural-urban partnerships, and sustainable communities. He is currently director of the Center for the Rocky Mountain West at the University of Montana.

His visit was the first in a series of colloquia sponsored by CIAS on issues related to regional food systems. The Center for Community Economic Development, and the Community and Natural Resource Development program area of UW-Extension co-sponsored the event.

For more information about this and future colloquia, or to order a cassette copy of Kemmis' lecture, contact John Hendrickson at (608)265-3704 or E-mail: jhendrik@macc.wisc.edu or send \$6 for each tape to Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, 1450 Linden Drive, Room 146, Madison, WI 53706.



the wisconsin foodshed

Vol. 1, Issue 1 Feb 1997

the wisconsin foodshed is a food systems newsletter produced by the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems. CIAS is a sustainable agricultural research center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, College of Agriculture, Research Division. We bring together university faculty, farmers, policy makers, and others to study relationships between farming practices, farm profitability, the environment, and rural vitality. Please contact us if you would like to submit articles for the newsletter or would like more information on CIAS's food systems research programs.

CIAS, 1450 Linden Dr., Rm. 146, UW-Madison, Madison, WI 53706 **Phone:** (608) 262-5200 **Fax:** (608) 265-3020
Internet: jhendrik@macc.wisc.edu **Web:** <http://www.wisc.edu/cias>

From Field to Table

research on the food system

Overcoming barriers to food security

Although Madison claims one of the nation's lowest unemployment rates, a recent community needs assessment reveals that demand for low cost or no cost food more than doubled between 1992 and 1994.

The "Community Needs Assessment of Food Security in Dane County" reinforces previous studies that have identified barriers to food security: inadequate employment, income, health and child care, affordable housing and transportation, and a lack of job training. The Hunger Prevention Council of Dane County, which conducted the study, wanted to identify barriers to food security in Dane County, to develop a resource guidebook for service providers, and to increase community dialogue on hunger prevention and food security.

The assessment was funded through a hunger prevention grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services. Researchers Jasia Chitharanjan and Julia Salomon conducted focus groups with people whose food security is jeopardized, surveyed food service providers, and reviewed previous local food security studies.

Barriers to food security

The study defined food security as access for all people to quality, affordable, nutritious, and culturally acceptable food at all times through non-emergency channels. The researchers learned that:

g The cost of living, particularly high rents in Dane County and Madison, can price people out of affording food. There simply isn't enough money left after paying bills. Researchers suggested rent subsidies as a possible solution.

g Women with children may not be able to afford child care, which in turn restricts their ability to work. Child care may be so expensive that it consumes a significant portion of income, leaving little left to spend on food.

g Limits in public transportation—such as hours of service or routing—can make food shopping difficult. Supermarkets are often located well away from the communities that suffer the greatest barriers to food security. Residents must either pay for transportation to those stores or shop at local, yet more expensive, convenience stores.

g Inadequate employment and a lack of education and job training hinder food security.

Recommendations

Based on their study, the Hunger Prevention Council suggests ways to strengthen food security in Dane County:

g A positive step is for communities to analyze their needs and resources, then build programs to help people meet their own and others' food needs.

g While only 29 percent of organizations responding in the study provide nutrition education, focus group respondents felt that these educational programs or referrals to them should be encouraged.

g The assessment did not adequately identify and address the unique concerns and needs of rural Dane County residents.

Effort must continue to identify those at risk of hunger in rural areas and provide them services.

Supermarkets are often located well away from the communities that suffer the greatest barriers to food security.

g Access to food can be improved by developing or improving transportation services, such as volunteer networks, business groups organizing weekly bus service to their stores or advocating public transportation service to underserved areas.

g Organizations that address food security issues can be more effective by improving access to their planning and programming meetings. This might include providing transportation and child care or scheduling meetings when more people can attend.

g All agencies and organizations should keep records of the number of people they serve and the type and amount of services they provide.

For copies of the report and resource guidebook, contact the Hunger Prevention Council of Dane County, c/o Ms. Pat Ludeman, 1 Fen Oak Court, Madison, WI 53704.

—contributed by Jasia Chitharanjan and Julia Salomon

Table Settings

g Wisconsin has 4,269 vegetable farms, growing produce on 347,581 acres (1992 Census of Agriculture).

g A University of Wisconsin database of fresh market fruit and vegetable growers includes 772 growers, the majority located in southern and east-central Wisconsin, near metropolitan areas.

g More than 80 organic farms grow vegetables in Wisconsin certified through the Organic Crop Improvement Association.

g The WI Dept of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection estimates that Wisconsin sells 85 percent of its food production nationally and internationally.

g There are 250,000 people in Wisconsin who are considered hungry.

Home Grown *from page one*

They said they would also be willing to buy more local foods if they had a dependable, convenient supply that could be integrated with year-round suppliers or that could be processed for year-round provision. Lower prices for local foods would also encourage greater purchases.

Home Grown Wisconsin began offering fresh produce to restaurants in May, 1996. While they sold everything from arugula to parsley to turnips, four crops—asparagus, lettuce, potatoes, and tomatoes—dominated sales. Weekly sales averaged \$517, with a peak of \$978 the last week of August. Sales of winter storage crops will continue into January.

With one growing season under its belt, HGW faces challenges next year. Last year's gross sales were 50 percent below what is needed to cover brokerage and distribution costs. Only about a fourth of the restaurants participating made consistent purchases. Farmers often found it difficult to justify a trip to town given the small orders they were filling.

High prices for local, organic produce may be a fundamental challenge for the cooperative. Most Madison chefs are unaccustomed to organic prices, while farmers indicate they can't cut prices further.

In the long run, more time and resources may be needed to develop relationships among food buyers and farmers. The food buyer at Bluephies, a Madison restaurant, said that personal connections made at cooperative meetings prompted her to buy as much pro-

duce as she did.

UWCC will continue to promote HGW with a grant from DATCP's Agricultural Development and Diversification Program. Project participants agree: success will require farmers and food buyers to promote Wisconsin's home grown bounty as well as for citizens to support their local food systems.

For a copy of a report on HGW, contact Greg Lawless at (608)265-2903, or visit UWCC's World Wide Web site at <http://www.wisc.edu/uwcc/>

--contributed by Greg Law-

less

g g g g g g

What is a foodshed?

This term, borrowed from the concept of a watershed, was coined as early as 1929 to describe the flow of food from an area of supply into a given locality. Recently, the term has been revived by folks in Wisconsin as a way of looking at food systems and as a label for local sustainable food systems.

The exact shape, components, food and resource flows, and interrelationship of foodsheds are complex issues that warrant serious discussion. For example, how much food can a given region provide? Can local food systems meet nutritional needs and provide food security for everyone? How might alternatives to the existing food system be organized at the human and community levels? We invite your ideas and comments.

g g g g g g

Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems
1450 Linden Dr, Rm 146
Madison, WI 53706

Non-profit organization U.S. Postage Paid Permit #658 Madison, WI 54706
--