

Slow Food Huron Valley



March
2009

Upcoming Events

Green Drinks Mixer

Wednesday, March 18th, 7-10pm
Arbor Brewing Company "Tap Room"

Slow Food Huron Valley, o2-Michigan/Green Drinks, and the Sustainable Agriculture Working Group at the University of Michigan invite you to a mixer event. Come meet folks and socialize! Cash bar and ABC menu available.

Book Club

Tuesday, 3/10/09 at 6:30pm
March's book is: *Food Matters: A guide to Conscious Eating with More than 75 recipes* by Mark Bittman. Kathleen Eder will host, contact her if you wish to attend at kathleen.eder@gmail.com

Slow Food Huron Valley Leadership Meetings

Friday March 6 7-8:30am
Friday, April 3, 7-8:30am
Meet at Zingerman's Upstairs, Next Door. All welcome!

Gathering Fresh Food for Washtenaw County

Record-high energy, corn and wheat prices have led to sky-high costs in the grocery aisles. Since last year, the price of cereal has gone up 11%, and the cost of cooking oil has shot up 14%. Like the rest of the country, Michigan has felt the blow of high unemployment rates. Nearly 13% of people in Washtenaw County live in poverty, which translates into an annual family income less than \$25,364 for a family of *five*.



*Food Gatherers Warehouse
on Carrot Way in Ann Arbor*

Keeping food on the table in this economic climate is slipping beyond the reach of many, even those who have never struggled to make ends meet before. Food Gatherers, a food rescue and food bank program, has been addressing this problem in Washtenaw County since 1988 when it was founded by Zingerman's Deli.

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2009 Local Food Summit a Success

The 2009 Local Food Summit at Matthaei Botanical Gardens on January 29th was a great success, with 120 attendees including farmers, food producers, chefs, eaters, and activists. The summit aimed to map our current food system, find gaps, identify priorities, and coordinate efforts leading to a healthy, just and secure local food economy.



*Lunch and networking at the
2009 Local Food Summit*

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Upcoming Events

Everyone Has To Eat: An Open Space Event On Local Food Preservation, Production And Advocacy

Tuesday, 3/24/09, 6:30pm

1024 Dana Bldg., 440 Church St.,
Ann Arbor UM Central Campus

Building upon enthusiasm of the recent Local Food Summit and UM's Open Access Week, Everyone Has to Eat is an Open Space Technology (OST) structured event open to individuals interested in discussing a wide range of topics related to local food production, consumption, preservation, sustainability, and justice. The event unfolds over the course of the evening with an agenda set wholly by the participants.

Discussions could range from sharing knowledge and techniques related to preserving local traditions and producing local food, strategies for connecting local food advocates, producers, culinary artists, and consumers, conversations on strengthening the local network of individuals and organizations involved in local food issues, best practices in increasing access to information and knowledge among local food activists, or facilitating local food-themed workshops, websites, and community events.

Everyone Has to Eat hopes to invigorate local food networks in Washtenaw County and inspire participants to share these ideas in their own communities.

Food Summit

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Conference activities included brainstorming about ways to improve our food system and learning about successful models in the area.



Brainstorming about our community's resources

The Summit generated lots of new ideas and opportunities to get connected with local food in our area. New ways for everyone to plug in to post-summit efforts can be found through the Washtenaw Local Food Website: <http://washtenawlocalfood.net> This site has links to a Local Food Calendar, to a Ning site (called Local Food Summit) for social networking, with more to come.

The Local Food Calendar is a great way to find out what's happening in the area, and for posting local food events (anyone can post and view).

<http://washtenawlocalfood.net/calendar.html>

Local Food Working Groups and Discussion Forums (join or create a working group or discussion):

<http://localfoodannarbor.ning.com/>

- New Farmer Resources
- Edible Schoolyard
- Local Food Month
- Digital Initiatives
- Reading Room
- Multimedia Show and Tell

A transcript of Summit 2009 Working Group Summit notes are available:

<http://localfoodannarbor.ning.com/group/summit2009/forum/topics/summit-2009-documents>

See more about the day in coverage from the Ann Arbor Chronicle on "Local Food for Thought."

(<http://annarborchronicle.com/2009/01/31/local-food-for-thought/>)

Upcoming Events

Time to Plot Your Summer with Project Grow!

Garden applications for a spot at one of Ann Arbor Project Grow Community Gardens are now available for each of the twelve sites. To see the garden sites, maps, and download an application visit projectgrowgardens.org and click on Community Gardens. Hard copy applications are available by calling 734-996-3169.

Project Grow's Heirloom Seed Swap

Saturday, March 21

Sat, 3/21, 10am–Sun, 3/22, 12am
Leslie Science and Nature Center,
1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor

This event will feature hundreds of seeds including tomato, pea, bean, melon and pepper from Project Grow's own heirloom garden!! Bring your own seeds to swap and come to pick some up!! More information: projectgrowgardens.org or call 996-3169.

The Choices Conference

Wednesday, 3/11- Thursday 3/12

The annual Choices conference, held at Michigan State University, explores issues related to food and health. Speakers may explore such topics as sustainability, food as it relates to economics, how food affects our health, the local food movement, organic foods and many others. More information at: <http://web7.anr.msu.edu/choices/Agenda.aspx>

Go Slow: Join Slow Food USA

From tasting twenty heirloom varieties of tomatoes, to changing local policy on school lunches, to providing farmers with financial support after disasters, your membership helps you take action where it's needed most. As a member you can get involved with your local chapter, as well as be a part of the largest international network of food activists. Half price student memberships available.

http://slowfoodusa.org/index.php/join_us/

Membership includes:

A one-year subscription to *the Snail* journal, which covers issues such as: sustainable seafood, food systems education, alternative food distribution, protecting biodiversity and regional food traditions.

The Slow Food Almanac that features in-depth stories of the movement from around the world.

The Food Chain, our monthly e-newsletter that highlights our activities and headlines in food sustainability.

A personal membership card and a copy of the *Slow Food Companion*, detailing Slow Food's mission, network and projects.

Membership in your local Chapter and invitations to local, national and international Slow Food events ranging from seasonal feasts to film festivals, farm tours to taste workshops.

Discounts on merchandise including the *Slow Food Guides to New York City, Chicago and San Francisco*, as well as other items in our General Store.

Make a Dinner in Partnership with SOS Community Services

Program: "Make a Dinner" for area hungry kids

Description: Choose a Monday night and make a nutritional and kid friendly dinner in your kitchen and deliver it to our Family Relationship group. We need dinners that serve 25-30 people on March 9, 16, 23, 30, and April 6. If you are interested, contact Mimi Weisberg at SOS Community Services at 734.961.1210 or volunteer@soscs.org. More information at: <http://www.soscs.org/volunteer.html>

Upcoming Events

Building a Wood Fired Oven at Bake! In Ann Arbor

Join us in building a wood-fired oven at the BAKE! Facility at Zingerman's Bakehouse. With detailed plans and hands-on experience you'll feel confident to build a wood-burning oven at your own home for bread baking, pizza making, and more. This class is unique in a couple ways: a) We don't actually do any baking in this class and b) This is sold as a series, so that you won't miss out on any of the details in this fascinating masonry project! You'll leave BAKE! with your own copy of the book we'll be using in class, "The Bread Builders" by Alan Scott and Daniel Wing. Don't miss out on this one time class! Space is very limited. \$400 for the series (May 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th 8 AM-12 PM) Register at www.bakewithzing.com or 734-761-7255.

March is Reading Month at the Chelsea Library

This year's theme is all about eating locally and how we can eat healthy and support our local community. The library will be showcasing local businesses, the Farmer's Markets and long-time area farmers as well as bringing in experts on buying food, cooking food, and growing food. [More information.](#)

Poker Night: Growing Hope

**Thursday 3/12 - Sunday 3/15
and 4/2 - 4/5, 5pm to 2am**

[Coops All in 4 Charity](#) will be hosting poker nights to raise money for Growing Hope. Come to one night or come to all!

Gathering Fresh Food

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Food Gatherers rescues food from grocery stores, dormitories, farms and other groups and distributes it to about 150 outlets like food pantries, shelters, and after school programs. These groups offer it to community members in the form of groceries and meals.



Volunteers from Holy Trinity Student Parish /Ypsilanti

While such community effort provides vital aid to many in the area, demand is soaring. In Washtenaw County, as many as 50% more people sought food assistance from emergency pantries in 2007 compared to 2006.

While food stamps partly ease this need, many people fail to access them. Even if individuals do receive food stamps, the benefit often only lasts two and a half weeks out of the month. As the primary distributor of food in

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Volunteer with Slow Food Huron Valley

For all of you who love food and sharing with your fellow SFHV participants, I have an *opportunity* for you. I am the "new" volunteer coordinator and I want to collect names and a bit of information from you so that you can happily participate at a time and in an activity that interests you. We are a lively interesting group and knowing each other really adds to the fun and the satisfaction that comes from real involvement! I would like contact information; preference of activity [set up ahead of the activity, work during some activity like checking beverages, fixing the serving area, finding chairs]; and time preference [maybe only during non-school months, every month but August and January, evening only...]. If you would email me - not the group - jheady@umich.edu with you name, preferred contact [email or phone], your preference for activity, good times for you, and any other vital information. Thanks so much! Judith (Judy) Heady.

Gathering Fresh Food

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Washtenaw County, Food Gatherers has recently developed a food security plan for the low-income residents of Washtenaw County. Front and center in this plan are strategies geared toward providing healthier foods to those in need.

Dubbed “canned compassion” by former director of Connecticut’s Hartford Food System Mark Winne, most food assistance tends to come canned or packaged to keep cost down and for ease of shipping and storing. And although donated food can be a lifeline for the area’s most vulnerable residents, processed foods tend to be less healthy and contribute to diet-related conditions like diabetes. Fresh foods, however, are relatively scarce. Only one out of five county food pantries always has fresh produce, and 18% never do. Additionally, only 29% of area stores that accept food stamps offer fresh produce.

Food Gatherers existing strategies to boost the fresh food supply include purchasing foods, using leftovers from farmer’s markets, and utilizing the Robert J Delonis Center’s Community Kitchen. The kitchen, which is managed by Food Gatherers, is used to convert produce into shelf-stable product, which is then frozen for later distribution. According to Eric Marria, volunteer coordinator for Food Gatherers, the kitchen is a great resource to extend the life of, say, tomatoes by making them into spaghetti sauce. “We are very aware of the nutritional needs of the people we serve, and have tried to find a balance between providing nutritious but less frequently donated foods and food that is more available but less healthy and should be eaten in moderation like cake” commented Marria.

But the cost of purchasing produce, as well as transportation of donated produce and refrigeration really adds up. Rising need and food cost has increased Food Gatherers’ purchasing budget by almost 200% in the last four years.

Through these challenges have emerged several creative strategies that Food Gatherers plans to explore in the upcoming year. One of four priority areas is focused on increasing access to nutritious food. Growing food, an emerging trend among hunger relief



Donated “bulk” macaroni ready for packaging and distribution in the Food Gatherers Warehouse



Eric Marria, Volunteer Coordinator at Food Gatherers displays the labor involved in repackaging donated foods for distribution

Video of the month

High-fructose corn syrup TV commercial sponsored by the Corn Refiners Association

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVsqXPt564Q>

High-fructose corn syrup TV commercial SPOOF by the makers of the documentary King Corn

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRicUlnkYQM>

Web sites of the month

Civil Eats

<http://civileats.com/category/food-policy/>

Civil Eats promotes critical thought about sustainable agriculture and food systems as part of building economically and socially just communities. Civil Eats supports the development of a dialog among local and national leaders about the American food system, and its effects abroad. Civil Eats can be humorous, serious, academic, philosophical, conversational – its style of conversation is as diverse as its 40+ contributors – but it is always thought provoking, innovative, and focused on food politics.

Gathering Fresh Food

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organizations, will be investigated as a means to improve availability. Such an arrangement would involve partnering with a local farmer, potentially through leasing a farm dedicated to low-income households or contracting a local farmer to grow food for distribution. Eileen Spring, President and CEO of Food Gatherers, sees such approaches as a way to get more fresh foods to community distribution partners, and as an opportunity to invest in the local food and agriculture businesses.

One very successful example of such an endeavor is the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, which grows and sells food through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, wherein subscribers buy shares and receive produce throughout the season. Shareholder income supports enough profit to sustain the farm and provides about half of the harvest to the food bank, which distributes to member agencies. About 200,000 pounds of food is grown each season.

While Spring indicated that Food Gatherers does not intend to launch their own farm at this time, their goal is to strengthen partnerships with local farmers beyond their current support level, which includes some direct purchases as well as CSA shares from the Community Farm of Ann Arbor.

Another goal highlighted in the report is expanding efforts to engage community gardeners to grow specific food for donation. Spring articulated this as a desire to “invest the world in growing.” The organization would also like to promote existing programs such as “Plant a Row for the Hungry.” This national campaign, supported by Food Gatherers as well as Project Grow and Growing Hope, encourages local gardeners to designate part of their harvest for hunger relief organizations. Gardeners tending one of the participating Project Grow gardens will not have to carry their “hungry” harvest very far - it is directly in front of the Food Gatherers warehouse on Carrot Way.

Spring emphasized that alleviating hunger and its causes is a community effort. “One of the anti-hunger movement’s greatest assets is volunteers, and one of its greatest challenges is ensuring that the volunteer support is directed towards the greatest community need and that it is coordinated in such a way as to have a tangible and measurable impact.” The Food Security report will be available on the Food Gatherers Web site in coming weeks.