

Our Mission: *To promote and preserve unregulated direct farmer-to-consumer trade that fosters availability of locally grown or home-produced food products*

VICFA | Voice



2010 – The Year of the Pickle

By Christine Solem

Since lobbying the Virginia General Assembly, I have begun to associate certain food products and topics with certain years. (For instance, 1992-1994 were the raw goats' milk years.) 2010 is shaping up to be the year of the pickle. In 2008 we had the "kitchen bill," which actually passed, exempting candies

and certain baked goods, jams, and

jellies from onerous home inspections by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), provided such items were sold at the home or at farmers' markets to an individual for his own consumption and labeled "NOT FOR RESALE – PROCESSED AND PREPARED WITHOUT STATE INSPECTION".

The kitchen bill did not pass without a fight. VDACS did not want the sales to be at farmers' markets, but the will of the people did swing legislators this time. We wanted pickles to be one of the food items exempt in 2008 as well, but we didn't succeed – "too dangerous," said VDACS.

So now we're going back for pickles. Okay, so we're also going for salsa and relishes too, but let's face it, the pickle is the king here. Nobody likes to buy those limp, unexciting things in the supermarket. We want homemade pickles!

In order for one to sell pickles at the farmers' market, VDACS requires home inspections. VDACS also demands that you take a "pickle making course" (which costs about \$350.00 and is not often available) and submit your recipes for "approval" to Virginia Tech.

However, the federal regulations on acidified foods (21 CFR Ch 1. Part 114) do not say this. The regulations state, *All operators of processing and packaging systems shall be under the operating supervisions of a person who has attended a school approved by the Commissioner for giving instruction in food-handling techniques, food-protection principles, personal hygiene and plant sanitation practices, pH controls and critical factors in acidification, and who has been identified by that school as having satisfactorily completed this prescribed course of instruction.*

In other words, the person overseeing others making pickles in a processing and packaging system has to take a course. How does this apply to an individual who makes pickles at home for sales at a farmers market? Then too, the federal regulations are silent with respect to "recipe submission."

Furthermore, is all this really going to make pickles safe? It would appear that one would have to have a little inspection gargoyle sitting on your shoulder every time you made pickles to see that you did it right. Come on – it's not that hard to make pickles right.

We have it on good authority that the Farm Bureau men have already deemed pickles too dangerous with respect to our proposed legislation – someone might get sick. On the other hand, the Farm Bureau women in Nelson County voted to support our bill.

Exactly how dangerous are homemade pickles? Opponents claim that the threat of botulism is the food poisoning of choice here.

I have an old book entitled *Food Poisoning*, copyright 1949 by G. M. Dack, Ph.D., M.D., Professor of Bacteriology and Director Food Research Institute, The

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EVENTS IN REVIEW:

The State Fair

By Lois Smith

Wow! Eleven days at the State Fair of Virginia accomplished. The phrase that comes to mind is from a famous Dr. Seuss book called *Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!* First, I want a big thanks going out to all the volunteers that made it possible – **Anne Buteau, Ben Wood, Robin Raver, John Coles, Christine Solem, Naomi Wilson, Suzi Croes, Sue and Guy Freesen**, and last but not least, **Wayne Bolton** (who taught me everything I know about salesmanship, and from whom I stole all my one liners). My favorite quote from Wayne is, “If you don’t believe in what we stand for, join the other group – they need members too!”

Before the fair opened, a man who worked for the Farm Bureau came to our booth. He told me he was all for raw milk sales and that years ago, when we were fighting to restore that right, the dairy association called and asked him if he was crazy. They said that commercial dairies were so regulated and that it wasn’t fair that direct farmer to consumer sales would not require any regulations. What if someone gets ill drinking raw milk? People would stop buying milk and that would hurt all dairy farms, so he thought we should have agreed to some regulations. I replied that people have already stopped drinking milk because educated

consumers know that pasteurized, homogenized milk is unhealthy and that dairies are going out of business every day because they cannot set the price for their product or labor. Instead of regulations, why not empower people to make educated decisions? I love to hear the concerns of the opposition – they are usually based upon hysteria and bad science.

My own quest for raw milk is what brought me to the realization that our food rights have been taken away. I love to talk to dairy people when they come to our booth because I know they are some of the hardest working people in the world. It makes me sad that they cannot make a decent living providing such a popular product. I tell people about Mark McAfee in California, where raw milk sales are legal. He sets his retail and wholesale prices. He sells directly to consumers and 400 retail stores. You should see the shocked looks we get! Direct farmer to consumer milk sales, either raw or pasteurized, are the only hope dairy farmers have of taking back the farm. The one question I always leave people with is, “Could you make a living on your farm if you could get paid \$6 to \$8 for labor to milk a gallon out?” The usual response is “Hell Yeah!” Then I suggest the possibility of having a two-sided dairy operation that does both commercial and direct raw milk sales.

When people came by our display at the Fair, I would ask if they have ever heard about VICFA. If not, I would tell them that this organization is striving to preserve the family farms. Through over-regulation and attacks on our personal property rights, farms are being forced out of business. Our best chance

to stop this is by educating consumers about how these regulations hurt the farmer's ability to stay on the farm and earn a decent living. Pointing to a picture of a factory farm, I explain that in order to make a living, many farmers are forced into this type of operation, one that is not beneficial to him or to the consumer. So, who is benefiting from this system?

We believe that when people are given more food choices it will drive a consumer-based movement and that's when things can change. That is why VICFA supports unrestricted and unregulated food choice where direct sales from farm to consumer always need to be an option. If people are forced to do business under extreme regulations, affordable choices become limited. There are no longer options.

If your comfort zone demands regulations, you can still choose foods that are regulated. Unfortunately, as an educated consumer, I cannot think of any regulated food products in grocery chains that are healthy to eat. These regulations actually hurt my ability to acquire good wholesome foods. No one is being forced to purchase unregulated foods, but we are being forced to buy regulated foods, whether they are unhealthy or not.

Putting a human face on your food supply is real food security. Direct farmer to consumer trade relationships have a financially driven interest to offer the best foods possible. It should be a consumer choice. When the product is not satisfactory to the consumer, he would

not come back, and the producer will lose the business. That's how it should work. Our tax money should not be used to prop up a business that puts out an inferior product. If a local producer sells a product that causes illness, you know who is responsible. They have a face – that's trace back accountability. If Mr. Corporate Farmer's product makes you sick, you'll never see him and the company will deny they made you sick.

We tell people that it is through the efforts of VICFA that it is possible for some home products to be made in an uninspected home kitchen and sold directly to the consumer and we continue to work on amendments to include more products to that kitchen bill.

It's hard to describe what it is like representing VICFA at the Fair; it is something you must experience.

Some of the unsuspecting fairgoers gaze quizzically and ask, "What's this booth all about?" Some purposely walk towards us, demanding to know what we are doing. Most, however, sense that we are there because we care about them, whether they are farmers or consumers. Our message is too noble not to take the opportunity to awaken Virginians to the fact that they need food freedom. Most people stop to hear what we have to say, and some come back to hear more and ask questions. Because our booth is worked only by volunteers, our passion is contagious. And, if some would-be passers-by happen to get too close, we just rope them in – Wayne taught us how.

"Putting a human face on your food supply is real food security."

Celebrate a Green - and Local - Holiday!

- * Use fresh cut Virginia Christmas trees, grown without chemicals, pesticides and colorants.
- * Make gifts from the kitchen or farm products. If you're not inclined, support local artist and craftspeople by choosing their products as gifts.
- * When shipping gifts of Virginia products to friends, pack them yourself using shredded paper collected through the year, --bubble wrap and shipping peanuts only go to the landfill to live forever.
- * Consider giving local farm products like grass fed beef, pastured eggs, locally made sausage to friends who do not buy direct from farmers—maybe they'll get the idea.

Thank you to the enthusiastic consumer member who shared these ideas.



VICFA Notes

Please welcome **Anne Buteau** and **Carlos Arostegui** as new members on the VICFA Board of Directors.

Attention all members: Are there any products that you would like to offer to VICFA members at a discount? Consider publishing your discount offerings in the newsletter so that all members may take advantage. Just send a note to the newsletter at 28 Woodlake Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22901 or an email to Rowena@inthekitchenonline.com. We are also considering publishing a Producers Guide in 2010. If you would be interested, please let us know!

The **Big Farm Show in Fishersville**, January 19-21, is well worth attending (though it coincides with Lobby Day in Richmond). If you attend, please let us know what you think of this event for VICFA's possible participation next year.

There will be another **Deb Naylor Benefit Auction**, December 5, 2009 beginning at noon at STEPS, Inc., 100 Industrial Park (the building at the intersection of Industrial Park Drive and Third Street), Farmville, VA. For more information, to donate, or to help, contact Bev Hill at 434-292-9183 (cell) or 434-645-8905 (home).

Write for VICFA Voice!

You are invited to contribute to the newsletter. Each month we would like to publish an article contributed by a member farmer or consumer. Many of you have ideas to share but may be reluctant to write an article—don't let that stop you. Let us know, we'll have someone call to interview you. The newsletter committee will look forward to receiving articles and consider them for publication.

Thanks to **Robin Raver** for hosting the November meeting.

Come to Our Next Meeting!

The December Meeting will be hosted by Anne, Dan and Elizabeth Buteau at their home in Shipman. Come to the meeting on December 13, 12:00-3:00. The business meeting is from 12:00 – 1:00 followed by a general meeting from 1:00 – 3:00. We will share a pot luck lunch following the business meeting and before the general meeting. VICFA membership meetings are open to the public. Please bring a dish and a big helping of enthusiasm to share. Broaden our reach - invite a friend or neighbor to join you.

Sunday, December 13
at Anne, Dan and Elizabeth Buteau's home.
6556 James River Road (Rt 56)
Shipman, Va 22971
Phone: (434) 263-4946

From the North/West/East:

From Charlottesville, come south on Rt 29 towards Lynchburg. Go about 30 miles to Lovingston and turn left at the traffic lights (the 3rd Lovingston exit). Turn right on James River Road/Rt 56 East. Go about 7 1/2 miles on this road and you come to our house on the left hand side, mailbox 6556, just before an old big white barn. (When you come down a mountain with 25 mph curves you are about 3/4 mile from our house)

From the Lynchburg area:

Come north on Rt 29, pass through Amherst, Colleen (Look for Blue Ridge Medical Center on right/Big Ice Cream Cone on the left). Go another 1 1/2 miles, turn right towards Shipman/OakRidge on Rt 653. Go to T junction (by the Corner Market) and turn right on James River Road/Rt 56 east. Follow above directions from here.

From the Farmville area:

Go west on Rt 60. Go through Buckingham. Turn right on Rt 56. Cross the James River and we are 6 1/2 miles from there on the right. Mailbox 6556, next to big white barn.

Legalized Drugs Necessary to Keep Food Choice

By Joel Salatin

Food choice is ultimately about who gets to determine what can pass from my lips to my stomach. When that decision is made by government, I call that an invasion of privacy.

Each layer of personal autonomy that we remove inevitably leads to other arenas of liberty deprivation. After all, if the government has the authority to decide what I can feed my 3 trillion internal flora and fauna community, it certainly has the same authority in other areas.

Americans have an historical precedent which demonstrates the broad effects of such intrusion into personal autonomy: prohibition. That decade-long love affair with foolishness destroyed the imbedded alcohol infrastructure in communities all across the nation.

In the early 1900s, alcohol served many functions: fuel, antiseptic, preservative, and sedative. It was also a way to ship fruit nutrition in a time before refrigeration and efficient transportation. Apple brandy was Johnny Appleseed's goal, not apple pie. Because alcohol was ubiquitous in the culture, Henry Ford made the Model T with two buttons on the dashboard to regulate the carburetion depending on whether the engine burned gasoline or alcohol.

The prohibition received substantial support from John D. Rockefeller, a teetotaling Presbyterian. Rockefeller threw his significant financial and personal capital behind the prohibition movement and it thrived. Although it only existed a few years, that was long enough to destroy the alternative fuel system . . . and remove that pesky alternative carburetor button on the automobile dashboard. I can't help but wonder what our energy situation would be today if all the imbedded decentralized community-scaled alcohol production expertise and infrastructure had not been destroyed a century ago.

Here we are a century later, still suffering from the invasive, albeit relatively short lived, prohibition era. Which brings us to the modern prohibition - the drug war. A government with the authority to tell me I can't smoke dope or take an alternative medical treatment certainly has the authority to tell me I can't ingest raw milk or compost grown tomatoes.

Righteous indignation is a powerful force. Before unleashing it on any policy, we need to make sure we're not paving the road to hell with good intentions. I think the drug war is exactly that kind of misguided indignation. As a culture, we haven't thought through the ramifications of drug prohibition—any more than indignant folks thought through the ramifications of alcohol prohibition a century ago.

I may be wrong, but I believe we will not secure freedom of food choice until we chip away at the assumption that denying personal drug autonomy—for enjoyment, self-destruction, or medical reasons—is within the government's purview. Our culture, far removed from the limited government authority envisioned by the Constitution, rarely questions the role of government to reach into my mouth or my stomach. If we want something to be indignant about, that intrusion well qualifies.

To think that we can encourage the government to reach into our mouths on Monday to extract snake oil or meth without having it extract raw milk and home-kitchen-made cheese on Friday is to practice intellectual schizophrenia. The more consistent our argument is, the stronger it will be.

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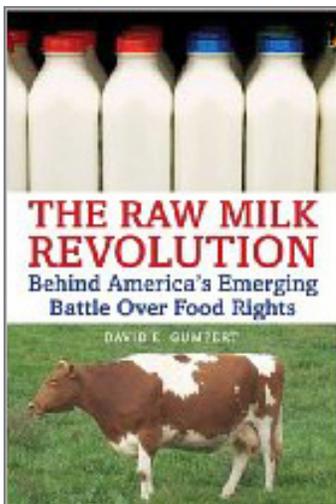
University of Chicago. According to this book, there were 462 outbreaks (most in home-canned vegetables) of botulism in the United States between 1899 and 1947, led by string beans with 97 outbreaks, corn 47, beets 24, spinach 22, asparagus 21, olives 14, and peas 10 followed. Number 17 on the list was pickles with 3. This was before the common use of pressure cookers to can vegetables in the home. This book recommends such usage, and the housewife has since learned. This book was also written before the formal recognition of the value of vinegar in controlling botulism. It is to be noted, however, that back then, brining was recognized as effective for its control. Ever tasted any brined pickles? Wow!

As for modern times, VICFA Board member Anne Buteau recently researched botulism. Since 2001 there

have been 1022 cases of botulism in the United States. However, only 139 of these cases were in food, and some were in commercially canned food.

Within this time frame, there has been only one case of botulism from homemade pickles. The case involved a forty-nine year old man from South Carolina. There were no other details. The report was so poorly documented that it did not state even whether he lived or died. Anne called the South Carolina Health Department for more information, but as of this writing she had received no reply.

So, are homemade pickles dangerous? I'm not in the least convinced that they are! Now we need to convince the House Agriculture Sub-Committee, which will meet in January. It is chaired by Delegate Orrock. **Watch for VICFA action alerts!**



Raw Milk Revolution by David Gumpert

By Rowena Morrel

On November 7th, consumers and farm food producers gathered to hear reporter David Gumpert talk about his most recent book, *The Raw Milk Revolution* – an expose of what's behind America's emerging battle over food rights. The

book describes scenes of the government's tough and occasionally brutal intimidations of raw milk producers. Joel Salatin, who had written the introduction to *The Raw Milk Revolution*, gave a short introductory speech.

When Gumpert began his research in 2006, he did not know that unpasteurized (raw) milk existed. He recounts buying milk from a Vermont farmer, Kathy, from her Guernsey cow, Selena. "I loved the fact that the cow providing my milk could even be identified, given that the average container of pasteurized milk contains the output of perhaps hundreds of unidentified cows," he wrote. When purchasing raw milk at a farmers market for \$3 a gallon, he felt as if he had found a good bargain. The book further takes a poke

at why government is still kicking around a bunch of small farmers, why pasteurization is still being debated, whether raw milk is healthier and when it comes to food, how much freedom we should have. During Gumpert's presentation, he expressed concern that recent events could be just the tip of the iceberg and that the availability of raw milk was headed perhaps for extinction.

Following the presentation, both Salatin and Gumpert participated in a book signing.

The event was well attended on a Saturday, which was also filled with many area agricultural events. Kathryn Russell had initiated this event as one of her last acts on behalf of VICFA. Four of her daughters and many of her friends attended in Kathryn's honor.

To produce and promote an event like this requires well over 40 volunteer hours and a significant amount of time and money. It was sponsored by VICFA, the Weston A. Price Foundation, Flavor magazine, and In The Kitchen Magazine. Through this gathering, VICFA received four new VICFA members. This and other VICFA events are created to build a stronger relationship between farmers and consumers—and it's working.

COOK'S CORNER:

50-Mile Feast Meals

By Rowena Morrel

After learning about the 100-Mile Diet and the ensuing "100-Mile Thanksgiving" put on by Tom Beatley, professor at the University of Virginia, I am confident that both efforts encourage people to search for more local ingredients. A 100 mile radius, however, is a lot of territory from which to source food, particularly in Virginia. I decided to try a 50 mile radius, using Charlottesville as the center, to see if our feast meals could be prepared

with ingredients sourced completely from food sources within the 50 mile radius. Taking a look at a Virginia road map and using the scale provided, I drew a circle with a radius of 50 miles (from Charlottesville). The circumference of the circle passed through Fredericksburg, Sperryville, Staunton, Buena Vista, Madison Heights, Powhatan, Montpelier, Spotsylvania and all points in between. My husband, Ron, and I set a goal to find as many ingredients for our traditional feast menus as possible from within the circle. Obviously, you can perform a similar exercise from your own home, where you may find sources of local growers and food producers you have not thought of before.

The 100-Mile Diet is a learning experience, getting to know the seasons and understanding where our foods come from. This was not a great challenge for us, however. We not only live in a well-endowed food community, we typically source our food within a 50-mile radius or at least within the state. Of course, there are a few exceptions. We do use some spices, sea salt and pepper, coffee, chocolate, baking soda, baking powder, and sugar; these items are not native to Virginia.

We purchased pasture-raised turkey from C'ville Market and standing rib roast from Gryffon's Aerie Farm near White Hall. We found an abundance of vegetables from farmers we met at the farmers markets earlier in the season and from area grocery stores that carry local produce. Apples, sweet potatoes, and cider were purchased at the Vintage Virginia Apple Harvest Festival. An assortment of herbs came from our garden as well as canned green beans and tomato juice. We found honey, sorghum, and chestnuts in Nelson County, cornmeal from Massy Mill in Amherst, and flour from Byrd Mill. We have a source of whole raw milk from which we churned butter and we buy pastured eggs and rendered lard from a local pork producer.

Article provided by In The Kitchen Magazine. Rowena Morrel is the creator and editor of the magazine, who, with her husband Ron Wade, enjoy foraging, hunting and sourcing their food from their native Virginia. For more information access more local food sources and recipes from www.inthekitchenonline.com

Share your local recipes and food experiences. Send to Rowena Morrel at 28 Woodlake Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22901, or email at editor@inthekitchenonline.com. Clearly note VICFA on the message line.

Here are menus from feast meals in 2008. We are now sourcing similar menus for 2009.

50-Mile Thanksgiving Menu 2008

Virginia Artisanal Cheeses	Creamed Onions
Homemade Crackers	Braised Kale
Winter Squash Bisque	Baking Powder Biscuits
Turkey, Gravy, and Chestnut Dressing	Pumpkin Pie
Country Ham	Apple Pie
Sweet Potatoes	Vintage Virginia Cider
Mashed White Potatoes	Lemon Verbena Tea
Home Canned Green Beans	Barboursville Wines

50-Mile Christmas Menu 2008

Virginia Artisanal Cheeses	Herb Biscuits
Cheese Straws	Pumpkin Pie
Bloody Marys	Apple Pie
Mushroom Soup	Pecan Pie
Standing Rib Beef Roast	Applesauce Cake
Horseradish Sauce	Lemon Verbena Tea
Roasted Root Vegetables	Barboursville Wines
Braised Swiss Chard	Egg Nog
Lemon Verbena Sorbet	

VICFA

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Charlottesville, VA 22902

VICFA

Virginia Independent Consumers and Farmers Association

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Vice President: Lois Smith

Treasurer: Carroll Ann Friedman

Secretary: Laura Russell

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E-mail Group: groups.yahoo.com/group/VICFA

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Annual membership is \$25.00.

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learn about
VICFA?