

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

February 2010

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Preparing for Virginia Legislative Breakfast

The January general membership meeting was a rousing success. There were 27 people present, and conversation was lively around the potluck lunch in Bev's kitchen. The main topic was the upcoming Legislative Breakfast to be conducted in the halls of the Virginia General Assembly on January 20th. Lois Smith is chairing this 2-hour event, which requires a great deal of preparation and an awesome amount of work. Lois pointed out that it is indeed a privilege to be able serve food to this assembly of legislators and staffers in their office building, and asked members to volunteer and to help in any way possible on January 20th in Richmond. Some members who were present at the meeting, as well as members solicited by phone, volunteered to set up and clean up the room, send or bring food, lobby their own and other legislators regarding bill #HB60, and generally help in any way they could.

In 2008, the efforts of VICFA members were key to the passage of what came to be known as the "Kitchen Bill," which exempted candies, jams, jellies and certain baked goods that are made in undisputed home kitchens, sold directly to consumers, and marked "NOT FOR RESALE—PROCESSED AND PREPARED WITHOUT STATE INSPECTION." While this may sound like a simple thing, it took many hands to host this Legislative Breakfast and even more to get the bill passed.

Because of the efforts of VICFA members, homemakers can operate within the law to bring a few of their homemade items to market without regulators and inspectors invading the privacy of their kitchens. The newly proposed bill would add pickles, relishes, and salsas to the list. Everyone should be willing to support VICFA in these efforts. Ask people you know who sell their items at the market to join VICFA and lend their support. Call your representative, talk to the staff and encourage them to support bill #HB60. Talking points are listed below for a better understanding of what needs to be accomplished. Don't wait for a few to do the work when many are needed. Lend your willing hands or consider a contribution to help defray the expenses of lobbying this bill.

Find Talking Points on page five.

The Farmstead Community

By Joel Salatin

What defines the allure of Historic Williamsburg? Is it the costumes, the drum and fife corps, the buildings? All of those things add to it, of course, but I think most people are drawn to the imbedded farmstead crafts and industry.

The defining characteristic about Williamsburg, which differs from modern America, is the proximity to residences of what was, in that day, fairly heavy industry. They didn't have the commercial district, the retail outlet district, the farming district, and the residential district. If you visit the George Wythe House, after going through the house you enter the backyard. There, busy at their work, are candle makers, spinners, a blacksmith, a barrel maker, and a woodworker.

If you study the on farm industry at Monticello, it's the same thing. I recently finished a fascinating book about Pharsalia, a plantation south of Charlottesville that cured hams and had an on-site hospital for the slaves. These farmsteads bustled with the industry of the day. At Mt. Vernon, George Washington owned a mill, dock, and had numerous income streams, from whiskey to shad fishing.

All of these activities are appropriate for farms. Butchering, tanning, all food preservation from canning to curing, welding, energy generation, brewing, woodworking, spinning and clothes making—the list is endless. But today, this kind of activity is considered incompatible with farming. Oh, you can do it for yourself as a hobby, but don't dare sell any of it!

I call all this social and economic apartheid. And, lest anyone think this is a product of big business and conservatives, the radical environmentalists are just as bad. They want to lock up large tracts of land called wilderness. They kicked farmsteads off the Blue Ridge Mountains and took land and farms for a national park, dislocating people who had lived there for a long time. Today, we parse this apartheid down even to residential square footage. If you can afford a 1,500 square foot house, you can live in this section. But, if you can only afford a 1,000 square foot house, you have to live over in that section. Talk about becoming insular.

In 1915 some 1,500 auto manufacturers existed. Many of them were glorified backyard mechanics, tinkering and working in their own home shops, long before zoning regulations. This creativity worked out the kinks and slowly birthed the automobile. Today, this same kind of creativity has birthed the e-boom from home offices and computer consoles. The e-breakthroughs largely have come from individual, independent minds, not from big corporate efforts.

Two areas need this kind of home-based creativity to be unleashed today: food and energy. We hear about inner city food deserts. Nothing would solve that problem faster than vacant lot mini-farms and in-home food preservation and processing. Re-embedding the entire food chain in a farm and village setting would

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exponentially increase creativity and innovation in food. The way to solve problems is not to centralize the innovation, but to spread it out and let more people participate in the solutions.

Rarely does the answer come from one source. The more brains, eyes, ears, and hands participate, the better the solution and the quicker it will occur. A lady in Texas told me recently that she'd been turned in to the zoning board for growing a tomato plant in her flower garden. Her residential area prohibits farming...and growing a tomato is farming. Is this crazy or what?

The same is true for energy. The best thing we could do for energy is to dismantle the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) so that anyone who wanted a still could have one. We should have a blanket exemption for windmill towers up to a certain height. The paperwork and

bureaucratic permitting process to produce your own energy is not only inappropriate, it actually stifles innovation.

I wish I had a nickel for every time some jackleg mechanic has told me about a little carburetor gizmo that will increase fuel efficiency by 20 percent. I'm not mechanical enough to figure out how to install these things. I'd be happy to pay someone to install these things and they'd be happy to do it. But if they do, then they have a business, and if they are working out of their residence, that's prohibited.

If we're ever going to bring creativity to the table, we have to quit this economic and vocational apartheid nonsense. Instead of restricting access to local commerce, we need to encourage local commerce.

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Classified Ad rate per month, prepaid:

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Deadline for receipt of Display and Classified Ads is the 15th of the month for inclusion in the following month's issue.

Send questions concerning Display Ads to Advertise@vicfa.net

VICFA Notes

Virginia Association for Biological Farming Conference & Trade Show will be held February 19 & 20 2010 at the Institute for Advanced Learning & Research, Danville, Virginia. VICFA will have a booth at the Trade Show. Call Lois Smith if you can volunteer to work the booth for a few hours on February 19 & 20. Mark your calendar to attend the conference or participate in some way. For more information:

<http://vabf.org/annual-conference>.

Meet The Farmer TV produced wonderful coverage of the 5th Annual Farm Food Voices, interviewing some farmers and legislators who participated. **Richard Schelling**, local radio personality gave an insightful presentation of the VICFA mission statement. **Richard Bean** encouraged young people to get involved in local farming. Featured speaker, **Richard Morris** encouraged attendees to reap the economic rewards of eating good, local, whole foods. **Creigh Deeds**, patron of the Kitchen Bill, praised the efforts of VICFA as the creators of an agricultural model that will lead to a global agricultural renaissance. **Congressman Tom Perriello** complemented VICFA for a good job of bringing people together, presenting a common sense voice for good quality local foods.

The 56th episode of Meet The Farmer TV was dedicated to **Kathryn Russell**, fellow farmer and coordinator of the 5th Annual Farm Food Voices. View this and other upcoming shows on Dish Network's channel 9415 and on Charlottesville's Comcast channel 13, Tuesdays at 7 PM. For a chance to see the complete series of over 58 shows, you can watch online anytime at:

<http://Watch.MeetTheFarmer.tv>.

CLASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE - Walk-in freezer, International Cold Storage, 2002, 220V, 30 amp, single phase, 11'W x 12'D x 8' H, comes with metal racks and plastic containers, \$8,000. Call Karl Keller at 434 823-1999.

Come to Our February Meeting!

Share in the VICFA experience: VICFA meetings are open to the public. Bring your enthusiasm, a friend or neighbor and a contribution to the pot luck.

VICFA meetings are held the second Sunday of the month. **New Meeting Format:** The business meeting is from 12:00 – 1:00 followed by a pot luck lunch and a general meeting from 1:00 – 3:00.

Sunday, February 14
at Guy and Sue Freesen's home
3081 Shutterlee Mill Rd.
Staunton, VA 24401
Phone: (540) 886-8486

FROM I-64 (EAST OR WEST BOUND):

Go North on I-81. Take exit 225 off I-81 (Route 262/Woodrow Wilson Pky). Go South on 262, through the first light (Rt. 11). Take a right at the second flashing yellow light (742/Shutterlee Mill Road). Go 2.5 miles. We're on the right, #3081 Shutterlee Mill Rd.

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

Subscribe to **In The Kitchen Magazine**, a local publication for home cooks their friends and everyone who loves good food. The magazine is published by Rowena Morrel, a VICFA member, who focuses the magazine's content on sourcing and preparing local foods. Over the last 10 years, many VICFA members have been featured and a number have been contributing writers. VICFA members may subscribe for \$15; the regular subscription price is \$23. Send your check to In The Kitchen Magazine, 28 Woodlake Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22901

Discount to members: Are there any products that you would like to promote 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 describing your offer to editor@vicfa.net or mail to Editor, VICFA, PO Box 915, Charlottesville VA 22902.

LOST AND FOUND

Someone found 2 spoons on the lawn after the January VICFA meeting at Bev Hill's house. They are fairly heavy and have a floral design with two loops on each side at the top. If these are your spoons, contact Bev Hill, goodfoodforall@yahoo.com or 434-292-9183.

THANKS

- To Bev Hill in Crewe, Virginia for hosting the January meeting
- To Joel Salatin for his contributions to VICFA Voice
- To Angelo Vangelopoulos for his contribution to VICFA Voice
- To Lois Smith for organizing the Legislative Breakfast
- To Anna Emery for the new design of the newsletter

PARTICIPATE

Members networking and doing business with members is a win-win situation, one that is at the heart of this organization.

- Read your newsletter on line at www.vicfa.org, no password required.
- Attend VICFA meetings
- Renew your VICFA membership if this is your renewal month.
- Volunteer to host a VICFA meeting
- Contribute to the newsletter
- Call your Virginia State Legislators to vote for the new Kitchen Bill, HB 60

HELP US OUT

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 and we'll have someone call to interview you. The newsletter committee looks forward to receiving articles to consider for publication.

Send your discount notice, your request for an interview or your article to editor@vicfa.net or mail to Editor, VICFA, PO Box 915, Charlottesville VA 22902.



Photo from January VICFA meeting

TALKING POINTS: January 20, 2010 - Legislative Lobby Day

1. Consumer Demand

There are increasing demands for locally prepared, small batch foods, while the public becomes more aware of numerous food poisoning outbreaks resulting from commercially processed foods.

2. Private Home Inspections are Oppressive and Unnecessary

Regulations mandating inspections of private homes where the resident processes and prepares food for sale to an individual for his own consumption are oppressive and unnecessary. Such inspections inhibit small, local enterprises.

3. 2008 Exemption

In the 2008 legislative session a bill was passed exempting candies, jams, jellies, and certain baked goods from inspection if those items were sold at the home or at Farmers Markets and labeled "NOT FOR RESALE – PROCESSED AND PREPARED WITHOUT STATE INSPECTION." There have been no public health problems resulting from this legislation.

4. Current Bill – New Exemptions

This current bill, #HB60, proposes to add pickles, salsa, and relish to the list of exempted food items. Because of the acidic nature of these products, they may be safely produced and sold from home.

5. Virginia's Budget Shortfall

Virginia's budget shortfall demands that available funds be used to inspect the problem areas in food safety: mainly, food processed by large commercial businesses.

6. Support Families and Bolster Local Economy.

Allowing the sale of some homemade products would provide a valuable source of supplemental income to families. It would also bolster the local economy. According to an economic analysis report conducted by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, if every household in the state spent just \$10 on local food per week, the Virginia economy would receive an additional \$1.65 billion.

Link to the Talking Points with attached economic analysis report:

<http://www.vicfa.org/pdf/2010%20Legislature%20Talking%20Points.pdf>

Getting to Know You

One goal of the new Communications Committee is to promote greater communication among members. With that in mind, we want to use the newsletter to introduce you to other fellow VICFA members. In turn, the introductions will work to strengthen the association and increase opportunities for networking. This month let me introduce you to a couple that is relatively new to farming and VICFA and to a couple who has been farming for 30 years and are founding members of VICFA.

Farming On The Side

*Alexa Boker and Carlos Arostegui
Whispering Creek Farm, Wingina, VA*

“We bought 184 acres with an old farmhouse on Halloween 2003. It was April '06 before we moved in and we are still remodeling the house ourselves. There was no infrastructure on this old farm, no outbuildings or fences—none of that.” They both admitted that neither of them had much farming experience beyond those experiences lingering from childhood memories.

They liked the Central Virginia area. They bought a cow, now have 4 herd share members and continue to explore what they will do on their land. Meanwhile they continue to operate their business, accounting software sales and support.

Alexa admits that she likes to grow things and thought 30-60 acres would be sufficient. Now thoroughly challenged by 184 acres she is never bored, never has to search for things to do. When asked her advice for those considering an agricultural pursuit, “Get used to having your plans upset and don’t take it personally.”

To answer the same question, Carlos quoted a well-known phrase, “sometimes you eat the bear and sometimes the bear eats you! Incidentally, we have two black bears who visit occasionally.”

They got started in VICFA when researching alternative uses for their land and saw a Joel Salatin seminar advertised in ACRES USA. At the seminar Joel mentioned VICFA. When they saw the VICFA booth at the State Fair they signed up. “Little did I know that shortly I would be picketing in front of the Virginia Supreme Court against intrusive home inspections of small farm cheese production!” Carlos said.

Carlos is a new member of the VICFA Board of Directors and the VICFA Webmaster. Alexa is on the Communications Committee and the newsletter staff and serves as the chairman of the newly formed Finance Committee. Each shares their much needed professional talents to enhance the direction and growth of the organization.

Alternative Farming

*Christine Solem and John Coles
Satyrfield Farm, Charlottesville, VA*

Christine was not a farmer but a classical pianist and taught piano lessons as well as a number of other vocations. Her love of animals was her connection to the land. Soon there were 2 goats and “You know, when you have milk people want it.” she said. “Raw milk leads to problems you know. As a matter of fact our legal bills became so excessive, as we were determined to keep regulators out of our home and our business, that I began to study the law, learned the players and the ropes and essentially became a lobbyist for the rights of small independent farmers.”

John joined her and though the goats were fine, he found a more symbiotic relationship when he created a garden—for the manure. Selling produce to local food stores and restaurants was not all together satisfactory. His supply was not consistent enough. The farmers market provided just the right venue. “Seventeen years ago I took in \$12 my first day at the City Market and was thrilled. Now I give away our cheese rather than comply with the regulations.” John said.

Increasing regulations have placed additional burdens on small independent farmers. John continues to use his corner stand at the market to update shoppers on what is going on in the regulatory arena that affects their ability to buy local food and solicits their support.

In 2000, John and Christine became founding members of VICFA, creating a bulwark against continuing encroaching regulations and an infrastructure for addressing such encroachments.

John is a member of the VICFA Board of Directors and a key lobbyist. Christine often contributes to the newsletter and plays a strong role in our legislative efforts. When asked how he would counsel those considering farming for a living he quickly said, “Go to alternative agricultural sources and local small farmers for advice.”

Did you know that our VICFA is indeed the first “ICFA” in the country? That makes me very proud! How about you?

COOK'S CORNER

Root Vegetables

By Angelo Vangelopoulos

As a chef who has always sought after and enjoyed relationships with local farmers, I feel as though it is my responsibility to share how this makes the foods we serve special. Our guests appreciate the effort we take to serve local food, but quite frankly not enough of them pursue these foods for their own use and enjoyment at home.

When as cooks we are able to highlight why these foods are better for us and give our customers a memorable meal using as many local ingredients as possible, treated with respect and cooked with care, we fulfill our responsibility of eating seasonal, local and fresh. Regardless of how well we prepare Peruvian asparagus in January, it barely resembles the amazing product we gratefully receive from people like Deirdre and Phil at Harvest Thyme Herbs, or Jean and Richard at Double H Farm, when springtime finally comes around. In the meantime, we can enjoy some of the hearty foods that Old Man Winter provides us.

There is something truly soul satisfying and heartwarming about root vegetables in the wintertime. With short, chilly days and long, cold nights, I can't think of a better food to satisfy my cravings than simply

roasted tubers with butter and herbs. It seems sometimes that the simplest of techniques and recipes are the ones that keep us coming back for more.

Consider the sweet potato – which in my opinion was slighted with the name, and might have enjoyed more culinary fame and fortune if it had been called “the awesome potato.” Fast and easy to prepare, and packed full of vitamins, nutrients, and fiber, it is undoubtedly underutilized and underappreciated. Fritters, salsas, gratins, pies, cakes, stuffed pastas; baked, fried, roasted, boiled. I could go on all day. Also, dare I say, there are few foods that have more savory and sweet applications.

My favorite way to enjoy sweet potatoes (applicable to many other foods as well, such as parsnips, salsify, and turnips), is to cut them into 2” thick slices, douse them with oil, butter, plenty of salt, pepper, and leaves of fresh thyme and sage. Spread them out on a sheet pan, cut side down, and roast on the bottom rack of a 400 degree oven for about 20-25 minutes or until fork tender (flipping them over once during cooking). They will caramelize nicely on both sides, get a touch crispy, and boy do they taste good! A perfect complement to almost any pork or venison dish, and a great way to enjoy the plentiful bounty winter has to offer.

VICFA member Angelo Vangelopoulos is chef/owner of Ivy Inn Restaurant at 2244 Old Ivy Road, Charlottesville, VA 22903-4817. He may be reached at 434-977-1222 or ivyinn@comcast.net. Enjoy his frequent blog postings at <http://www.ivyinnrestaurant.com>.



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Share this newsletter with a friend - encourage others to join VICFA!

Annual membership is \$25.00.

Please make check payable to VICFA and send to PO Box 915, Charlottesville, VA 22902.

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Producers, please list the products that you sell:

*Do you want to be listed in the Membership Directory? Yes No

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How did you hear about VICFA?

Comments: