



A Good Year for Local Food Production

By Heidi Chay, Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District Manager

Looking back on 2013, there have been many encouraging signs for the future of local food production on the Kenai Peninsula.

In January, a joint Chamber of Commerce luncheon on the "eating locally" theme drew an overflow crowd and planted seeds for new farm-to-restaurant efforts. In February, Peninsula residents spoke up for agriculture, both current and future, in the borough-wide land use survey. In April, the third annual Kenai Peninsula Ag Forum featured local food innovators Rupert Scribner and Sarah Donchi of Funny River Fjord Ranch and the debut of the Peninsula's only certified seed potato producers, Don McNamara and Donna Rae Faulkner of Oceanside Farms in Homer. In May, city councils in Kenai and Soldotna, the Kenai Peninsula Foundation and local businesses threw their financial support behind efforts to raise consumer awareness of locally-grown food. June saw the successful launch of a new farmers market at the Kenai Peninsula Food Bank. As an aside, did you know that upwards of 600 customers visit local farmers markets each week? In July, at the height of the fishing season, local composters were hard at work turning record quantities of fish waste into valuable agricultural inputs. And in August, the Borough Mayor and the cities of Kenai and Soldotna issued proclamations declaring September 16-22 Harvest Moon Local Foods Week.

Whew, time to celebrate our progress toward a thriving local food system! There are a variety of ways to get involved during Harvest Moon Local Foods Week:

- All week long, enjoy local food specials at one of the participating restaurants: Mykel's, Corner Cafe, Fine Thyme Cafe and Odie's Deli in Soldotna, and Veronica's Old Town Cafe in Kenai.
- On Sept. 18 or 19, take in a presentation on the Alaska Food Challenge -- a year of eating all locally -- by Anchorage gardener and permaculture teacher Saskia Esslinger.
- On Sept. 20 and 21, attend the Local Food Film Festival at the Kenai Peninsula Food Bank. The festival kicks off at 6 pm on Friday, Sept. 20 with guest speaker and renowned Alaskan chef, Rob Kineen. Festivities continue Saturday, Sept. 21 with films at 3 pm and 7 pm, and a free dinner, all Alaskan grown of course, at 5 pm.
- And don't forget the farmers markets on Tuesdays and Saturdays! (See inset for details.)

You'll find the complete schedule of events at www.kenailocalfood.org.



Tuesday at the Farmers Fresh Market in the Food Bank parking lot.

Local Farmer's Market Schedule and Locations

-Central Kenai Peninsula Farmer's Market, Soldotna
Schedule: Saturdays until Sept. 28.

Hours: 10am-2pm

Location: Corner of Corral St. and Kenai Spur Highway, at the "bus turn-around."

For more information: 262-7502

-Kenai's Saturday/Farmer's Market

Schedule: Saturdays through Sept. 14. Hours: 10am-4pm.

Location: Kenai Chamber & Visitors Center, parking lot, 11471 Kenai Spur Highway.

For more information: 283-1991

-Farmers Fresh Market

Schedule: Tuesdays, 3 - 6 pm through Sept. 28

PLUS Saturday, Sept. 21, noon - 3 pm.

Location: Community College Drive in the Food Bank Parking Lot.

For more information: 262-3111

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