2025 Grain Growers Conference

The Links of a Local Grain Supply Chain

Join the University of Vermont Extension Northwest Crops and Soils Program and Northern Grain Growers Collaborative (NGGC) for the Annual Grain Growers Conference!

Conference Details

Location: The Essex Resort & Spa
70 Essex Way, Essex, VT, 05452

Date and Time: March 12, 2025
9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Registration 8:15 a.m.
Conference starts 9:00 a.m.
Networking Session 4:30 p.m.

Conference Fee:
Lunch is included!
Per Person: $85.00
NGGC member: $60.00
Student: $50.00

Register online by March 10
https://go.uvm.edu/2025graingrowers or by calling the UVM Non-Credit Registration office at (802) 656-8407.

Baker's Showcase
New this year! We want to highlight you and your bakery. Bakers can showcase their prized breads and connect with others in the grain community.
Interested? Please contact Carrie Brisson before March 1 at carrie.brisson@kingarthurbaking.com

RED HEN BAKING CO

Featured Conference Speaker: Randy George

Randy George and his wife Eliza Cain founded and co-own Red Hen Baking Co. located in Middlesex, VT. In operation since 1999, Red Hen operates a popular café and a wholesale bread bakery specializing in organic breads made with local and regional ingredients. For two decades, Randy has worked closely with Vermont farmers to improve the baking-quality of their wheat. Currently, all of the wheat and rye that is used at Red Hen comes from four farms located within 300 miles of the bakery. Randy is a Northern Grain Growers Collaborative (NGGC) board member and regularly participates in bake-tests of local grain for UVM Extension.

Randy will tell the story of Red Hen's 25 year journey working with local grain farmers. In that time, Red Hen has gone from using a small amount of Vermont-grown grain to the present day where they purchase nearly 300 tons of local grain annually from three NGGC members.

Thank you to our event sponsors & partners:

Le Moulin des Cèdres
Red Hen Baking Co – Vermont Artisan Breads
King Arthur Baking Company
SARE Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education
Arthur Carroll Crop Insurance
Northern Grain Growers Collaborative
Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming

If you require an accommodation related to a disability, please contact UVM Student Accessibility Services at access@uvm.edu, or (802) 656-7753 by February 19.

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University of Vermont | Extension
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AGENDA

Time	Salon I/II	Salon III	Ballroom	Viking Kitchen
Atrium **9:00 am —10:00 am**	Welcome and Keynote - Randy George, co-owner of Red Hen Baking Co. Sharing the story of Red Hen's 25 year journey working with local grain farmers.			
Session 1 **10:15 am - 11:00 am**	Erik Andrus Boundbrook Farm Practical Northeastern Small Commercial Rice Methodology	Mac Ehrhardt Albert Lea Seed Fusarium Disease Management	Laura Valli U of Missouri Rye in the broader grain economy	Baking Session 10:15 am - 11:55 am Jeffrey Hamelman Traditional Pretzels
Session 2 **11:10 am - 11:55 am**	Matthew Dewavrin Les Fermes Longprés' evolution, mission and values	Andrew Dixon Here and There Grain Small scale grain growing	Kristen Loria, Cornell Ivy Krezinski, UVM Maddie Hunter, UMaine Organic Dry Bean Research Updates	
Atrium **12:00 pm - 12:45 pm**	**LUNCH** Secretary of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Anson Tebbetts, will join us briefly at lunch time			
Atrium **12:45 pm to 1:30 pm**	Grow It! Mill It! Bake It! Living the Grain Chain in the Finger Lakes Vertically Integrated Grain System - Grower Thor Oechsner with Oechsner Farms, Baker Stefan Senders of Wide Awake Bakery, and Miller Greg Russo with Farmer Ground Flour			
Atrium **1:30 pm - 2:30 pm**	Baker's Showcase - join local bakers who are showcasing their breads and bakeries.			
Session 3 **2:40 pm - 3:25 pm**	Tom Molloy, UMaine and Amber Lambke of Maine Grains Local grain nutrition	Joel Alex Blue Ox Malthouse Experiences and successes	Mark Bernard Barnyard Organics and the production system	Baking Session 2:40 pm - 4:25 pm Laura Valli To grow more rye, we need to use more rye
Session 4 **3:35 pm - 4:25 pm**	Justine Dewavrin Moulin des Cedres Experiences running a mill on the farm	Roy Desrochers UVM Sensory Expert Malt Sensory	Thor Oeschner Oechsner Farms Managing Fertility	
Atrium **4:30 pm to 5:30 pm**	Networking Session and Social Hour			

CULTIVATING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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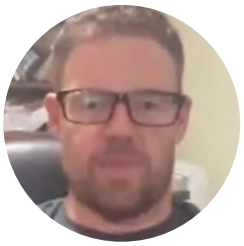
SPEAKERS

In 2013, **Joel Alex** left his job and "9 to 5" life to found Blue Ox Malthouse with the goal of becoming a catalyst for fostering relationships between farmers, brewers, and other food producers. In January 2014, with two tons of grain from Aroostook County, Joel processed his first pilot batch of malts at Coastal Farms and Foods, Inc. in Belfast, ME. This would lay the groundwork for Blue Ox Malthouse's work with the state's agriculture and brewing communities to provide the perfect Maine malt. A year later in Spring of 2015, Blue Ox Malthouse found a permanent home in Lisbon Falls, ME. From empty warehouse to functioning malthouse, Blue Ox began full malt production in Fall 2015. Grains are processed locally to keep money in the community through job creation. That ultimately translates to high-quality, thoughtfully sourced beer and spirits. Since then, Blue Ox Malthouse has grown and developed— honing in on quality, increasing the farmers we work with, and expanding our product offerings. They strive every day to improve the world in which we live. Join Joel's presentation to hear more about Blue Ox Malthouse experiences and successes.

Erik Andrus and his wife Erica started Boundbrook Farm in 2006, and they have been growing rice on the integrated duck-and-rice "aigamo" model since 2010. The farm is in Vermont's Champlain Valley and offers ecologically-grown brown and white rice wholesale and retail, as well as roasting ducks seasonally.

In this presentation, Erik will share their farm model for rice farming along the lines of small-to-medium scale Japanese farms. Since 2023, Boundbrook Farm has been working directly with Cornell and Cornell Cooperative Extension to advance a New York State Rice program. Exciting research avenues, compelling ecosystem and watershed benefits, and prospects for the spread of this development work to other states make this a very interesting time for rice.



Mark Bernard and his wife Sally started Barnyard Organics, in Prince Edward Island Canada in 2003. It is a certified organic farm with a vision of being a self-sustaining and environmentally sustainable farm. Growing, mixing and selling complete organic feed rations for livestock, selling bulk organic grains, custom seed cleaning and soybean roasting, managing a Community Shared Agriculture program for organic chicken and eggs, custom poultry processing and raising four enthusiastic farm kids keeps everyone pretty busy at the farm.

Barnyard Organics offers grain-related services, including cleaning and drying. They are also a distributor for Bio-Ag products and for General Seed Company's products for cover crop and forages seeds, both organic and non-organic. Mark will share how they have added 30 head of cattle into the rotation for fertility to increase soil biology. They are also starting to apply compost extracts to all of their seeded ground and have been seeing great results.

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Roy Desrochers, sensory scientist at UVM Extension, will facilitate a sensory workshop on the aroma and flavor of malt and malt products. It will include a general foundational training in objective Descriptive Sensory Analysis (DSA), and the sensory evaluation of congress worts to assess malt quality for use in products such as beer. The final part of the workshop will be the sensory evaluation of malt products to apply the knowledge and skills learned in this workshop. Participants will benefit from the interactive tasting format and leave the session with a basic understanding of the evaluation of malt and its sensory properties.

Justine Dewavrin is one of the co-owners of Le Moulin des Cèdres, a mill in Québec that aims to enhance organic wheat from local agriculture through partnership with neighboring bakers.

Since 2015, she oversees the processing of the wheat grown on the family farm into a white organic flour. Through close collaboration with several bakeries and Coop Agrobio du Québec, she has been developing a farm to table approach for the commercialization of the Moulin's products.

Join Justine’s presentation to hear about her experiences running a mill on the farm.

Matthew Dewavrin is a Quebec-based farmer, agronomist, and advocate for sustainable agriculture, deeply committed to promoting eco-friendly practices and community engagement. As a board member of Quebec’s Institute for Research and Development in Sustainable Agriculture and as the president of his local agro-environmental club, he collaborates with other farmers to advance sustainable farming techniques, particularly in soil health and biodiversity.

Matthew’s presentation delves into the practices and strategic approaches implemented at Les Fermes Longprés, an organic farm spanning 1520 acres. Matthew, agronomist and co-owner, discusses the farm’s evolution, mission, and values, emphasizing self-sufficiency, soil conservation, biodiversity, and vertical integration.

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Andrew Dixon is the lead crescent wrench at Here and There Grain Project, which offers a mobile harvesting service and post-harvest technical assistance in southern New Hampshire and coastal Massachusetts. Instead of leasing land, he has partnered with farms to incorporate grain plots into vegetable rotations. Farming part-time since 2021, Andrew has also worked in commercial-scale composting facility construction, at a wood-fired bread bakery, and as a software engineer. His friends like to tease that he's obsessed with rye, but he likes wheat too.

Andrew's presentation is on small-scale, collaborative, peri-urban grain growing.
From half-acre plots to 30-acre fields, this talk will explore some of the challenges unique to the small-scale grain grower. We'll take a look at the equipment that you can get by with and some that you'll wish you had. We'll talk about opportunities for marketing, stop-gap infrastructure, and establishing mutually beneficial relationships with other food businesses. — Can the Northeast's urban hinterlands play a larger role in the organic grain revival? We'll take a look at a collaborative approach to farmland use at the interface of urban and rural landscapes.

Mac Ehrhardt is a 3rd-generation owner of Albert Lea Seed House in Albert Lea, MN. He grew up in the family seed business and received his formal agricultural education at the University of California, Davis. Mac has worked full-time at the Albert Lea Seed House since 1991. After serving as its President for 20 years, he stepped into the role of Chairman in 2023 and remains involved in sales, production, and management. He has served on the boards of several organizations. Mac's presentation is about fusarium disease management.

Jeffrey Hamelman is the author of BREAD: A Baker's Book of Techniques and Recipes. He is one of a limited number of Certified Master Bakers in the United States and a past captain of Baking Team USA. His sourdough culture has brought him to six continents to bake and to teach. He now shares his knowledge and decades-long commitment to baking by teaching students around the world, and loves the opportunities this affords him to learn from others.

Jeffrey's morning baking session will be traditional pretzels. In this class you will shape German-style pretzels, which will be dipped in a lye-based solution before baking. The mixing process will be explained and demonstrated before the end of class (attendees will shape dough that was mixed prior to the start of the class). Discussions will include flour choices as well as the use of sourdough or other pre-ferments. Class size is limited to eight participants.

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Madeline (Maddie) Hunter is a graduate student at the University of Maine, studying a Master's Degree in Plant, Soil, and Environmental Science. Her Master's project is concerned with identifying best practices for nitrogen management in organic no-till dry bean production. Maddie shared that she has been passionate about learning about sustainability since her undergraduate studies in environmental science that she completed back home in Western Australia. Her goal is to work as an agronomist while developing more sustainable cropping systems in collaboration with smallholder farmers.

Maddie, along with Kristen Loria from Cornell Univ. and Ivy Krezinski from Univ. of Vermont will join for a presentation on organic dry bean research updates. They all participate in the East-Central Organic Dry Bean Collaborative (ECOBEAN).

Ivy Krezinski is a research specialist with the UVM Extension Northwest Crops & Soils program. She is a part of the East-Central Organic Dry Bean Collaborative (ECOBEAN), and works on the organic dry bean research trials at Borderview Research Farm in Alburgh, VT.
Ivy, along with Kristen Loria from Cornell University and Maddie Hunter from UMaine will join for a presentation on organic dry bean research updates. They all participate in the East-Central Organic Dry Bean Collaborative (ECOBEAN), which was developed by researchers in collaboration with organic farmers and dry bean industry stakeholders across the Northeast and Upper Midwest. The goal of this project is to build resilient regional organic dry bean production systems through applied research and farmer-to-farmer learning. Over the past couple of years, Cornell University, University of Maine, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and University of Vermont have conducted several organic dry bean research trials.

Amber Lambke of Skowhegan is co-founder and president of Maine Grains and a driving force behind Maine's sustainable foods movement. Amber has worked with local business leaders and community members to successfully bring the cultivation and processing of grains back to Skowhegan. Maine Grains is carried by specialty food stores and used by bakeries, breweries, and restaurants throughout the Northeast.

Amber is also the founding director of the Maine Grain Alliance. Her efforts through the Maine Grain Alliance have generated a broader understanding and appreciation of the nutritional and economic value of heritage grains and oats, as well as their exceptional flavor. The Alliance's Kneading Conference, co-founded by Amber, now draws thousands of attendees from throughout North America each year and has spawned similar conferences across the country.

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Kristen Loria is an extension support specialist in the Sustainable Cropping Systems Lab at Cornell University, as well as a farmer/owner at Buttermilk Bean. She has a bachelor's degree in Natural Resources and a Master's degree in Plant Breeding and Genetics at Cornell University. Kristen helps lead Extension efforts for the lab, which include coordinating farmer advisory groups, on-farm and farmer-led research, as well as outreach events such as workshops and field days. She also helps manage and execute field experiments related to the lab's work on regional dry bean production and organic no-till systems.

Kristen, along with Ivy Krezinski from University of Vermont and Maddie Hunter from University of Maine will join for a presentation on organic dry bean research updates. They all participate in the East-Central Organic Dry Bean Collaborative (ECOBEAN).

Tom Molloy is a Research Professional in Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Maine and has been working with small grains and pulse crops for close to twenty years. His presentation will include results from the nutritional survey conducted in 2024 - Nutritional Value of Local Grain Products. The objective of this project was to determine if the flour produced by local, small-scale millers differs in nutritional composition from the closest comparable products currently available in the USDA FoodData Central database of ingredients. For the project, 32 flour samples from 8 mills in the Northeast and Midwest were submitted.

Thor Oechsner farms 1000 acres of organic grains in the Finger Lakes region of NY on Oechsner Farms. His crops include flint corn, a variety of wheats, rye, buckwheat, red clover, and various cover crop seeds, all of which he grows in rotation to rejuvenate the soil and create necessary biomass to support the growth of annual grains without chemical inputs. Thor is dedicated to creating a local grain economy and, in order to do so, has helped found both Farmer Ground Flour and Wide Awake Bakery. These value added markets have made it possible for Thor to help other grain producers in his region, and beyond, transition to organic and replicate his success by growing and marketing food grade grains.

Thor will talk about Oechsner Farms and managing fertility and soil health on an organic grain farm without livestock during his afternoon presentation, as well as join colleagues Stefan Senders and Greg Russo in a panel discussion right after lunch about a vertically integrated grain system.

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Greg Russo grew up in Silver Spring, Maryland, and spent much of his 20s working on small organic vegetable farms. An interest in grain led him to the Finger Lakes region of New York, where he finished his bachelor's in farm business management at Cornell, and met his future business partner Thor Oechsner through a sustainable agriculture book discussion group. Their first collaboration was a sample farm enterprise budget for purchasing a spelt dehuller. The dehuller was never purchased, but Thor and Greg went on to start Farmer Ground Flour while Greg worked on his farm. Greg lives in Trumansburg with his wife and two daughters, and enjoys basketball and chess in his spare time.

Farmer Ground Flour farm and mill in New York State is motivated to help New York farmers step out of the volatile commodity market by building long-term relationships, and providing a stable price and consistent market. Greg will join his partners Oechsner Farms and Wide Awake Bakery in a lunch time panel discussion.

Wide Awake Bakery was conceived over a great meal shared among friends. Three people — **Stefan Senders,** a home baker who was contemplating a career change, his wife, Liz Brown, and their friend Thor Oechsner, a local organic grain grower — were enjoying a meal together, with one of Stefan's loaves at its center. From that meal the Wide Awake Bakery was born, and now fifteen years later, Wide Awake is known in the Finger Lakes region and beyond for its delicious products and its role in building a sustainable local food system.

They host baking classes, flour tastings, and trials of heirloom organic wheat varieties, working with the Organic Grains for the Northeast program of OGRIN (Organic Growers' Research and Information-Sharing Network) and New York City's Greenmarkets as part of a network of growers, millers, and bakers working to promote wheat production in the Northeast. They consult with other bakeries to help familiarize others with the challenges and potential of baking with local flours. Wide Awake Bakery is a community-focused bakery located in Trumansburg, NY. They work closely with their partners, Oechsner Farms and Farmer Ground Flour, to make great breads from local organic grains. Join Stefan, Thor and Greg for the lunch time panel *Grow It! Mill It! Bake It! Living the Grain Chain in the Finger Lakes.*

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Dr. Laura Valli, originally from Estonia, a small rye-loving country in northern Europe, spent the last six years in Skagit county, WA, an area known for its diverse agricultural production. She obtained a PhD in Crop Science from the Breadlab at Washington State University in May 2024. Working under the mentorship of Dr. Stephen Jones, she used anthropological approaches and theoretical frameworks to investigate issues of agronomical significance. She researched the meaning of rye for the people in the grain network, in the hopes of facilitating connections and mutual understanding between different interest groups (breeders, farmers, bakers and eaters). She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Missouri Center for Regenerative Agriculture, researching the impact of digital technologies on the accessibility of cost-share funding in the US.

In her presentation, Laura will share what can we learn from the current positioning of rye in the broader grain economy. Relying on insights from grain practitioners and data from field and baking trials, Dr. Valli will be discussing the promise of rye and the lessons that can be learnt from the relatively modest contemporary presence of this historically important grain.

In Laura's afternoon baking session *To grow more rye, we need to use more rye* and baking is a great avenue for that. In addition to making rye sourdough bread, rye flour is well suited for many other baked goods. This workshop will look at the baking chemistry of rye and the use of rye flour in place of all-purpose flour, with a focus on how the incorporation of rye impacts the sensory properties of the finished product.

Lunch time panel discussion
12:45 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Grow It! Mill It! Bake It!
Living the Grain Chain in the Finger Lakes

Join Grower Thor Oechsner with Oechsner Farms, Baker Stefan Senders of Wide Awake Bakery, and Miller Greg Russo with Farmer Ground Flour for a panel discussion about their journey in the local grain market/movement.

Northwest Crops and Soils Program

Find our grains research at https://go.uvm.edu/grains

Stay up to date with our research, programs, and events by following us on social media!

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Our mission is to promote the renewal and growth of grain cultivation in the Northeast by supporting farmers and building a local grain economy.

Interested in becoming a member of the Northern Grain Growers Collaborative (NGGC)?

Register online at
https://northerngrains.nationbuilder.com/membership_sign_up
https://www.northerngraingrowers.org/

Calling all bakers!
Baker's Showcase

New this year, we will hold a Baker's Showcase session to spotlight the products of local bakers. The Northern Grain Growers Collaborative invites all bakers to enter a loaf of bread in this showcase.

The Northeast is home to incredible bakers who use local grain in their everyday baking. This showcase will highlight the varieties of bread across the Northeast and provide a sensory experience for all attendees to enjoy.

Where: The Essex Resort and Spa
When: March 12, 2025, 1:30 p.m.- 2:30 p.m.
Contact: Carrie Brisson
carrie.brisson@kingarthurbaking.com

Showcase Highlights:

- Baker
- Bakery name and location
- Bread type
- Grain type
- Grain origin

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by calling the UVM Non-Credit Registration office at (802) 656-8407.
Cost is $85 per person or $60 for NGGC members.
You can also mail in the following registration form with a check payment by March 5, 2025.

Registration Form

Name 1: _____ Business Name: _____

Additional People: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

#People Total _____
Registration Fee $85 per person: _____ x $85 = $_____
NGGC Member Registration fee $60 per person: _____ x $60= $_____
Total amount enclosed: $_____
Please make check payable to UVM or University of Vermont and mail to: University of Vermont Extension, ATTN: Grain Growers Conference, 278 So. Main Street, Suite 2, St. Albans, VT 05478 by March 5, 2025.