

## FINAL REPORT

Educating Consumers and Chefs about Lesser Cuts of Meat through a Grassfed Meats Day - FNE02-419

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### **Project Goals**

The purpose of this project was to develop an event designed to educate consumers and chefs about grassfed meats, primarily lesser cuts of meat. We had set goals of 10 chefs participating, 150 consumers attending, two articles, and \$2,000 of immediate economic benefit to participating farms.

### **Farm Profile**

Skate Creek Farm is a 120 acre diversified livestock farm. Our mission is to raise animals on grass and to market them to consumers interested in flavor, health, and environmental sustainability. We raise veal, pork, poultry and sheep on pasture. Markets include mail-order, farmers markets, chefs and small stores.

### **Participants**

Jen Prosser and Dina Falconi took on the job of event coordinators. They were responsible for securing the site for the event, and lining up vendors, musicians, storytellers, facepainters, and speakers. They promoted the day and took charge of keeping the event running smoothly.

Epworth Farm is a camp that allowed us to hold the event on their property.

Tracy Frisch from the Regional Farm & Food Project was the technical advisor. She is working with the other participants to find funding to make the event an annual one.

Skate Creek Farm coordinated the grassfed meat farmers who provided the cuts of meat for the chefs, and the chefs who took place in the Tasting Competition.

### **Project Activities**

The first annual Family Farm Festival was held on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003.  
<http://www.sunstoneherbs.com/festival.html>. Over six months of hard work and planning went into this event.

Over 1,000 people were in attendance, including five chefs preparing grassfed beef, pork, lamb, and goat, forty-two vendors, and volunteers. The bulk of the funding went to pay two festival organizers, who were responsible for all publicity, event organization, vendor recruitment, and site preparation.

Two keys to the festival's success were the organizers and the location. The organizers put in at least 1,000 hours of time to put the event together, because they were passionate about the cause of sustainable farming in New York, and wanted to see the festival become an annual event. The funding did not begin to cover the hours that they contributed. The organizers were two customers of Skate Creek Farm, who own herbal businesses and often organize workshops and events. Their local connections and detailed organizational skills proved invaluable.

Epworth Farm is a non-profit church camp with large grounds and a big kitchen. They agreed to co-sponsor the festival and allowed us to hold the event there in return for a portion of the ticket sales and the opportunity to sell food. This proved to be a perfect location, with plenty of parking space, room for animals and hay-rides, room inside for chefs to have the tasting, space for vendors, and bathrooms. Next year Epworth wants to set a higher fee for the location, to make sure that they are reimbursed for their staff time.

It took a long time to get this festival off the ground. Our goal was to have at least four farms represented and ten chefs cooking with grassfed meats. Both farmers and chefs were slow to sign up, as there was no guarantee of publicity or attendance for this first event. As much as three months before the festival, we considered scaling the event back to a dinner and talk about grassfed meats, but decided that with the meat that farmers had committed and five chefs involved, we had enough participation to go forward. The press was very supportive, with at least four articles written in advance of the event.

Feedback since the event has been outstanding – many vendors have followed up to say they appreciated the interest of the crowd in sustainable farming and want to be contacted to participate again next year. Many attendees have compared the event with the early years of the Common Ground Fair.

The event included tastings from four local restaurants and Peter Hoffman, president of the Chefs Collaborative, and educational talks by a cheesemaker, a grassfed beef farmer, and the Hudson Valley's Slow Food Chapter. Vendors included local artisans, but also at least 10 New York livestock, dairy and produce farms.

### **Evaluation & Measuring Results**

This festival took A LOT of time to pull together, but was well worth it. The organizers set the stage for an annual event that will draw more people and be even more educational next year. We learned a few things that will be put into practice for next year's event.

- **Funding support is necessary for the festival until it grows to a substantially larger size.** The festival brought in about \$4,500 of income from ticket sales and

vendor fees. However, total expenses were over \$10,000. Without the funding from SARE, the festival would not have been able to meet its expenses. As it is, the funding didn't come close to paying the organizer's time involved. The organizers for next year have already begun to look for potential supporters for 2004's festival, and have set a goal of raising \$20,000.

- **More printed educational materials.** Attendees got a lot of information about grassfed meats and other sustainable farming practices from vendors and from the lectures. However, due to time constraints, we didn't get take-home materials drafted and printed for attendees. Next year a map of the festival layout as well as a schedule of events will be printed and handed out, as well as some basic information about grassfed meats, and recipes for cooking them. Many farmers commented on the interest that attendees had in education about sustainable farming.
- **Lots of animals.** This year we had farmers bring sheep, calves, oxen, chickens, and heritage turkeys. The animals were a big attraction, and we'll hope to have even more there next year.
- **Survey attendees.** We have gotten great informal feedback about the festival, but next year will try to institute a more formal evaluation method to determine ways to continue to improve people's experience at the festival. Chefs and vendors have given more formal feedback on how to improve the festival for them next year.

**Number of chefs participating: 5** (goal was 10). We've scaled back the goal for next year to 6 or 7 to keep it manageable. The grassfed meats tasting was by far the most popular feature of the festival. Next year we need to have more chefs cooking more tastings, and will also charge more for the tasting tickets (this year the tasting tickets just covered the cost of the meat.)

**Number of consumers attending: 1,000+** (goal was 150). This was overwhelmingly well-attended beyond what we had imagined possible! Farmers commented that this was a very well-educated crowd with an interest in detailed information about food choices and sustainable farming.

**Number of articles written: 4** (goal was 2)

**Immediate Economic Benefit to participating farms: \$1,750 from meat purchases from tasting and festival income.** Goal was \$2,000. This figure does not include income that farmers made selling product at the festival, and increased good-will in the community.

Two of the chefs participating were Skate Creek Farm customers, who are committed to serving sustainably-raised meats. The other three chefs also try to purchase locally, but it was important for them to see the interest that was generated in grass-fed meats, and to meet other farmers who could supply them with goat, lamb, beef, and pork. One of these chefs has already called the farm to ask about placing more regular orders.

## **Conditions**

N/a – the project was an event, not a research project.

## **Economics**

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It is impossible to tell if this festival directly contributed to an increase in sales, but based on the attendance, and the positive response from grassfed meat farmers who participated, the event brought together a huge number of interested potential customers to learn about the products.

## **Assessment / Adoption**

The festival far exceeded our expectations for participation, and we would like to make it an annual event. However, we also underestimated the time it would take to plan and organize such an event. We need to find a major sponsor or another source of funding to pay for more organizing time if the event will continue again in 2004. A fundraising plan has been written and sponsors are being sought. This turned out to be an event with more impact on more farmers and consumers than anticipated, but also MUCH more work!

## **Outreach**

Articles about the festival are attached, as well as organizing materials which are available to others seeking to develop a similar event.