



Slow Food Sonoma County North <slowfoodsonomacountynorth@gmail.com>

Sonoma County North Newsletter, June 2020

1 message

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June 2020 NEWSLETTER





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Small Farms: Together We Can

During COVID-19, small farms have a surprising advantage over factory farms: they can be flexible and creative in finding ways to stay viable. From New York to California, some small farms are actually thriving in an economy that is struggling. [\(New York Times\)](#)

The solutions that farms have devised are often in collaboration with other farms, with restaurants, and with advocacy groups such as CAFF (Community Alliance with Family Farmers). The demand for farm produce is also coinciding with the failure of larger food operations. “The potential danger of a crowded supermarket during the coronavirus pandemic, for both shoppers and workers, and the fragility of the industrial food supply, have people all over Los Angeles frantically looking for reliable, low-contact, or no-contact groceries. Some community-supported agriculture services have seen their membership triple in just a few weeks.” [\(New York Times\)](#)

Here are some examples of how farms are surviving.

The first major challenge for farms was when the restaurants they supplied closed. Some were able to shift sales directly to consumers at farmers markets or by creating CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) subscriptions. In some cases, such as at Chez Panisse in Berkeley, the restaurant created boxes of produce from its suppliers and sold them at the restaurant. At some farms there is now a waiting list for CSAs.

There is a strong history of cooperation among farmers that is helping many to survive. For example, Green String Farm in Petaluma and Dragonfly Floral in Healdsburg started selling products from other local producers along with their own—increasing their own sales and assisting their friends.

Green String's Ross Cannard set up a market in the parking lot of a café and sells his own vegetables and olive oil, as well as wine from a friend's vineyard and flowers. **Dragonfly Floral** originally sold flowers to individuals and to many restaurants. When restaurants closed, owner Carlisle Degischer decided to create a virtual farmstand. "She started working with local companies that make products she wanted to make sure she would continue to have access to, including (but not limited to) fresh vegetables from F.E.E.D. Sonoma, meats from Journeyman Meat Co., baked goods from Quail & Condor, Russian River Tea, and Volo chocolate." The online shop now sells everything from food to silver jewelry from about 40 vendors. ([Sonoma Magazine](#))

Organizations such as **CAFF** and **Farm Trails** also help small farms by creating links between producers and buyers. In addition to "match-making," CAFF provides information about how to start and run a CSA, relevant legislation, available funding sources, and a series of four webinars showcasing successful farms. Two days after the shelter-in-place shut down regular sales outlets, Farm Trails had put up a new page on its website and invited its members to post their offerings. In the first two days, web traffic on Farm Trails' site went up 1000%. ([Yes Magazine](#))

Despite their own need to survive, some farms are providing food to local food banks. **Foggy River Farm** in Healdsburg, which closed several years ago, has revived in order to provide vegetable starts and food to people in need. **Farm to Pantry**, which bridges the gap between food waste and food insecurity, has expanded its gleaning program to 12 crews in order to meet the greater need for food donations.

All of these examples of innovation in the face of a pandemic add up to a food community that is working together and standing up to the most extreme of challenges. As restaurants begin to open, that avenue of supply will once again flow. We are in this together, and together it's working.



Slow Food Events

We have postponed several of our events, but are hoping we can hold them before the end of 2020. Invitations will be sent approximately 4 weeks before each event.

Among the events we hope to hold are:

Slow Books

Picnic at the Gradek Family Ranch

Annual Meeting and Bodega Red Potato Fest

Terra Madre Day Dinner

Climate Change Panel



Spotlight on Member/Producer: Little Rocky Ranch



Vanessa and Zach Advocate know how to give their pigs the good life. [Little Rocky Ranch](#) sits on three-and-a-half acres of oak woodland in Penngrove. Oak trees, grasses, and natural foliage surround a verdant creek and provide shade, protection, and abundant food for the pigs, geese, sheep, and human inhabitants.

Little Rocky Ranch is family run and provides pasture-raised pigs for meat and quality breeding. Zach's family has owned the land since the late 1960s. After his parents moved away in 2012, Vanessa and Zach became roommates, fell in love, married, and decided to stay on and run the farm. Vanessa says, "It has been a long labor of getting things going."

Over the years, the land has morphed many times. "Little Rocky Ranch got its name because of our rocky landscape," Vanessa explains. "You can't put a shovel in the ground anywhere and come up without at least a few little rocks in the soil. The soil was a big deciding factor in going into ranching rather than trying to grow crops." Growing up in Montana surrounded by farms, Vanessa always wanted to live and work on a ranch of her own. Now she lives her dream here in Sonoma County.

The ranch's most recent innovation was to expand the breeding enterprise, with partial help from a grant and no-interest loan from Sonoma County North in 2019. After much research, Vanessa and Zach decided the Idaho pasture pig would give them exactly what they wanted. "These pastured pigs are perfect all around. They have a great temperament, are thrifty growers, and provide exceptional red meat." They prefer grazing over rooting in the ground, so they are easy on the land. Vanessa cares about diversity and hopes to get this breed established on the West Coast.

I asked Vanessa how the pandemic is affecting their livelihood. Other than some challenges in sourcing their supplemental food for her pigs, she talked about big positives, including a huge increase in support from the local food networks in this area. "People want to build a relationship with local farmers now," she adds. "The pandemic exposes many of the detriments about the big factory-farm agriculture, assembly-line processing."

Little Rocky farm sells meat directly to Sonoma County customers. For more information, go to their [Facebook page](#) or give them a call at (707) 774-5633.



Snail of Approval

Patio dining at our restaurants

Outdoor dining is now allowed in Sonoma County, and many of our Snail restaurants have patios. A few have already opened their outdoor seating while still offering takeout, and others are planning to open soon. Please check ahead for business hours.

Esterio Café, Valley Ford, [Facebook](#)

Handline, Sebastopol, [Menu](#) (You may also enjoy takeout on the patio.)

Mateo's, Healdsburg, [Reservations](#)

Takeout from our restaurants

Backyard, Forestville, [Menu](#)

Diavola Pizzeria, Geyserville, [Menu](#)

The Naked Pig, Santa Rosa, [Menu](#)

Red Horse Pizza, Santa Rosa, [Facebook](#)

SingleThread, Healdsburg, [Menu](#)

Trading Post, Cloverdale, [Menu](#)



Pickup, delivery, and shipping from our producers

- Black Pig Meat Co.**, Sonoma County, [Shop](#)
- DaVero Farms & Winery**, Healdsburg, [Shop](#)
- Tilted Shed Ciderworks**, Windsor, [Shop](#)

CSA, farmstand, and delivery from our farms

- Bernier Farms**, Geyserville
- Laguna Farm**, Sebastopol
- Lantern Farm**, Cloverdale (New: Farm Box subscriptions for Tuesday and Saturday now available. Weekly or bi-weekly. Season runs from June to November.)
- Tierra Vegetables**, Santa Rosa



Bodega Red Potato: Chapter Crop



In March, Sonoma County North sold 4,500 pounds of Bodega Red seed potatoes to Sonoma and Marin County farmers and retail establishments. Even Harmony Farm Supply & Nursery, which bought 800 pounds, sold out in two weeks!

Our chapter held back about five pounds to plant for upcoming Slow Food events. The Gradek Family Ranch gave us a beautiful plot with rich soil, and we planted our seeds in mid-April. The plants are now about a foot tall.

We hope to hold our popular Potato Fest dinner before the end of the year. So envision a near future with Slow Food friends and an array of tasty potato dishes, and it will come to pass!



Tidbits

Slow Read

Sonoma County's Slow Food Movement Turns to Issues of Food Equity. Read about our Slow Food chapter, [Sonoma County North](#), along with the [Russian River chapter](#) in this *Sonoma Magazine* article. Our [Snail of Approval](#)-awarded business [Red Horse Pizza](#) is also featured.

Slow Watch

Meals with the Mayor: Tilted Shed Ciderworks. Guy Fieri and Dominic Foppoli, Mayor of Windsor, talk with Scott Heath about [Tilted Shed Ciderworks](#) and give some of their ciders a try. Tilted Shed



is currently offering curbside pickup, local delivery, and shipping to 37 states. Tilted Shed is one of our Snail-approved businesses.

Gleaning: Ancient local solution to a current national challenge. *Roots of Change* "Flipping the Table" conversation with local food-justice activist Duskie Estes and Melita Love, founder of **Farm to Pantry**. They share the benefits of gleaning, which builds community, feeds the hungry, and ends food waste.



Remembering Two Slow Friends





Al Loebel

Al and his wife Liz were longtime active members of Sonoma County North. They joined us at many events, and were the first to win a 100-Mile Dinner prepared by our chapter leaders in the Loebel home. Al helped us to "sell" subsequent auctioned dinners by describing the special meal with great enthusiasm.

Al fought lung cancer for two-and-a-half years; he died on April 23 at his home. He was 82. According to the *Healdsburg Tribune*, Liz said she will be planning a celebration of Al's life when

such gatherings will again be permitted, and she knows she can anticipate a very large crowd. In the meantime, people may choose to make a contribution to the Rotary International Foundation through the Rotary Club of Healdsburg (noon), P.O. Box 671, Healdsburg, CA, 95448.

Al, we will miss you, and Liz, we hope to see you soon.

Pat Dimock

Pat and Bud Dimock were also longtime Slow Food members. Their son, Michael Dimock, has been a Slow Food leader since the beginning of the movement in the U.S. Pat and Bud were at the Healdsburg farmers market every Saturday and attended many of our gatherings.

Michael wrote the following: "Patsy Lee Hamilton Dimock, born December 23rd 1933, passed last night, May 11, at 11:39 pm. She was a great lover of beauty, natural and human made. The three things she valued most were her family, flowers and beautiful objects she found or made. She was ... a unique, fun, admired, and vibrant force of nature."



Membership

[Join or renew your membership online](#) and list Sonoma County North-CA as your chapter. If you prefer to renew locally by check, please download our [membership form](#) and follow the instructions.



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