

Heartland Food Network brings more local food to Minnesota tables

St Paul, Minnesota - The Heartland Food Network is quickly becoming a hot topic of discussion for many local chefs, food distributors, and local food advocates.

Convened by the Minnesota Project, the Heartland Food Network is a unique collaboration of chefs, farmers, processors, and distributors. The

Network is committed to bringing high-quality, locally grown, sustainable and organic products to the region's dinner tables.

Interested participants become part of the Heartland Food Network by committing to buy local, sustainable and/or organic products from regional sources in Minnesota and its bordering states—with the intent to offer larger quantities and a wider variety of these products in the future. Members will proudly display the Heartland Food Network logo on the entrances to their establishments—spotlighting their commitment to the movement.

For consumers committed to the freshest and most flavorful ingredients that embody "the taste of place," the Heartland Food Network is a welcome addition to Minnesota's culinary scene.

According to one local patron, "The Heartland Food Network emblem will make it easier for me to decide where I want to dine out. I look at it as an easy, reliable way of knowing that the quality of the food is top notch."

The Heartland Food Network also provides a way for chefs to differentiate themselves in a crowded and competitive marketplace.

"To be able to support, promote, and utilize the regional food shed through the Heartland Food Network has evolved my culinary philosophy," said Chef Paul Gordon of Cafe

Minnesota. "Merging my Southern Low Country roots with Midwestern Comfort Cuisine has allowed me to reach new heights with my customers. I would never have been able to achieve this benchmark relying on products that are shipped into this area."

Local talent, Chef Paul Lynch of *FireLake Grill House*, agrees with his colleague, stating, "FireLake is first and foremost a Minnesota Restaurant and it reflects who we are as Midwesterners.

Quality local food gives us a 'taste of place.' It is good for my restaurant, Minnesota farmers and the state of Minnesota. For years I have been seeking an easier way to source local meats, dairy and produce and let people know about my Minnesota local food menu. Heartland helps on both counts."

The Heartland Food Network provides awareness to a much needed market for family farms in the region, whether they are experienced in selling to the local market or trying it for the first time.

According to Doug Peterson, President of the Minnesota Farmers Union, "Farmers, consumers and chefs share an interest in the promotion of healthy local food. The Heartland Food Network provides a great opportunity for farmers to showcase farm fresh food as they produce food and work

with chefs to provide a greater dining experience."

Jim Ennis, Director of *Food Alliance Midwest*, also supports the movement. "The markets for local and sustainably grown foods is growing, and progressive chefs are on the cutting edge of this movement. The Heartland Food Network assists growers by identifying the chefs and restaurants who care about where their food comes from."

In addition to the many local chefs and food organizations taking note, local publications and media are also becoming more aware. Recently, *Restaurant Business Magazine* reinforced the Heartland Food Network's philosophy, indicating that today's sophisticated, flavor-craving patrons will pay up to 30% more when they know where the ingredients are coming from.

Clearly, this is an important movement for all those involved: from local farmers and chefs, to everyday customers and local food advocates. As the demand for local food increases,

food establishments across the region can anticipate a greater interest among chefs, distributors, and customers. For more information on the Heartland

Food Network, please call 651-645-6159 or visit the Heartland Food Network website at www.mnproject.org.



2006 Heartland Food Network Charter Member Chef Paul Gordon of Cafe Minnesota



2006 HFN Steering Committee Member, Chef Paul Lynch of Fire Lake Grill House & Cocktail Bar

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- Restaurant Business Magazine
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