

# Healthy Local Food



EcoExperience · Minnesota State Fair 2015  
Summary Report

# Summary

The 2015 Healthy Local Food exhibit of the Minnesota State Fair EcoExperience ran from Thursday, August 27th-Monday, September 9th. Organized by Renewing the Countryside, the 2015 exhibit theme was "Agriculture: from First Peoples to New Immigrants." Approximately 250,000 visitors attended the EcoExperience exhibit during the 12 day event.

## Purpose:

The goal of the exhibit was to educate the community on the impact immigrant and minority farmers had and continue to have on food and farming in Minnesota. The exhibit explored how native cultures and immigrants, past and present, have played important roles in food production, economic growth, and expanding our palates.

## Partners:

Health Partners, Peace Coffee, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Mississippi Market, Seward Co-op, Wedge Community Co-op, Lakewinds Food Co-op, Co-op Partners Warehouse, Organic Valley, AgriBank, AgStar, and Homegrown Minnesota/Minnesota Department of Agriculture

## Volunteers:

Over the course of the fair 112 individuals volunteered for 145 shifts to assist with cooking demonstrations, sampling local foods, and overseeing the children's activities.

With additional support from: Whole Grain Milling and Eversharp Knives.

The Cooking Demonstration Stage was provided by Domain Architecture & Design, Dakota Surfaces and Warners' Stellian Appliance Company.

Healthy Local Foods Presented by:



renewing the countryside

Healthy Local Foods Partners:



Minnesota  
Pollution  
Control  
Agency



Seward  
COMMUNITY CO-OP

Wedge  
COMMUNITY CO-OP

AgriBank

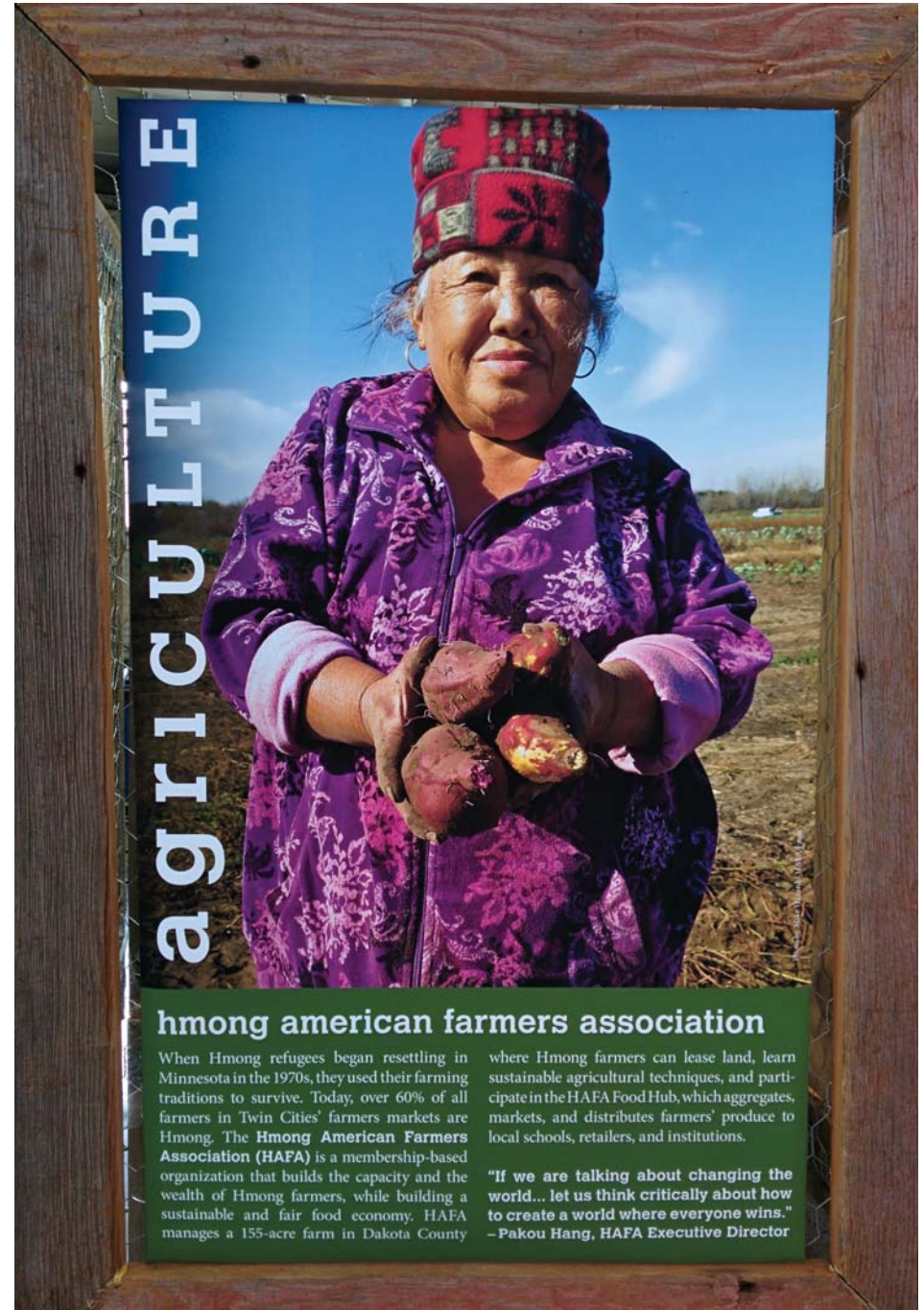




## Exhibit Description

The AgriCULTURE exhibit highlighted the histories and current stories of several cultural groups that had strong influences on food and agriculture in Minnesota. Included were key historical facts and fun figures about people of Hmong, Somali, Mexican, Ojibwe, Dakota, and European heritage. Additionally, through portraits and stories of restaurateurs, community centers, and local farmers, the exhibit shared first-hand accounts of the multicultural individuals shaping food in Minnesota. Attendees also had the opportunity to reflect on their own heritage and its impact on the food system via chalkboards and hangtags placed throughout the exhibit. Questions ranged from "Where are your ancestors from?" and "What food reflects your heritage?," to "What is your favorite ethnic food outside of your own heritage?"

This year's exhibit included a new section about cooperatives. One display tower shared the cooperative principles and the benefits of being a member of a food cooperative. Fairgoers could engage with the exhibit by sharing the coop that they belonged to. Leaflets about several cooperatives were also available to take.





# agriculture

## TATANKA TRUCK

TRADITIONAL  
NATIVE AMERICAN  
FOODS



Photo by Dave Thompson

### sioux chef

Sean Sherman has worked in restaurant kitchens since he was a teenager. But when the 41-year-old Oglala Lakota chef set out to write an indigenous cookbook, he was surprised he couldn't find much information about the foods his ancestors ate. After years of research, Sherman, now known as "The Sioux Chef," is resurrecting Native cuisine and taking it to the streets. His Tatanka Truck serves up dishes like manoomin (wild rice) salad and cedar-braised

pté (bison). For the Tatanka Truck, Sherman partnered with the Little Earth of United Tribes, creating jobs and training opportunities for their community. He stays connected to native farmers, sourcing organic produce from farms like Wozupi Tribal Gardens in Prior Lake.

"These flavors speak of the land, of a particular region. A culture without food, is a lost culture." – Sean Sherman

# Europeans

## agriculture

### French

French explorers arrived in the 1600s, followed by "Voyageurs," French Canadian indentured servants who enabled the fur trade by transporting pelts in their canoes. For subsistence they relied on pemmican, a mixture of dried meat and fat created by Native Americans.

### Scandinavian

Scandinavian immigrants began arriving in Minnesota as early as 1845. They soon formed cooperative creameries and consequently tripled the number of cows in the state. In 1921, half of these cooperatives merged to become Land O'Lakes.

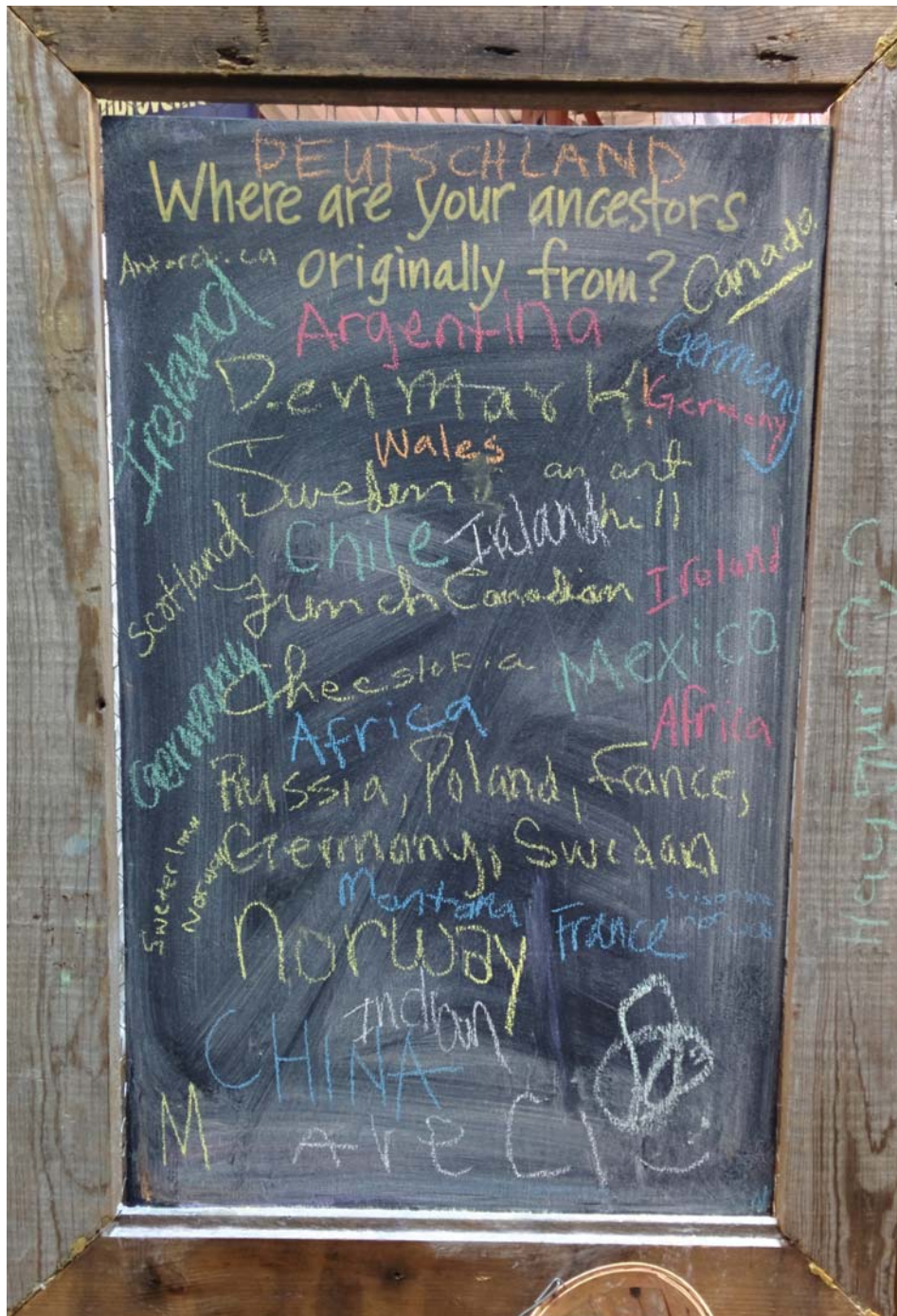
### Polish

The chance to own farmland brought Poles to Minnesota in the mid-1800s. Early Polish homesteaders banded together in agricultural cooperatives to share insurance coverage and farming equipment.

### German

Many Germans immigrated to Minnesota in the 18th and 19th centuries, also with the dream of owning a farm. They worked short-term jobs in the cities to earn \$50 to \$100, which was sufficient money to purchase 40 acres of farmland in 1850.

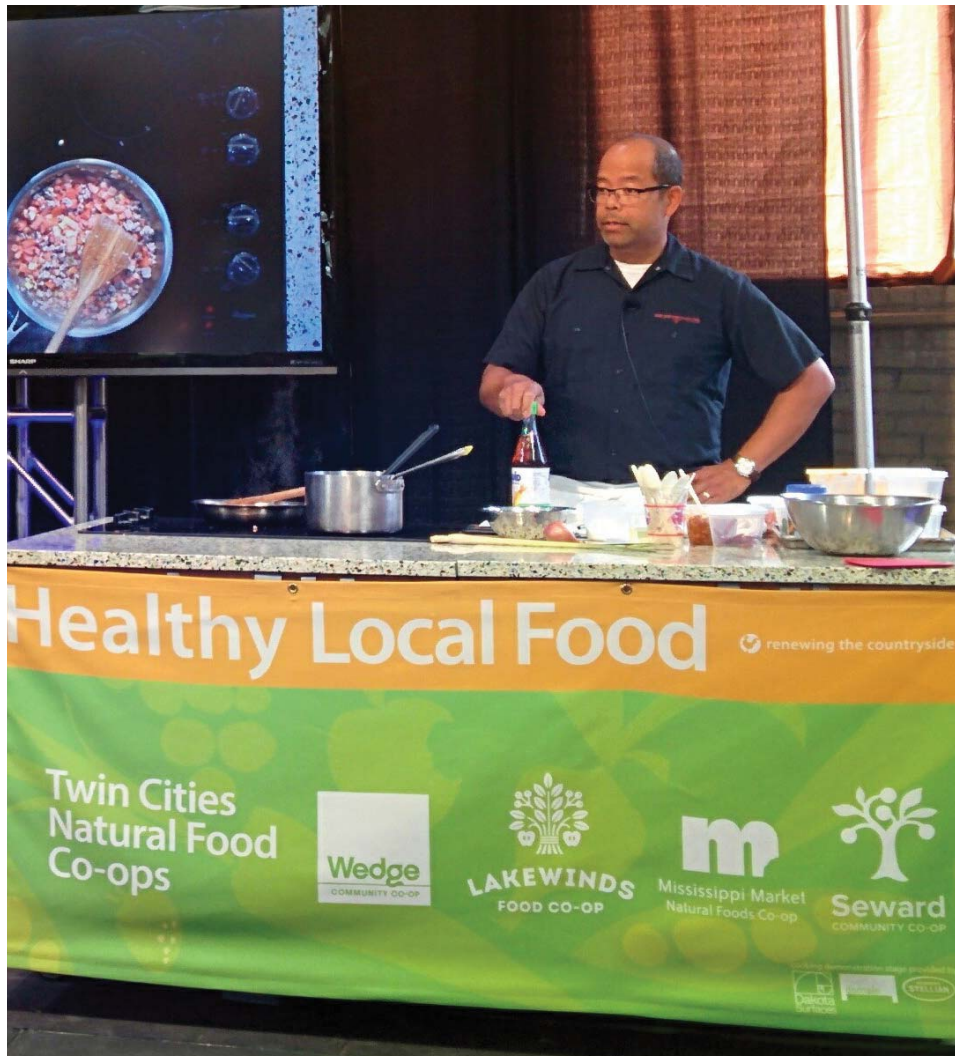






# Cooking Demonstrations

Three 30-minute cooking demonstrations took place each day at 11am, 1pm, and 3pm. Each day, Twin Cities area chefs and foodmakers of different cultural backgrounds shared stories about their heritage and work, and cooked a dish or meal using local ingredients. Demonstrations ranged from refreshing summer tea to hearty meat dishes to sweet treats.



Left: Joe Hatch-Surisook, from Sen Yai Sen Lek, demonstrates how to make Naam Prik Ong (Spicy pork and tomato chili dip with lemongrass, garlic, and cilantro) on the Sustainability Stage.

Above: The staff from the Hmong American Farmers Association describe their work supporting the Hmong farming community and teach the audience about lemongrass tea.

### Cooking Demonstrations

Day	Date	Company	Chef	Recipe
Thursday	8/27/2015	Sen Yai Sen Lek	Joe Hatch-Surisook	Naam Prik Ong (Spicy pork and tomato chili dip with lemongrass, garlic, and cilantro).
Friday	8/28/2015	Sioux Chef / Tatanka Truck	Sean Sherman	Cedar Maple Iced-Tea and Native Granola
Saturday	8/29/2015			
Sunday	8/30/2015	Red Table Meats	Mike Phillips	Salumi / History of cured meats
Monday	8/31/2015	Flamingo Cafe	Frey Haile	Alicha: (curried cabbage and mixed vegetables). Tintimo Miser (Red split lentils with a spicy berbere sauce.)
Tuesday	9/1/2015	Breaking Bread Cafe	Lachelle Cunningham	Local Fruit & Veggie Smoothies and Banana Berry Frozen Treats
Wednesday	9/2/2015	Rainbow Chinese Restaurant and Bar	Tammy Wong	Farmers Market Vegetable Curry
Thursday	9/3/2015	Chin Dian Cafe	Nina Wong	Pork and Chive Dumplings
Friday	9/4/2015	El Burrito Mercado	Milissa Silva-Diaz	Tostones, Maduros and Roasted Jalapeno Salsa
Saturday	9/5/2015	Ghandi Mahal	Ruhel Islam	Bangla Tilapia with fish sourced from Ghandi Mahal's aquaponics system.
Sunday	9/6/2015	For the Love of Ghee	Shamim Rashid	Tangy and Spicy Chickpea Curry with Cilantro Chutney and Tamarind sauce.
Monday	9/7/2015	Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA)	Pakou Hang	Hmong farming folklore and traditional cuisine.







# Sampling Station

Local food samples were handed out all day, every day. Every morning Peace Coffee offered samples of their coffee to fairgoers. In the afternoons, many local food producers and businesses donated their products and time to share their product. The Twin Cities based local food distributor Co-op Partner Partners Warehouse also donated additional local foods for sampling.

## Samples and Sampling Businesses

- Flavored Honeys and Honey Spreads, Bare Honey, St. Paul, MN
- Micro-greens, Product of Nature-A Think Mint Brand, Northfield MN
- Wild Rice Hotdish, White Earth Wild Rice, Ogema, MN
- Elderberry Juice and Throat Coat, River Hills Harvest Marketers, Minneapolis, MN
- Jams and Jellies, JAmazing!, Minneapolis, MN
- Single Source Raw Honeys, Ames Farm Delano, MN
- Vegan Meats and Cheeses, Herbivorous Butcher, Minneapolis, MN
- Carmels, Curly Girlz Candy, Medford, MN
- Ghee, For the Love of Ghee, Woodbury, MN

## Co-op Partners Warehouse Sampling

- Gouda - plain & tomato basil, Eichten's Hidden Acres, Center City, MN
- Honey Mustard, Lucky's Popcorn Dressing, Mankato, MN
- Tortilla Chips, Whole Grain Milling, Welcome, MN
- Chocolate Milk, Castle Rock Dairy, Osseo, WI
- Heirloom Tomatoes, Muskmelon, Featherstone Farm, Rushford, MN
- Thai Chili Sauce, Isabel Street, St. Paul, MN
- Chai, Gray Duck Chai, Minneapolis, MN
- Salsa, Haas Brothers, St. Paul, MN



Left: Shamim Rashid from For the Love of Ghee tells Kare11 about her cooking philosophy and ghee.

Above: Peace Coffee baristas offer samples fair trade, shade grown, bike delivered coffee to exhibit visitors.





*Above:* A volunteer offers samples of Gray Duck Chai donated by Co-op Partners Warehouse.

*Right:* Red Table Meats samples some of their cured meats after a cooking demonstration.

## Prize Drawing

Names and email addresses of fairgoers were collected and entered to win one of several local food prizes. A Seward Co-op gift card, and a local foods gift basket donated by Mississippi Market were offered as Grand Prizes. Additionally, twelve *Renewing the Countryside* books (one for each day of the fair) and six t-shirts were given away. All prizes went to individuals randomly selected at the end of the fair, and were mailed out to winners.

## Local Food Video

Clips from *Perennial Plate*, an online weekly documentary series, were screened each evening starting at 7pm. The documentary featured Chef and Activist, Daniel Klein and Co-producer/Camera girl Mirra Fine on their travels exploring the global food system. Two episodes, one in Wisconsin and one in Minnesota, were played each night. The first connected with Laotian restaurant owners in Madison and the second brought viewers to Livin' the Life Farm, Mhonpaj's Garden, and Tiny Diner Farm in Minneapolis. While watching the documentary attendees had the opportunity to sample local popcorn drizzled with local, organic butter. Whole Grain Milling of Welcome MN provided the popcorn and the butter was from Kalona SuperNatural.



# Local Food Organization Showcase

During many days of the fair, local organizations welcomed visitors to the exhibit and introduced them to their varied work in strengthening the local food system.



Local Food Organization Showcase	
Organization	Description
Minnesota Food Association	An educational organization providing training and technical assistance in sustainable farming and business planning to build a food system based on social, economic, and environmental justice
Tatanka/Little Earth	Minnesota's first Healthy Native American food truck committed to promoting Native health, sustainability & community
Urban Roots	A Saint Paul-based nonprofit working to build vibrant and healthy communities through food, conservation and youth development.
Appetite for Change	A community-led organization that strengthens families, creates economic prosperity, and encourages healthy living through food.
Frogtown Park and Farm	A community green space including an active recreation area, a nature preserve, and an urban demonstration farm.
Urban Graze/Twin Lakes CSA	A Consortium of 3 small CSAs, providing organic and many heirloom varieties and using heritage growing practices.
Wozupi	An organic, Tribally Supported Agriculture farm committed to growing food in a way that nourishes the earth, the community, and people's minds and bodies.
Hmong American Farmers Association	A training and support program that grows the capacity and the wealth of its Hmong American farming families to build a sustainable and fair food economy for all Minnesotans.
Seed Sages	An educational program that provides seed consultations, designs, trainings, and research for seed production to strengthen garden and farm communities.





*Above:* A volunteer talks with you fairgoers at the kids activities area.

*Right:* A volunteer has fairgoers guess nutrition and Minnesota history facts.

*Page 13:* Appetite for Change staff share nutrition facts about soft drinks and explain their community building programs to fairgoers.

## Kids Activity Area

In the kids activity area, children had the opportunity to do an array of different games and activities. Healthy eating activities were designed and provided by the HealthPartners YumPower team and Renewing the Countryside provided opportunities to learn about local foods. Activities included:

- Racing local vegetables down the Veggies Grand Prix race track
- Playing a healthy eating memory game
- Drawing on healthy foods coloring worksheets.
- Spinning a trivia wheel with nutrition facts and facts about the cultural heritage of food and farming in Minnesota.
- Receiving super veggie and farm ninja temporary tattoos, and healthy eating magnets as giveaways









# Conclusions

Overall the 2015 Healthy Local Food exhibit was a success, engaging a large audience around the diversity of food and farming in Minnesota. Organizations and individuals involved with the program also felt that the exhibit was worthwhile.

"It was great. Definitely worthwhile. I think we could have done better at making our exhibit more 3D, and I also would like to budget for stipends to encourage more farmers to participate instead of just staff."  
- Minnesota Food Association

"Participation was every bit worthwhile as I was able to share my knowledge of spices with more people than I would have normally. Also, this led to having a piece on Kare11 which was great exposure for my company."  
-Shamim's Pantry

"It was super fun! Kids really love the veggie grand prix"  
-a volunteer

Next year, Renewing the Countryside is looking forward to increasing collaboration in the community, providing additional support for volunteers and creating opportunities for local foodmakers, farmers, and cooperatives to showcase their work making a vibrant local healthy food system.



**agriculture**

**mohamed gaabane**

Mohamed Gaabane is the proud owner of **Chicken Head Farm** in Silver Lake, Minnesota where he tends to 90 laying chickens, 15 goats, five acres of sweet corn, and two acres of mixed vegetables. When Mohamed arrived in Minnesota in 2006 as a 70-year-old refugee from Somalia, he couldn't have predicted that his life would one day revolve around cultivating his very own plot of farmland. Thanks to training from the Minnesota Food

Association's Big River Farm Training program and loan financing from AgStar's Emerging Agribusiness Lending Program, Chicken Head Farm is now in its second season. Mohamed's newest goal is to launch a farm training program to teach other Somali immigrants about the hard-earned rewards of farming.

**"Farming is real life." – Mohamed**





Above: Chef Shawn Sherman describes Native American food traditions during the daily cooking demonstrations.





**renewing the countryside**

*inspiration · connections · solutions*

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