

NEWS RELEASE



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Exploding Interest in On-Farm Dining Inspires New Resource Supporting Start-Ups

Minneapolis, MN – As interest in knowing where your food comes from continues to boom, local food fans are increasingly flocking to on-farm dining experiences, from multi-course farm-to-table meals to family-friendly pizza nights. This movement opens up opportunities for farmers to launch dining experiences on their family farms and diversify income streams. A new free publication, *Come & Get It: What you need to know to serve food on your farm*, supports farmers as they research the possibility of on-farm food service start-ups.

This publication guides farmers interested in understanding regulations and learning from businesses that are profiting from the growing trend of on-farm food service. *Come & Get It* is spearheaded by the Minnesota-based non-profit, Renewing the Countryside, an award-winning non-profit championing educational resources for farmers and rural entrepreneurs. The project supports farmers in Minnesota and Wisconsin interested in exploring on-farm food service with resources including assessments, case studies, and research data to develop their own business plan.

“The reality is that state regulations regarding food service, particularly when you take something to a farm setting, can get complicated and confusing quickly,” shares Jane Jewett, Associate Director of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), one of the partners in this project. “Before investing a dime, thoroughly research and understand your options, learn from farms successfully running these kinds of businesses, and then determine what may be best for your farm business. The Come & Get It program supports this type of thoughtful, business-minded approach.”

Every year, Renewing the Countryside also puts on a variety of events supporting the local food movement, including FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace, a local foods festival and tradeshow in

Rochester, Minnesota, and the Healthy Local Food Exhibit at the Minnesota State Fair's Eco Experience.

The 120-page *Come & Get It* publication offers an industry overview including how to determine if an on-farm food service business is right for farmers. Case studies of nine successful farm businesses in Minnesota and Wisconsin offer "behind the scenes" tips and first-hand experiences from farmers already running successful pizza nights and other on-farm food service events.

Additionally, the *Come & Get It* publication contains marketing insights collected and summarized through research conducted in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Stout. For the first time ever, on-farm food service attendees were interviewed in order to gain an understanding of who is coming to these events and what the potential is for future similar businesses.

"Results from this research found that a hundred percent of customers interviewed enjoyed their overall experience, particularly the delicious food, the organic and fresh ingredients, and the family-friendly atmosphere," summarizes Jan Joannides, Executive Director at Renewing the Countryside. "This data indicates opportunities for more on-farm food business start-ups."

"Collaboratively sharing our experiences is what our sustainable agriculture farming community is all about, so we are honored to share our personal start-up learnings building a commercial kitchen on-farm and serving meals," shares Susan Waughtal, co-owner of Squash Blossom Farm with her husband, Roger Nelson, in Oronoco, Minnesota. "We launched our farm in our 50s without any farming experience and really appreciated the many resources and mentors that helped us when we started. We are delighted to now complete the circle, helping support other farmers interested in bringing people to eat on their farms."

This project is funded under a North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) Partnership grant, a funding opportunity to foster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers to catalyze sustainable agriculture education. The project involves a team of seven farm partners in Minnesota and Wisconsin including Together Farms (Mondovi, WI), Suncrest Gardens Farm (Cochrane, WI), Borner Farm Project (Prescott, WI), Campo di Bella (Mt. Horeb, WI), Dream Acres Farm (Wykoff, MN), Squash Blossom Farm (Oronoco, MN) and Moonstone Farm (Montevideo, MN).

"We would love to partner with other organizations around the country to share our learnings and support them in developing training publications specific to their state regulations," adds Joannides. "We look forward to further supporting farmers in evaluating whether an on-farm food service is a good addition that can help diversify their income and strengthen their business."

Come & Get It is available online free at:

http://www.renewingthecountryside.org/on_farm_food_service

Renewing the Countryside is a nonprofit organization that works to strengthen rural areas by championing and supporting rural communities, farmers, artists, entrepreneurs, educators, activists and other people who are renewing the countryside through sustainable and innovative initiatives, businesses, and projects. For more information, see renewingthecountryside.org.

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Photos & sample captions:

Pizza close up:

<https://app.box.com/s/kuuiuuuhmf4nl1q8ef5eqwc59dpxabnj/file/434711516846>

A new free publication from Renewing the Countryside supports farmers interested in hosting pizza nights on the farm.

Photo credit: John D. Ivanko Photography

Pizza Night event:

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Sample caption:

Research shows customers enjoy and recommend on-farm food experiences to friends, such as Pizza Night at Stoney Acres Farm in Athens, Wisconsin.

Photo credit: John D. Ivanko Photography