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NEWS RELEASE

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Photos available—Download links and sample captions at end of release

Local food tradeshow celebrates the power of connection through shared vision

Rochester, MN – FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace will host its sixth annual tradeshow at Mayo Civic Center Friday, Dec. 6, including a Buyers' Expo, Makers' Forum and an awards ceremony.

Buyers for grocery and specialty stores, restaurants, food service and more have a unique opportunity to discover on-trend products from regional businesses from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The vendor list is [available online](#).

FEAST! vendors have reported sales to wholesale buyers of over a million dollars since the event launched in 2014. "It's amazing to see the businesses that have grown since the FEAST! Local Foods Network launched six years ago," says Tim Penny, President and CEO of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF). "As we like to say at SMIF, collaboration is the key to vitality in our region. This is especially evident in the local foods economy."

The afternoon is dedicated to learning and networking. Panel discussion sessions address best practices, including a buyers panel with professionals from the grocery, restaurant and distribution industries. A marketing panel will involve consultants skilled at working with print media, social media and video, preparing for tradeshows and strategic marketing in retail and public relations. Farms and food hubs are also joining the networking time to engage in discussions of ingredient supply chains.

The Support Services Mini Expo resource area will provide time for discussions about technical assistance with support businesses and agencies such as Minnesota Dept of Agriculture, Compeer Financial and Agricultural Utilization Research Initiative, among others.

The FEAST! awards ceremony, 5:30 to 6:00 p.m., will feature awards presented by invited speakers: Tim Penny of SMIF, Bob Cole of Ag Ventures Foundation in Iowa, Jess Joyce of Rochester Farmers Markets, and Tim Wiste of Tonic Local Kitchen and Juice Bar, who will offer a tribute to Tonic founder Nicci Sylvester.

General admission is available with a discount for aspiring entrepreneurs who wish to come and learn. For buyer registration and more information, visit local-feast.org. Follow FEAST! Local Foods Network on [Facebook](#), @Local_Feast on [Twitter](#), localfeast on Instagram, and use #localFEAST to join the conversation.

FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace is co-hosted by the [Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation](#) and [Renewing the Countryside](#) non-profit organizations and is supported with premier sponsorship by the [Minnesota Department of Agriculture](#).

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Photos and suggested captions:

FEAST! Makers' Forum::

<https://flic.kr/p/D2PvhZ>

Sample caption:

Food businesses listen and learn strategies for growth during panel discussions at the FEAST! Tradeshow.

Photo: Ashley Aukes, Beruck Studios

FEAST! Support Services mini Expo:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WECvrmHwfvksby86107hr5FQOOTXCQ3e/view?usp=sharing>

Sample caption:

Food businesses have direct access to a range of technical assistance expertise during the FEAST! Support Services mini Expo.

Photo: Ashley Aukes, Beruck Studios

FEAST! 2018 Innovative Local Sourcing Award winner:

<https://flic.kr/p/2dcDD6Z>

Sample caption:

Kim Olson of Grandma's Gourmets with the FEAST! 2018 Innovative Local Sourcing Award engraved cheeseboard at the event in Rochester, Minn. last December.

Photo: Elena Byrne

FEAST! Logo:

<https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/renewingthecountryside/pages/383/attachments/original/1476298740/Feast!.png?1476298740>

Sample caption:

The largest celebration of local foods in the upper Midwest, FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace brings together over 100 regional food and beverage businesses for sampling, sales and fun.