

# FEAST!

## Your Eyes on This

### ART ADDS FLAIR TO FOOD FESTIVAL

BY EMILY WATKINS

**DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON, GATHERINGS WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY REVOLVE AROUND FOOD AND DRINK.** Get ideas for holiday fare at FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace on December 7 at Mayo Civic Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

According to the website, the FEAST! Local Foods Network is a partnership of many organizations, businesses and individuals committed to growing a sustainable, local and regional food system that encourages innovation.

#### FEAST AND ART: A NEW PARTNERSHIP

This year there will be an additional focus, as the Minnesota State Arts Board awarded grant money from Minnesota Festival Support, a category of grants through the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund Programs, for artists to "engage, involve and entertain FEAST! attendees." The aim is to get people thinking more about their food and where it comes from.

There will be four featured artists. First, respond to questions about local foods to create Arlene Birt's "String Survey" visual display. Second, enjoy music by artists including Mary DuShane and Nick Jordan. Third, be sure to take in the vegetable alfombra (carpet), curated by artist and farmer Susan Waughtal. Lastly, interact with the art under the eye of videographer Ross Ballinger.

Jan Joannides is executive director and co-founder of Renewing the Countryside, a nonprofit that, along with Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, organizes FEAST! Joannides had the idea to apply for grant funding in order to add more arts to the festival. "She's been a key visionary around our entire event," says Elena Byrne, tradeshow and communications coordinator with Renewing the Countryside.

#### A SIX-YEAR TRADITION

Joannides has lived in Zumbro Falls for the last eight years and has been interested in the "local food space" for a long time. She's excited about telling the stories of local makers and especially "the whole art aspect," which she says, "is really going to add a fun new dimension to the event."

"The people who come just love it and leave with grocery bags full of food and other products for themselves or to give as gifts. It's a great opportunity to buy things for the holidays."

Some features of the event are:

- Cooking demos
- A kids' area
- Produce, breads, jams, oils, vinegars, cheese and meats to sample and purchase
- Beer, wine and cider tasting (with wristband purchase)

Attendees are encouraged to vote for their favorite vendor. Those who vote are entered to win a basket of products from the event, while the winning vendor gets a free booth at next year's event.

#### FOR LOCAL MAKERS

If you're a food producer, plan to attend Friday's industry-only tradeshow. This event is for food buyers and sellers to learn, network and cultivate relationships. The aim is to help exhibitors grow and expand and to "inspire and assist aspiring food entrepreneurs."

Waughtal, owner of Squash Blossom Farm, has been participating in FEAST! since its first year, when her kitchen wasn't even built. She calls the event a "neat way to unveil what was happening for us," and notes that Squash Blossom has expanded its offerings every year. This year's new enterprise: bean to bar chocolate. This means roasting, grinding and milling cocoa beans and then tempering and molding the finished product.

Waughtal designed the alfombra, which was inspired from similar art forms in Guatemala and Italy, to be made out of local produce. Festival goers will place the produce within the



Middle photo: Hare & Tortoise Farm produce is mostly sold to food co-ops and restaurants in the Twin Cities and Rochester. [hareandtortoisefarm.com](http://hareandtortoisefarm.com). Bottom photo: Open Hands Farm, located in Northfield, is a 17-acre organic vegetable farm. [openhandsfarm.com](http://openhandsfarm.com)

design, and afterward the food will be donated to Channel One Regional Food Bank.

Waughtal says FEAST! is "all about celebrating the food," allowing makers to experiment with different foods and introduce themselves and their products to new customers and other vendors. "It's a festive atmosphere. Eat good food, meet good people, do some art and hear some music."

The cost to attend FEAST! is \$8 for adults, \$2 for children 12 or under. A wristband for beer, hard cider and wine tasting is \$25 (which includes the price of admission).



Emily Watkins is a local writer.