

Farm, Food and Life

PS agrarian

June 2016



Find Great Food

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Mark your calendars ...

Business of Making Cider — 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Columbia Gorge Community College, 400 E. Scenic Dr., The Dalles, Ore. Cost is \$95. Northwest Agriculture Business Center, the Washington State University Northwest Research and Education Center and the Northwest Cider Association will present a one-day cider business development workshop for new or existing operations. Go to www.agbizcenter.org/business-services/classes-and-workshops/event/123/Business-of-Making-Cider-June-20--2016

Sno-Valley Tilth June Potluck talk and farm tour — 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Monday, June 13, location to be determined. Participate in a potluck and tour a farm located in the Snohomish and Snoqualmie valleys. Go to www.snovalleytilth.org Sno-Valley Tilth Farm Summer Dinner — 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday, July 16, venue to be determined, Carnation, Wash. Evening includes a farm tour. Enjoy a four-course dinner prepared by chefs from Le Medusa Restaurant in Seattle along with Meredith Molli and Gordon Wishard. Go to www.snovalleytilth.org

Vashon Sheepdog Classic — June 9 through June 12, Misty Isle Farms, Vashon Island. Travel to rural Vashon Island to explore the world of working sheepdogs. Proceeds of the event goes to Vashon nonprofit groups that benefit the health and education of island youth. Go to www.vashonsheepdogclassic.com

Seattle Tilth's Chicken Coop and Urban Farm Tour — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, July 16. Cost is \$12. Glean ideas from creative neighbors who are incorporating animals and gardens into their homes and landscapes. See different types of chicken coops and learn what's needed for keeping miniature goats, ducks, mason bees, honey bees and rabbits. Go to www.seattletilth.org for more information.

Whidbey Island Horse Trials — July 8 through July 10, Intersection of Zylstra and Van Dam roads, Whidbey Island. Equestrians from up and down the West Coast descend on picturesque Whidbey Island to participated in cross country, showjumping and dressage competitions. Go to www.whidbey-horsetrials.org for more information.

Cover photos

Front: Farmers at City Grown Seattle spruce up a field in front of the Crown Hill Community Center. See story on page 8 to learn about their efforts to farm in Seattle.

Back: Farm fields butt against Admiralty Inlet is just one of the stunning landscapes that makes Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve on Whidbey Island such a popular attraction.



PSagrarian

PS Agrarian is a publication and website designed by Nathan Whalen, a graphic arts student at Everett Community College. All copy and photos was created and developed by Nathan Whalen. Find PS Agrarian at www.psagrarian.com.

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Photo above left: Growers at Tonnemaker Valley Farm in Woodinville plant greens that should be ready for shoppers to purchase in June. For information about Tonnemaker Valley Farm, go to www.tonnemaker.com.

Why I'm here ...

After encountering several life-changing circumstances over the past couple of years, I've developed a fondness for quality food and an agrarian life that seems to combine the peace and tranquility of the outdoors with a heavy dose of hard work. I'm hoping to use my skills as a writer, photographer and designer to celebrate, advocate and honor the people who embrace agriculture and are proud of the wonderful food they produce.

To start my project, I focused on fresh food being grown and produced on Whidbey Island, Snohomish and King counties. I'm impressed with the efforts of the hard-working volunteers of the Mukilteo Food Bank to find the freshest possible food to dole out to people in the most need. Then there's the group of budding farmers trying to grow a farm in the middle of a metropolitan area.

Thanks to the entrepreneurial efforts of small businesses and farms, community supported agriculture program provide folks with a weekly supply of food while funding local farms during slow times of the year. The program is so effective that small restaurants and small-scale food producers are getting into the act.

I will explore the rural nature of the Puget Sound area. I want to meet longtime family

farmers, young couples who are buying a small piece of land and jumping into a life-consuming vocation and the small-scale food producer making honey or bread from a kitchen in their garage.

People will hopefully enjoy reading about subjects that may allude to an agrarian lifestyle, which could be anything from horses to astronomy. Go to a farm away from a city on a clear night and you'll know what I mean.

I hope people reading this publication and perusing my website will find some joy from the stories and photographs I create. In learning about the various forms of agrarian life that takes place everywhere between the urban jungle of Seattle to the farms located in the Cascade foothills, people might remember their connection to the environment, take time to slow down and enjoy the world.

— *Nathan Whalen*



Growing up in tight spaces



Rob Taylor is combines his love for gardening and love for building into one hobby. He spends his spare time using fence boards to grow vertical gardens.

Thanks to the help of Snohomish County WSU Extension, he teaches budding gardeners how to construct vertical planters, which are typically comprised of cedar fence boards and they are perfect for folks who have small spaces available for gardening.

He said a vertical garden should be placed in areas are exposed from the west or the south.

Taylor has been thinking vertically for years. At one point, he was growing pumpkins in trees. He joined the Master Gardeners in 2008 and he has several demonstration gardens available at McCollum Park in Everett and Jennings Park in Marysville.

The Extension office occasionally offers classes in vertical gardening.

Go to xtension.wsu.edu/snohomish/calendar for more information about WSU Extension.



Tyler Hansen, chef and owner of The Oystercatcher on Whidbey, shows some of the bread that is the heart of a CSA the popular bistro offers to island residents.

Bread rises on Whidbey

CSAs are more than just fruit and produce

By NATHAN WHALEN
Editor

On New Year's Eve 2013, Sara and Tyler Hansen took over The Oystercatcher, a cozy bistro located in historic downtown Coupeville located in the heart of Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve on Whidbey Island. They have a view of picturesque Penn Cove and currently serve beef shoulder, black cod and a local bean cassoulet braised lamb shoulder.

One of the more popular dishes is the bread they bake fresh out of the open-air kitchen located in the center of the restaurant. Sara said it started to gain a following and they started selling it at nearby farmer's markets and neighboring businesses.



Michael Tu, bread baker for the Oystercatcher on Whidbey, looks at the latest loaves to pop out of the oven. Bread-loving Whidbey residents will receive weekly loaves as part of a subscription program.

"It kind of became gluten crack to people," co-owner Sara Hansen said.

Their bread has become so addictive people bought a subscription where they would receive one loaf per week.

Oystercatcher on Whidbey provides a CSA to folks living within driving distance to the Central Whidbey-based restaurant. So far, around 50 people are receiving loaves of bread.

CSAs, or community supported agriculture, is a subscription-based food program often used by small-scale organic farms.

A family pays a fee, often hundreds of dollars, to receive a full box of fruit and produce a week for typically 20 weeks. The Hansen's CSA highlights such programs have expanded beyond traditional agriculture.

"It's kind of funny, people didn't think to come here to buy it," Hansen said.

CSAs provide several advantages for both the consumer and the business. Local Harvest, a nationwide website

emphasizing farms and food, highlights several positives of CSAs. For the consumer, they receive ultra-fresh food and get exposed to new food. They often get a chance to visit a farm and learn how produce is grown.

The Hansens started their subscription program as the slower winter season started on Whidbey.

"What's nice is you know exactly how much you make so there's no waste."

Sara Hansen, co-owner

"What's nice is you know exactly how much you make so there's no waste," Hansen said.

It takes about 36 hours for Oystercatcher staff to produce their loaves of bread. They have their own starter that they add to every day.

As for yeast, the Oystercatcher simply leaves it out and uses the yeast found in the air.

"That's what I love this kind of bread," Tyler said of its simplicity.

Subscription
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Sue Learn and Ellen Scheffer with Seattle City Grown clears a field located in front of the Crown Hill Community Center. They are busy growing vegetables on fields throughout the city.

Growing nature's bounty in boomtown Seattle

Urban farmers grow vegetables in nooks and crannies through Seattle

By **NATHAN WHALEN**
Editor

A group in Seattle spends their days hop-scotching around town tending raising organic vegetables for the public. They have three locations scattered throughout a city that has construction that seems to be filling every space in the city.

Three employees and a throng of volunteers are planting in front of a community center, a former farm remnant and on a vacant piece of land.

City Grown Seattle comprises a small group of farmers who are busy working to transform their business into a full-time, year-around job. "It would be great to have a full acre, but with city development, you never know," said Ashley Wilson, a farmers for City Grown Seattle.

It's spring time, so the farmers and volunteers are busy planting greens, radishes, bok choi and more.

Over the past several years, they've managed to expand the land where they grow, increase the amount of vegetables they grow, rally more volunteers willing to get their hands dirty, and the number of employees.

Discovering available land comes as more and more people are moving into the city. In 2010, Seattle had a population of 608,000 people. Estimates by the federal Census bureau estimates Seattle's population as of



Ashley Wilson, Sue Learn, Ellen Scheffer and Arielle Antosca of City Grown Seattle are growing vegetable in three areas throughout Seattle. They sell produce from farm stands located in Crown Hill, Wallingford and Georeetown. See www.citygrownseattle.com for more information.

July 2014 to be 668,000 people, which is a 10-percent increase in four years.

During City Grown Seattle's first year, employees grew on 3,000 square feet on four plots of land. Farmers in 2015 grew on 16,400 square feet with five farmers and had developed a subscription base for their CSA, according to its website.

Three people comprise the backbone of City Grown Seattle. In addition to Wilson, Arielly Antosca and Ellen Scheffer also partner to make the farm grow. All of them also work other jobs as their urban farm buds.

Arielle said she hopes to figure out a way to grow on more land to sell more produce in hopes to become self-supporting in around two years.

Although similar to a community garden or a P-Patch, she pointed out a difference with City Grown Seattle.

"We're market gardeners. We grow food to sell," Antosca said.

City Grown Seattle currently operates three farm stands in Seattle that are open one day a week. It has a stand open Wednesday afternoons in the Crown Hill area;

another open in Wallingford Saturday afternoons; and a third open in Georgetown Sunday afternoons.

The farmers like finding property of homeowners who may not want to deal with the upkeep of maintaining a backyard, Ashley said.

In fact they recently, transformed a homeowner's backyard into a garden to supply their roving produce stand.

The principals of City Grown Seattle all have an agriculture background. Wilson started with City Grown Seattle in 2014. Before that she volunteered with Seattle Tilth and previously worked for a farm in Carnation.

"It mixes the farming and urban lifestyle," Wilson said of her career choice.

Antosca previously grew crops on organic farms in New Zealand and on Orcas Island in the San Juan Islands. Scheffer is a Montana native who's farmed for five years.

"My dream is to have my own full-size farm at some point," Scheffer said.

See City Grown
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Healthy choices for those in need

Community gardens provide fresh produce for food banks

By Nathan Whalen
Editor

Dozens of socially conscious green thumbs are ensuring the poor and needy have healthy food. Gardeners at the Mukilteo Community Garden make sure a portion of the produce they grow is donated to food banks in Mukilteo and Lynnwood.

Their efforts have been a big help. Last year, around 2,000 pounds of produce benefited people struggling to find affordable, healthy food.

“When the community garden has that stuff, we don’t have to purchase it,” said William Sacherek, president of the Mukilteo Food Bank.

Around 600 people stop by the food bank two times a month from their space located in the rear of Mukilteo Presbyterian Church near Boeing.

“It’s nice to have really fresh lettuce and spinach,” Sacherek said.

The Mukilteo Community Garden is wedged in a park located between Boeing and a residential development. Low flying planes land at Payne Field while dozens of volunteers tend to the garden beds. Everybody who rents a bed has to volunteer 10 hours for the food bank.

“Most of the people are apartment dwellers so they don’t have a place to grow,” said community garden board member Kathleen Eaton.

Even when hardly anything is growing in the beds, community garden members are helping the food bank. In February 2016, when fresh food donations were particularly lean, a group of community gardeners descended upon a nearby supermarket and asked shoppers to simply buy some fresh fruit and produce for the food bank. That simple request paid off. The food bank received more than 400 pounds of fresh produce.

Volunteers were recently on hand sprucing up the beds preparing them for the first planting of the season. At the end of April, a team of volunteers descended on the Mukilteo Community Garden to plant seeds in the beds that provide for the food bank. People from Boeing, the Boy Scouts and the Kiwanis helped too.

Sacherek complimented the relationship the community garden has with the food bank noting that the beds provide a consistent source of fresh food.

“We are a nutrition bank, not a food bank,” Sacherek said. Food bank folks are trying to improve the nutritional value of the items on the organization’s shelves. They look for canned vegetables, low-sodium soups and other healthy options. Sacherek said he doesn’t want the food that goes out inadvertently exacerbate someone’s medical condition.

“We’re looking at things we can use that will make a healthy nutritional meal,” Sacherek said.

For people interested in getting involved, he suggested making a cash donation so food bank volunteers can acquire food that specifically meets the communities need. If people want to donate food, he suggested people consider giving food they would like to see served on their own dining room table.

He advised against donating “estate” food, which typically are canned food items that are past its expiration date. Expired food has to be discarded.

If the food bank has too much food, then the extra gets doled out to neighboring food banks and the Everett Gospel Mission.

“We’re sharing a common table with our neighbors,” Sacherek said.



Mukilteo Food Bank volunteer Rose Marie Tamburri sorts through the radishes grown by members of the Mukilteo Community Garden. Members of the garden harvested greens and radishes that was donated to the food bank. Such donations give food bank clients healthier choices.

More information about the Mukilteo Food Bank can be found at legacy.mukilteofoodbank.org/

Northwest Harvest, a statewide nonprofit that distributes healthy food to participating organizations across the state, maintains a fairly comprehensive list of food banks operating in Washington. The organizations website, www.northwestharvest.org, has a searchable list of food banks.

Space is available for people interested in growing food at the Mukilteo Community Garden. The organization has 52 beds for people to grow and it costs between \$40 and \$60 a year. People renting a bed are also expected to provide 10 hours of community service for the part of the garden that supplies the food bank. More information can be found at www.mukilteogarden.org.



Mukilteo Community Garden volunteer Jerry Flatterich repairs one of the garden beds used by volunteers.



Sno-Country Farms owner Pa Lee and Samantha Lee, with her 9-month-old son Kai, prepares bouquets during the Snohomish Farmer's Market. The small-town market is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2016.

Snohomish Celebration

Farmers market kicks off 25th year

By **NATHAN WHALEN**
Editor

As the Snohomish Farmers Market celebrates a watershed anniversary, Sarah Dylan is looking for ways to attract young shoppers to help ensure the market's popularity for years to come.

Dylan, who became manager of the venerable Snohomish Farmers Market about a year ago is developing a program that encourage children to explore the offerings at the market and learn to make healthy dietary choices.

Children starting in June can participate in the "Power of Produce" club will receive a \$2 market token they can use to buy food at the market.

"It encourages the relationship with the farmers and youngest people," Dylan said.

She added a Go Fund Me program raised the \$4,000 needed to pay for the tokens.

The Snohomish Farmers Market started in 1991 by market founders Dennis Lebow and Richard Wertz, who owned Last Chance Productions. Market days back then were modest events originating on Avenue A in Snohomish with about 20 vendors plying their wares. Dylan said as commerce at the market improved, organizers at the time had to move the market by the Iron Works building near the Snohomish River.



Ashley Meier from Pioneer Farms Grill based in Stanwood cooks burgers during the Snohomish Farmers Market. The Stanwood-based farm has been a fixture at the Snohomish Farmers Market for around 10 years.

As the market continued to flourish, organizers about nine years ago moved the market to its current location near the old Carnegie Library. Dylan said at the height of the season, about 60 vendors show up.

"I think we're still going to hold strong," Dylan said. The market features farmers, artisans, fresh flowers, prepared food and take-home food. She added that to be titled a farmers market, 55 percent of the sales have to come from the farmers.

Market organizers are partnering with the City of Snohomish to kick off the market season, which starts at 3 p.m. Thursday, May 3. The mayor will conduct a traditional ribbon cutting at the start of the market.

Dylan said a volunteer is going to explore the market to learn what's fresh and then create sample recipes based on the best food and produce available.

"We just thought this would be an added value for the market growers and encourage people to shop," Dylan said about the customized recipes.

With the market season gearing up, people could spend a quiet Thursday afternoon perusing the fresh fruit, browse the hand-crafted jewelry while enjoying some sushi or pizza that is prepared during the market.

The Snohomish Farmers Market takes place from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Thursdays starting May 5 and continuing through September.



Phil Hansen strums his guitar and sings during the opening day of the Snohomish Farmers Market. Live music is a popular feature of farmers markets. Snohomish's weekly farmers market takes place Thursdays from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Subscription

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For the farmers involved, the CSA provides them time to market their farm during a traditionally slow time of the year and the subscriptions improves the farm's cash flow.

The subscriptions are helping the Hansen's expand their business. They used the cash earned from the subscriptions to pay for a large oven, which will help speed up the baking process.

The Hansen's aren't the only ones who are expanding the concept of a CSA.

Pam Thompson, owner of Farm and Larder and Bella Luna Farm, offers soups, meats, jams, cheeses.

"There's always some sort of menu that goes out," Thompson said. "There's a theme around the contents of the box."

Farm and Larder has operated its CSA for two years.

"It just seemed to be a good way to market the farm," Thompson said.

The CSA provides a chance for people to tour the Bella Luna Farm and learn culinary techniques such as cheese-making and herb gardening. Thompson said the Farm and Larder CSA is geared toward a family of four, but she hopes to eventually add an a la carte option.

Farm and Larder operates near Snohomish but the Thompson's also grows organic fruit and produce on about 30 acres of land near Fall City. Sixty people currently receive weekly boxes, but Thompson said she hopes to expand that number to around 100-125 customers scattered between Seattle and the Eastside.

Farm and Larder also has a selection of produce for the boxes too. People can expect to see rhubarb, potatoes, spring onions and peas as part of the culinary box.

"I try to base the menu on what is available from the garden," Thompson said.

Of course there are plenty of traditional CSAs thriving throughout the Puget Sound region. Puget Sound Fresh, www.pugetsoundfresh.org, provides an excellent list of farms and ranches that offer CSAs. These farms are scattered between Stanwood and Olympia and from Ellensburg to Sequim.



The folks at Cascade Harvest Coalition provides a list of factors people should consider when deciding to participate in a CSA.

- Location – Farms serving the metropolitan area are scattered throughout northwest Washington and how often you want to be involved in on-farm activities. Some farms are located in neighboring counties, but, fortunately, those long drives are often the prettiest.

- Size – Some CSAs offer as few as 10 shares while others have as many as 300. This means some farms grow exclusively for a CSA while others also sell to markets and grocery stores.

- Price – It's difficult to compare prices between CSAs because of different growing seasons, products available, growing practices and size of shares.

- Pick-up sites and delivery days – All farms have weekly drop off sites that are typically at homes often of farm employees or CSA participants who receive a bit of a discount for hosting a site. The drop off days also vary between the farms with some delivering on the weekends while others deliver earlier in the week.

The Cascade Harvest Coalition also noted that some farms are certified organic while others simply use organic practices. CSAs also offers education and a chance to communicate with farmers.



Above: Arielle Antosca pulls plants out of the field during the early spring in preparation for the coming growing season.

Below: Ashley Wilson hauls some of the plants pulled out of the field.

City Grown

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In the meantime, farmers at City Grown Seattle continue to grow on their fields scattered throughout the city. They have a Community Supported Agriculture program up and running and they continue to sell their produce from their stands scattered throughout the city.

For more information about City Grown Seattle, go to www.citygrownseattle.com.





Ebey's Landing
National Historic Reserve
Whidbey Island, Washington