

# The Food Heritage of Virginia

## An Untapped Asset of Community & Economic Development

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<sup>1</sup> Graves Mountain Apple Festival. Syria, VA. <<http://gravesmountain.com/appleharvest.htm>>

## **The Food Heritage of Virginia: An Untapped Asset for Economic & Community Development**

*“By way of correction we must make locally-adapted economies, based on local nature, local sunlight, local intelligence, and local work.” –Wendell Berry*

Food roots us to the land and to our communities. When we become disconnected from the soil and air that makes our food possible and ignorant of the production processes and hands that harvest our food, our well-being and our communities suffer. Our health suffers as the quantity of food we consume remains constant but the quality declines and our work and lifestyles become increasingly sedentary. Our families suffer when meals are inhaled in the midst of overscheduled, overworked, and stressful lives instead of savored and used as the nucleus around which we build relationships. Our communities suffer when the majority of our food comes from far away and returns little to the local economy. In this essay, I focus on ways to address the latter issue—the fracturing of community as we lose our connection to and knowledge of local foodways and traditions. In particular, I examine food celebrations that have enormous potential to transform our communities into economically sustainable and attractive places to visit, live, and eat.

The benefits of strong local and regional food systems include are well-documented and wide ranging.<sup>2</sup> The intent of this essay is to share ideas of how to embrace food heritage celebrations with

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<sup>2</sup> Most regions of the United States have publications on the benefits of strong local and regional food systems to their particular region, but many of the benefits are similar nationwide. See Molly Anderson’s “The Case for Local

the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission. The ideas shared in this essay could be adopted and applied at varying scales depending upon the institutional capacity, authority, and resources of regional stakeholders that see their inherent value. As Nicole Perlroth famously (for residents of this region) stated in Forbes magazine in June 2011, Central Virginia has become known for its local food movement and has been crowned the “locavore” capital of the United States.

## Food Celebrations in Central Virginia

Food celebrations are familiar fare in Central Virginia. The colonial era of Virginia’s history feels a moment away if one forays into any one of the slew of food and heritage celebrations occurring on a crisp Autumn Saturday. At events like the Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello, old time fiddle tunes float through hollers, the smell of fresh cider and coffee fill the air, and food demonstrations attract throngs of visitors. As a volunteer on other side of the table at last year’s Heritage Harvest Festival, I distributed samples of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange’s phenomenal heritage tomato breeds to a stream of interested tourists, gastronomers, and children that flowed endlessly throughout the day. The primary focus of many festivals featuring such foods is ironically not food itself, but rather a cherished historical period or commemoration of the folkways and ancient customs indigenous to a region that expand our understanding of our culture’s roots (Crook).

Through a case study examining the Country Roads Cook-Off™ of West Virginia, I will demonstrate that developing place-based food heritage as an economic driver and community building block contains untapped potential. This is true in rural areas with limited employment opportunities and long depressed economies. While their issues may be multi-faceted and complex, urban areas

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and Regional Food Marketing for one such example. To get an idea of the unique assets of Central Virginia’s regional food network, see Tanya Denckla-Cobb’s “Virginia: An Emerging Leader in the Nation’s Food Movement.” Gary Nabhan of The RAFT (Renewing America’s Food Traditions) Alliance has edited numerous booklets focusing on the economic, ecological, and health benefits of heritage foods, local food, and economic development. All are available for free at < <http://www.albc-usa.org/RAFT/resources.html> >

possess food heritages and identities in their own right that can be tapped and integrated into culinary traditions that become attractions in their own right. Indeed, a Memphis without barbecue or a New Orleans without red beans and rice would be two confused and troubled urban identities.

Lastly, I consider the forgotten and ignored heritage of Central Virginia's Native American tribes as an asset to the development and embracement of place-based food. Civil War heritage tourism is examined as another untapped opportunity to incorporate the region's burgeoning food economy and enhance the authenticity of historic tourism by delivering unforgettable sensory experiences that bring foodways to life.

### **The Role of Heritage Foods: Tourism, Celebration, Community & Economic Benefits**

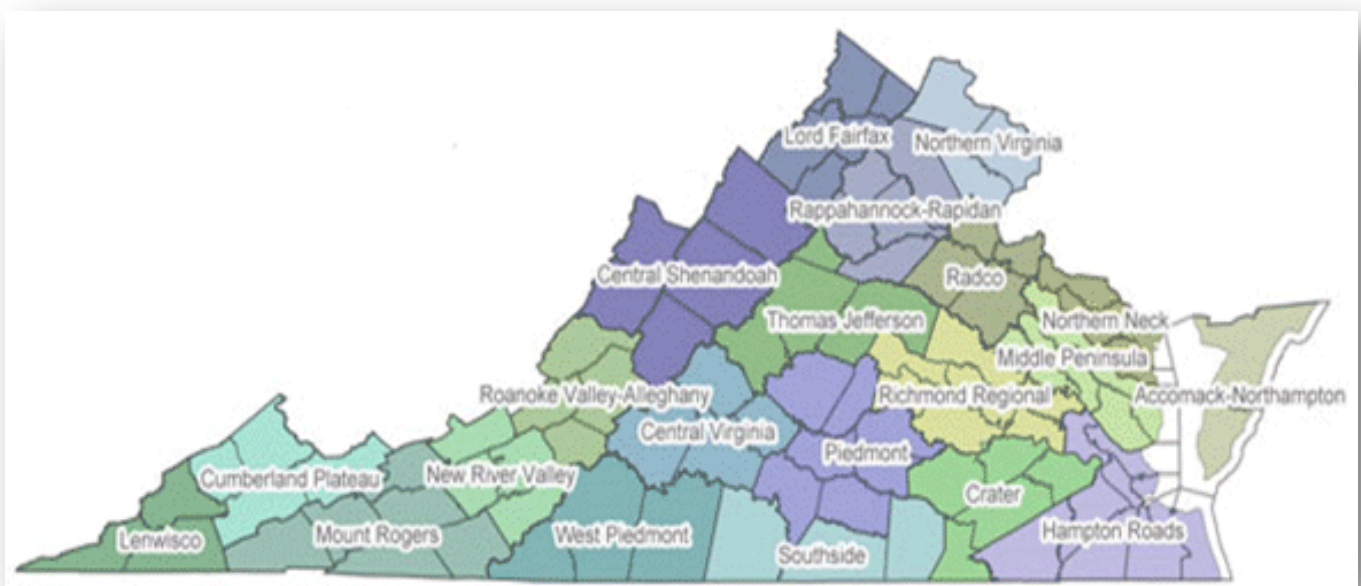
Heritage foods fit perfectly in the intersection between culinary and heritage tourism and hold particular value in their ability to both sustain our bodies and educate us of our local histories, creating a true sense of place that attracts visitors from the across world. In particular, interest in developing local food and culture-based economies has increased in recent years throughout Appalachia as its communities adapt and discover how to turn their natural assets into vital drivers of community. New livelihoods and openness to new ideas emerge as the traditional economic model of resource extraction and absentee landownership leave inhabitants of the region seeking a better, more sustainable way to shape their communities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Scholars such as Eban Goodstein have explained how absentee landownership in Appalachia concentrates land in the hands of very few landowners who display minimal interest in the development or progress of the region. Challenges of economic opportunity and social service delivery are greatly hindered by the colonial nature of landownership system and the ability of local governments throughout the region to deal with issues in communities is greatly constrained by this coopting of local power.

## Geographic Focus Area

For the purpose of these policy ideas, the geographic focus is the five county region known as the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, or Planning District 10 of the Commonwealth of Virginia. This region includes Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson counties. The TJPDC serves as a forum for ideas and a regional visioneer that serves “local governments by providing regional vision, collaborative leadership and professional service.” (Listed) The counties in this region are characterized by agricultural livelihoods, naturally preserved beautiful landscapes on the Eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and a burgeoning local food economy based in Charlottesville. The following map illustrates these counties in the context of the state of Virginia:



**The Thomas Jefferson Planning District is located in Central Virginia.**

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<sup>4</sup> Image source: “New Trends in Transportation and Land Use Scenario Planning.” Appendix C. Case Studies. 17 Oct, 2011.  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/scenario\\_and\\_visualization/scenario\\_planning/resources/new\\_trends/sec11.ccf](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/scenario_and_visualization/scenario_planning/resources/new_trends/sec11.ccf) Accessed: 17 April, 2012.

## Heritage Foods of Central Virginia

Understanding exactly what constitutes a heritage food is essential before one fully understands the importance of incorporating it into food celebrations. To put it simply, heritage foods are those pure and nature-selected breeds of fruits, vegetables, and livestock that regionally adapted to nuanced microclimates and biomes. As our food system became more industrialized with the harnessing of fossil fuels and chemical inputs to control and streamline strict production of monoculture yields, the varieties that were best suited to survive long trips through the agricultural distribution system prevailed. In the 1980s, scientists discovered that pieces of DNA can transfer between organisms and genetically modified food was soon after introduced into international markets (Hobbs & Plunkett). With this development, we gained the ability to manipulate, graft, and alter the genetic makeup of our food and bestow commercially desirable traits upon it. Regionally appropriate and adapted historic breeds began to vanish as these varieties of produce and livestock dominated supermarket shelves and consumer palettes. By the 2000s, a movement blossomed out of the desire to save these endangered heritage varieties by saving their seeds and promoting their unique flavors, colors, and textures.

## Climate Change and the Value of Heritage Foods

In the context of global climate change, preservation of diverse crop and livestock populations protects human populations from major environmental changes that may eradicate entire species (Moore). The Irish potato famine of the 1840s should remain an omniscient reminder for 21<sup>st</sup> century agriculture and survival in light of climate change. Millions starved as a result of the dependence of farmers on one type of potato that was wiped out by fungus (Ibid). Heritage crops and breeds survived the test of time for good reason—they adapted to fluctuations in climate and survived disease outbreaks (Ibid).

## Heritage Foods as Intergenerational Capital

Another unique value of heritage foods is that they functioned as a bequeathal that passed between generations. Families that farmed for lifetimes passed their special varieties, unique from even their neighbors, on to their children. In the same way that these seeds and breeds served as intergenerational capital and goodwill, their exploration and revival will serve as points of relation and pride amongst members of communities like Waynesboro, Scottsville, or Nellysville.

Food celebrations are one of the most accessible venues to educate the public about heritage food varieties and to literally give them a taste of what has largely gone missing in our food system. Dying and nearly forgotten food preparation methods can be combined with heritage varieties in attention-grabbing demonstrations that give area residents and visitors an authentic sensory experience and understanding of a place's culture. A perfect example of combining the two elements would be to set up an antique apple press to allow visitors at a heritage museum the opportunity to press their own bushel of Lugar Red apples. The following is a brief list of some of the food heritage foods native to Central Virginia, to provide a clearer idea of exactly what a heritage food is, its importance in community gatherings and the promise held for economic vitality:

1. **Bowling Red Okra.** This okra variety was grown by the Bowling family of Virginia since the 1920s and is highly valued by farmers and gardeners for its early harvest and productive growth. It is popular with consumers for its long, tender pods.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> No author listed. *Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds*. <<http://rareseeds.com/vegetables-d-o/okra/bowling-red-okra.html>> Accessed 21 April, 2012. Photo from same source.





**Bowling Red Okra**

2. **Virginia Greening Apple.** This is an old, Southern apple which is thought to have come from Virginia in the 1700s, although its origins have not been precisely determined. It is known for its, coarse, sweet flesh and keeping fresh for a long period of time after its harvest in October.<sup>6</sup>



**Virginia Greening Tomato**

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<sup>6</sup> Joyner, Ron. "Apple Variety Descriptions: S-Y." Big Horse Creek Farm.  
<<http://www.bighorsecreekfarm.com/descriptions4.htm>> 21 April, 2012. Photo from same source.



3. **Power's Heirloom Tomato.** This tomato originated in Virginia over a century ago and is most popular for making pastes and canning, although many prefer it sliced for its "sweet, mild flavor and meaty flesh."<sup>7</sup>



**Power's Heirloom Tomato.**

4. **Gloucestershire Old Spot Pig.** The "GOS" are excellent foragers and grazers, making them great partners on diversified farm operations. They were nearly extinct in both their native England and the United States at one time, but have made a comeback and continue to be the preferred pork of the Royal family and Virginians with good taste, alike.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> No author listed. *Totally Tomatoes*.

<<http://www.totallytomato.com/dp.asp?plD=00584&c=38&p=Powers+Heirloom+Tomato>> Accessed 21 April, 2012. Photo from same source.

<sup>8</sup> No author listed. "Gloucestershire Old Spot Pig." <<http://albc-usa.org/cpl/gloucestershire.html>> The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy is the "only organization in the U.S. working to conserve rare breeds and genetic diversity in livestock." Accessed 29 April, 2012.



These four examples of heirloom fruits, vegetables, and livestock breeds hardly scratch the surface of the extent and variety of heritage foods. Food heritage also includes the sites and methods used to process, preserve, share, and sell these foods like canneries and general stores. The importance and interest in each single type of heritage food is demonstrated by the hundreds of festivals around the United States dedicated especially to them. From the Pawpaw Festival of Southern Ohio to the Lynville Blackberry Festival in South Central Tennessee, communities across the United States gather and celebrate these foods, traditions, and history.

#### **Economic Benefits of Incorporating Heritage Foods into Festivals & Celebrations**

The number of festivals emerging around place-based food is no fluke—significant job creation and economic benefits are enticing results of the hard work and investment that go into executing these celebrations. A study of place-based food festivals in northeast Iowa conducted by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture found that the total economic impact of visitors was \$2.6 million for every \$1

million invested. \$1.4 million in personal income resulted from festivals. This \$2.6 million total included the creation of 51 jobs.<sup>9</sup>

The location chosen for a festival can make a difference of hundreds of thousands of dollars in income for a locality. For example, a study of the Scottish Highlands Games in North Carolina concluded that the economic impact of the festival was quite small, given “the induced or indirect effects on rural host regions.” It concluded that substantial economic leakages were an outcome of limited rural economies, meaning that outside vendors took some of the economic benefits of the festival with them as they left the region. These are important considerations in the TJP, given its largely rural character. Clustering festival activities around diversified and strong economic centers like the city of Charlottesville captures more of the economic benefits and multiplies the benefits of events like a heritage food festival.<sup>10</sup> For example, the New Orleans Wine & Food Experience produced a total economic impact of \$6.5 million, with state and local governments generating nearly half a million dollars in tax revenue.<sup>11</sup> Hosting a festival in a location with access to major markets and supportive economic enterprises to capture lodging and food costs makes a significant difference in the local capture of economic benefits.

## **Case Study: *Planning a Country Roads Cook-Off™: A Recipe for Success***

When considered in the national context, Central Virginia is ahead of the curve in seriously attempting to incorporate local food entrepreneurs and farmers into our economy and keep economic

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<sup>9</sup> This paragraph draws extensively on Lankford & Cela.

<sup>10</sup> This previous sentences in this paragraph drew extensively upon Chhabra, Sills, & Cubbage’s research on “The Significance of Festivals to Rural Economies.” See Bibliography for full citation.

<sup>11</sup> No author listed. “Raising a Glass to the Economic Impact that the New Orleans Wine and Food Experience Brings to the City.” Web. < <http://www.nowfe.com/media-center/raising-glass-economic-impact-new-orleans-wine-and-food-experience-brings-city>>. Accessed 30 April, 2012.

benefits within the region. With at least four festivals already incorporating heritage foods, the idea is not exactly novel.<sup>12</sup> Yet, we can always benefit from shifting focus to other regions of the country where innovation in heritage food tourism and community celebrations are attracting national and international attention. A great place to start is a festival that is quite new, but making a name for itself and eagerly giving away all of its secrets to encourage replication along the way. Central Virginia already possesses all of the necessary attributes for the event, given our existing support for local food production and purchasing, plethora of food celebrations, and the presence of notable chefs and “foodies” alike.

The Country Roads Cook-Off™ takes place at the Heritage Farm Museum and Village in Huntington, WV. For the past two Octobers, local cooks have come together “in a friendly, competitive environment to promote cooking using local foods” (Arnold). The Heritage Farm Museum and Village came about when Mike and Henriella Perry moved to a cabin near Huntington, WV and discovered a number of other burned-out cabins on their property. Fueled by “their pride in the Appalachian culture of Southern West Virginia,” they revived the historic structures and created the Heritage Farm Museum and Village (Perry). Mike’s motto of “observe the past, gain an appreciation of the present, and dream and imagine how much greater the future can be” is inspired by the work ethic of the settlers of the area who made most everything needed to live by hand (Perry). Mike’s museum was the ideal setting for a spinoff of the highly successful Cast-Iron Cook-off™ at the Greenbrier Resort in West Virginia.

The entire community participates in the event as judges, tasters, and sponsors of the event. The event was based on the highly successful Cast Iron Cook-Off™, which showcases the best of West Virginia’s culinary artists and brings in renowned “foodies” to serve as judges. After seeing its success and high level of community participation, Dr. Allen Arnold and other festival organizers at the West

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<sup>12</sup> Grave’s Mountain Apple Festival, Heritage Harvest Festival, Old Farm Days (Fluvanna), and The Vintage Virginia Apple Festival. I am certain you could add more, as I claim a meager nine months of residence in Virginia at the time of writing.

Virginia Farm2U Collaborative made a goal of spinning off the festival throughout the year in different regions of the state to expand the economic and community benefits beyond one event. The result has been astounding success in four different locations, including one in Virginia at the Abingdon Farmer's Market!<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Arnold and other organizers saw the immense potential of these events and so engaged communities throughout West Virginia to help lay the blueprints and take part in the planning process for other festivals, cultivating local leadership and eliciting public input along the way. The result has been success on multiple fronts, the most relevant of which for the TJPB is the *Planning a Country Roads Cook-Off™: A Recipe For Success* book that is available for free online.<sup>14</sup> It contains a detailed guide on every aspect of planning such an event, from the benefits of piggybacking animal auctions and farmers markets on such a cook-off, to site selection, traffic flow, and materials and supplies lists. Stock forms for press releases, sponsorship contracts, and cooking team entries are provided in the index, making this incredible resource instantly accessible and easy to implement for interested community groups or local governments with the capacity to organize such an event.

A number of takeaway points will stick in the mind even of a casual reader who skims the Cook-Off guide. One strength that becomes obvious as one reads through the process of planning it is that it not only encourages participants to "buy local", but to realize and imagine the financial opportunities that are underdeveloped but readily available by "marketing unique local food products to the rest of the world." Successful execution of a Country Roads Cook-Off™ is highlighted as "an exercise that builds a community's ability to strategize, collaborate, and celebrated successes," enhancing success in other community endeavors and cultivation of leadership of untapped potential. Lastly, a successful event "will remind and teach others about the important cultural values that made our ancestors successful,"

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<sup>13</sup> This paragraph draws extensively on "Country Roads Cook-Off History." By Dr. Allen Arnold. <  
<http://farm2u.org/country-roads-cook-off/country-roads-cook-off-history/>> Accessed 21 April, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> See "Allen" in the bibliography for a link to this resource.

fostering appreciation of heritage, history, and keeping old traditions alive that may be more relevant and needed today than we could have imagined.<sup>15</sup>

## **The Thomas Jefferson Planning District & A Country Roads Cook-Off**

If there were ever a location ripe for a Country Roads Cook-Off™ spinoff, the TJPD region would be it. Food retail infrastructure is strong in the region, with multiple farmers market to consider as site hosts for a Cook-Off. Aggregate distributors like The Local Food Hub sell food exclusively grown by farmers in the region and possess the capacity to source food for all participants attending as well as culinary artists competing in the event. As Gail Hobbs- Page, owner of Caromont Farms in Southern Albemarle County, recently commented, the growth of niche industries like goat cheese making and winemaking has attracted some of the most talented names in these businesses to this region. This could easily be said for local chefs and culinary artists, many of whom would be interested in a friendly and competitive atmosphere to showcase their abilities outside of a restaurant kitchen.

While fall is harvest season and the widest range of heritage foods will be available at that time, this should not discourage incorporation of heritage foods to maximize economic benefits throughout the rest of the year. Even in the leanest winter months, hearty greens like kale and chard continue to thrive. Opportunities to appreciate and build the local economy around heritage food incorporation in festivals are truly limitless and are only bounded by the creative limits of their proponents.

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<sup>15</sup> This paragraph draws extensively on “Country Roads Cook-Off History.” By Dr. Allen Arnold. < <http://farm2u.org/country-roads-cook-off/country-roads-cook-off-history/>> Accessed 21 April, 2012.

## Central Virginia's Assets for Developing Place-Based Heritage Food Tourism

As a commonwealth that received the first European colonizers and the “mother of U.S. presidents”, Virginia’s extensive history is rife for cultural and historical exploration. The history that unfolded on Virginia soil is significant and rich for students, tourists, and residents alike. Modern sensibilities and interests bestow value upon the voices and the stories of the unheard, forgotten, and oppressed. In Central Virginia, the history and legacy of slavery on institutions such as the University of Virginia and landmarks like Monticello has received increasing attention in recent years.

When considering the potential development of heritage tourism in Central Virginia, shameful histories of slavery and Native American displacement are not appropriately viewed as economic opportunities, but as opportunities in raising educational awareness and commemorating the hardships, burden, and cruelty bestowed upon indigenous inhabitants and captured African slaves. Forward-thinking cities such as Charlottesville have made a mission of racial reconciliation and honoring those disgraced in the past, as evident in its City Council’s 2025 goal of creating “A Community of Mutual Respect.”<sup>16</sup>

### Native American Food Heritage: The Virginia Indian Heritage Trail

In terms of exploring opportunities to remember the original inhabitants of Virginia before colonization, The Virginia Indian Heritage Trail (VIHT) is an incredible resource in which multiple connections are evident.<sup>17</sup> Just a short peek into their history reveals that we owe the adaptation and presence of beans, corn, and squash to Native American tribes who brought these vegetables to Virginia (which were not originally found here) and cultivated them. (Wood) In 2007, the Virginia Council of

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<sup>16</sup> No author listed. “Charlottesville City Council Vision 2025.” No dated listed.  
<<http://www.charlottesville.org/Index.aspx?page=92>> Accessed 19 April, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> To see the full publication, visit <[http://virginiahumanities.org/files/2011/12/Heritage-Trail\\_2ed.pdf](http://virginiahumanities.org/files/2011/12/Heritage-Trail_2ed.pdf)>



Indians identified “research and consulting assistance for tourist destinations” with interpretive content about Virginia Indians that would become part of the VIHT as a top priority. (Murphy Jr.) Institutional support such as University of Virginia scholarships offered to Native American professional students interested in leadership and economic development of Native American communities demonstrate commitment that can be built upon with other institutional and local governmental policies.

In exploring appropriate routes to support awareness and tourism of Native American cultural sites and foodways, some great ideas are available in a booklet produced on “marketing the heritage value of Arizona’s place-based foods,” by Gary Nabhan, dubbed by some as the father of the local food movement (Nabhan et al). The booklet makes a mission of honoring Native American traditions and bringing prosperity to the communities still producing and selling heritage foods like Tepary Beans. This ancient crop is easily preserved and extremely drought-resistant, pointing to a further benefit of encouraging heritage food cultivation—foods naturally adapted to a microclimate that have a higher likelihood of survival in the face of changing weather patterns as a result of climate change (Nabhan et. al, 27).

A few of the recommendations for achievable actions at the institutional and local government level include “acquiring federal and state funds to promote specialty and alternative crops and livestock breeds,” integrating promotion of a state’s heritage foods into interpretation and education efforts at parks and museums, and assuring that tribes benefit “from the production, promotion and sales of foods unique to their heritage” through mechanisms such as brand certification monitored and enforced by extension agencies (Nabhan et al., 9).

### **Recommendation: Regional Assessment of Native American Foodways in Collaboration with Tribes**

A natural starting point for developing policies and incorporation of Native American foodways in the TJPd region would be a regional assessment executed in collaboration with Powhatan and Monacan tribes of existing production of Native American heritage foods, seed saving initiatives, and powwows or other Native American celebrations that could benefit from incorporation of a heritage food element. The Piedmont Environmental Council could be an additional partner in these explorative efforts.

### **The Civil War Sesquicentennial: Incorporating Historic Foodways into Tourism Destinations**

Lastly, a great untapped opportunity lies in exploring the traditions, foodways, and strategic role of food in Civil War history in the TJPd. Only one major Civil War altercation occurred in the TJPd region—the Battle of Trevillian Station in Louisa County. It was the largest cavalry battle of the Civil War, with 13,000 cavalrymen involved and 1,619 perishing in total (Louisa County Historical Society). The region as a whole played an important role in the Civil War. Charlottesville’s manufacturing industries supplied uniforms, swords and prosthetic limbs for amputees and its hospitals tended the wounded (Ervin). The occupation of Scottsville by Union troops is well known, where soldiers “destroyed mills, factories, and bridges” and destroyed the James River Canal (Barr).

Civil War tourism has been a unique brand of tourism in the United States for decades, but opportunities to expand the economic benefits and depth of Civil War commemoration and portrayal remain bountiful. The sesquicentennial or 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War has been heavily marketed and promoted by organizations such as The Journey Through Hallowed Ground, “a non-profit, four-state partnership dedicated to raising awareness” of American heritage from Gettysburg to Appomattox courthouse.<sup>18</sup> Listed as a partner of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground, TJPd commissioners and

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<sup>18</sup> No author listed. “About Us.” The Journey Through Hallowed Ground.

staff are undoubtedly aware of the efforts and economic benefits realized by this Civil War trail which has been recognized by Congress as “a National Heritage Area.”<sup>19</sup> The Route 15/20 corridor crosses the Mason Dixon Line and travels from Monticello to Gettysburg, making the TJPd region a prominent and touted-spot on the route by the JTHG, despite the lack of major battles. State route 20 is part of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground’s official route. The region’s numerous historic sites, museums, and presidential residences will undoubtedly attract the interest of these Civil War tourists. Below is a map I created of the TJPd region, with these two scenic byways highlighted as well as sites of Civil War battles:

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

## TJPDC & The Journey Through Hallowed Ground



### Legend

Virginia Battles

Cities

State Road 20

State Road 15

### Planning District

Thomas Jefferson Planning District

Communities across the United States, even throughout California and the West, have tapped Civil War tourism as an economic engine, especially since the demands of Civil War tourists on local services and infrastructure costs are so low.<sup>20</sup> A 2003 tourism study showed that 11.5 percent of all visits to Virginia by tourists were to Civil War sites.<sup>21</sup> The *Blue, Gray, & Green* report, produced in 2006 by Davidson-Peterson Associates, focused on Virginia battlefields and urged preservation of battlefield communities using local government funding. In many cases, development pressure has led to monumental conflicts like that between the Disney Corp. seeking to “develop commercial property near the Manassas National Battlefield Park” to the west of Washington, D.C. Civil War tourists have been shown to stay longer than even conventional heritage tourists and to spend \$300 more, on average (Pennel)

Interest in heritage-related activities by Civil War tourists was shown to be 71 percent in a U.S. Travel Association survey conducted just prior to the commencement of Sesquicentennial activities in 2011 (Sheatsly). Civil War tourists will be key to economic growth around cultural heritage and food in Central Virginia’s tourism economy in coming years. They are likely to be in their late forties or early fifties, well educated, and affluent, having household incomes that average between \$61,200 and \$79,500 (Daivdson-Peterson and Associates). Finally, at the twenty sites surveyed for the *Blue, Gray, and Green* report, food and beverages consistently made up the largest category of Civil War tourists expenses at around 30 percent of total dollars spent (Ibid).

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<sup>20</sup> No author listed. “Civil War Preservation Economic Engine for Local Communities.” 17 November, 2004. <[http://lubbockonline.com/stories/111704/lif\\_111704028.shtml](http://lubbockonline.com/stories/111704/lif_111704028.shtml)> Accessed 21 April, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

Central Virginia has earned a reputation based on its incredible foods and restaurants, innovative food infrastructure strengthening the local food system, and the presence of leaders of artisanal industries such as viticulture, cheese, and cider making. The benefits of this region embracing the production, preparation, and consumption of heritage foods will further connect residents to the deep history of the region and provide an interesting, delicious, and profitable caveat to attract outsiders to enjoy these foods and learn of our rich culture and traditions. Rural and urban communities alike stand to benefit from incorporating flavorful, bold, unapologetic heritage flavors into existing and future celebrations and historic foodways throughout the year.

From staging a Country Roads Cook-Off™ that engages the community in planning a successful, profitable, and unifying event to introducing Civil War food fare and cooking demonstrations into school programs and commemorations for the public, Central Virginia is rife with opportunities to build community and local economies around heritage food and celebrations. Just as our ancestors planted by the signs, harvested by the moon, and built community around food, embracing the value and depth of heritage foods will connect us to our agricultural past and build new bonds in a world that seems to have forgotten the value of sitting down for a long dinner and taking a break on the porch.

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