

Laura McCoy  
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## **FOOD HERITAGE PLANNING PROPOSALS: PLANNING FOR FOOD HERITAGE CELEBRATIONS IN CENTRAL VIRGINIA**

### PURPOSE

This paper highlights opportunities for incorporating and enhancing heritage food celebrations in the Thomas Jefferson Planning District (TJPD), a five-county region including Greene, Albemarle, Nelson, Fluvanna, and Louisa counties, and the City of Charlottesville. The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) is the board of representatives responsible for facilitating regional planning across the five counties in the region. In this paper I will present three ideas for the promotion of food heritage celebrations for consideration in the TJPD.

### CONTEXT

Food heritage is a somewhat ambiguous and amorphous term. It is dependent upon the place, the time, and the individual.<sup>1</sup> It is a means of rooting a community to its place and to its history and heritage, and of defining the cultural identity of a place, community, person, or region. Food heritage includes those varieties of plants and livestock that are native or unique to a place, community, or lifestyle. It can include heirloom varieties of tomatoes and apples, as well as the stories and traditions that are associated with the growth and harvesting of those varieties. They can be commonly

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Food Heritage Class Think Tank, May 1, 2012.

found, known to just a few, or even extinct—lost to our memory other than a few references.<sup>2</sup>

Exploring, defining, fostering, and protecting food heritage at any scale is becoming more critical than ever. In the face of globalization, the increasing reach of large-scale corporations, and the ubiquity of “Anywhere USA” development, the need for a sense of place and an understanding of heritage—where we came from—has never been greater. We are losing our connections to the land, an American ideal strongly encouraged by our local hometown hero in Charlottesville, Virginia, Thomas Jefferson. Instead, the country is increasingly favoring virtual places and the growing sameness of American identity. At the beginning of our nation’s history, founding fathers, writers, artists, and architects were engulfed in a constant attempt to define what is “American,” to find that aspect of American culture that made us unique, as something separate from the European powers. Through their efforts, the American identity was seemingly defined as varied and eclectic, regional, and place-based. The American landscape is incredibly varied, and that variety is evident in the cultural identities of its people. This is changing. Cultural and “locational” uniqueness is being lost in favor of the “march of sameness”<sup>3</sup> across the country. We are experiencing a “crisis of community,” and a “crisis of place.”<sup>4</sup>

Sustainability expert and University of Virginia professor Timothy Beatley makes this argument clear: “We need places that provide healthy living environments and also nourish the soul—distinctive places worthy of our loyalty and commitment, places where we feel at home, places that inspire and... that provide social and environmental

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<sup>2</sup> Veteto et, al, “Place-based foods of Appalachia”

<sup>3</sup> Beatley, “Sustaining Place in the Global Age,” 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 3.

sustenance.”<sup>5</sup> Put succinctly, the need is thus, “to revisit what it means to be *native* to where we live, to recommit to place.”<sup>6</sup> We need to collect and save this knowledge, as well as these foods and traditions before the knowledge and resources are lost forever.

How can we get there? This paper focuses on the development of food heritage celebrations as a means of reconnecting with our (food and) community roots. Again, food is a strong way of defining a community or location. Celebrations offer the opportunity to remember, cultivate, and teach residents and visitors alike the unique history and culture of place. The celebration of food heritage will help to uncover existing, but often-unknown connections between the land and the people that inhabit it, as well as between producers and consumers of that food heritage.

Food celebrations are a familiar part of the central Virginia culture, ranging from the Heritage Harvest Festival at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, and the Carter’s Mountain Apple Harvest Celebration a few miles outside of Charlottesville, to the multitude of Piedmont wine festivals and craft beer tasting events. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services identified over one hundred Virginia food festivals in 2011.<sup>7</sup> These celebrations are important community resources for preserving food heritage and regional heritage for two main reasons. First, celebrations and festivals are educational, and have the capacity to bring community attention to heritage foods that might otherwise be ignored. By hosting educational workshops, tastings, and demonstrations at regional festivals, it becomes possible to reach a larger audience, and teach people how to cultivate and use these foods and techniques before that knowledge is lost. Second, food celebrations can be used to highlight and

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Denckla Cobb, “Virginia—An Emerging Leader in the Nation’s Local Food Movement” 2.

strengthen sense of place. Food and people have roots to place. Festivals make these connections between the community, the food, and the place. This connection is particularly important when considering heritage food.

The development of food heritage food celebrations has the potential for strong regional economic benefits. Donovan Rypkema, an expert on the economics of preservation, emphasizes the multiple values of heritage conservation, including “cultural, aesthetic, educational, environmental, social, historical, and... the economic value.”<sup>8</sup> Heritage tourism, as defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is “traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic, and natural resources.”<sup>9</sup> Tourism has the potential to increase quality of life and build community pride; it brings new jobs into towns and increases property values. The National Trust identifies the biggest benefits of cultural heritage tourism as its abilities to diversify local economies and preserve communities’ unique character.<sup>10</sup> In Virginia specifically, historic tourists tend to “stay longer, visit twice as many places, and spend, on average, over two-and-a-half times more money in Virginia than do other visitors... visitors coming to see Virginia’s vast inventory of historic sites add their dollars to Virginia’s economy.”<sup>11</sup> The development of heritage food tourism can have the same positive impacts to the region as heritage tourism of historic sites.

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<sup>8</sup> Rypkema, 1.

<sup>9</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Heritage Tourism*.  
<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/heritage-tourism/>

<sup>10</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Cultural Heritage Tourism 2010 Fact Sheet*.  
<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/heritage-tourism/additional-resources/2010-CHT-FactSheet.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Rypkema, 4.

## CASE STUDIES AND PLANNING APPLICATIONS IN THE TJPD

This paper explores three case studies, the Cranberry Harvest Celebration in Wareham, Massachusetts, the North Carolina Apple Harvest Festival in Hendersonville, North Carolina, and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area, in order to formulate new ideas for celebrating food heritage in the Thomas Jefferson Planning District of central Virginia. These case studies lead to a variety of strategies, including a focus on the creation of well-supported festivals, celebration through awareness and financial support, and finally, through heritage tourism.

### CASE STUDY 1: THE CRANBERRY HARVEST CELEBRATION IN WAREHAM, MASSACHUSETTS.

The Wareham Cranberry Harvest Celebration occurs annually in early October, and, in 2012, is in its tenth year of operation. The A.D. Makepeace Company and the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association host the celebration every year. The A.D. Makepeace Company is the world's largest cranberry grower, the largest private property owner in the eastern part of Massachusetts, and a recognized leader in environmentally responsible real estate development and land stewardship. It has a 150-year history in the cranberry harvesting industry. The Harvest Celebration is a family event that also includes live music, local food vendors, pony and wagon rides, craft vendors, a farm stand, as well as helicopter rides over the cranberry harvest, a raptor demonstration, and cooking demonstrations.<sup>12</sup> The celebration brings in thousands of visitors each year to the area; in 2009 an estimated 20,000 visitors were present.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "Cranberry Harvest Celebration"

<sup>13</sup> "Cranberry Festivals to be held this weekend in Wareham, Carver"

The festival showcases the unique industry of the cranberry growers in southeastern Massachusetts. The Company demonstrates its method of harvesting and provides educational opportunities for the community about the crop and its harvest, as well as the economic impacts of the harvest on the greater community.<sup>14</sup>

With a \$50 million crop value, the cranberry is the number one food crop in Massachusetts. The industry provides about 5,500 jobs, and more than \$200 million to the state economy. The A.D. Makepeace Company is often called “The Cranberry King,” as it farms about 1,750 acres of cranberry bog in eastern Massachusetts. It is also the largest grower for the Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc. Company.<sup>15</sup> The Cape Cod Cranberry Grower’s Association, the second host for the annual celebration in Wareham, aims to support Massachusetts-based cranberry growers and to “enhance [their] economic viability.”<sup>16</sup> In some ways the celebration is a response to the large number of jobs the cranberry bogs create in southeastern Massachusetts. The cranberry sales in 2009 contributed to nearly eighteen percent of the total revenue from all farm products in the state.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the economic benefits of cranberry harvesting in Massachusetts, the cranberry also has a rich and lengthy history in the United States. American Indians used the cranberry as a source of food, as well as a fabric dye and healing agent. Mariners also used them in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to prevent scurvy. The first example of cranberry cultivation occurred in 1816, and today U.S. farmers

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “The Cranberry Industry,” A.D. Makepeace Company, accessed May 5, 2012. [http://www.admakepeace.com/pages/cranberries/the\\_cranberry\\_industry.asp](http://www.admakepeace.com/pages/cranberries/the_cranberry_industry.asp)

<sup>16</sup> The Cape Cod Cranberry Growers’ Association, accessed May 5, 2012. <http://www.cranberries.org/>

<sup>17</sup> “Cranberry Festivals to be held this weekend in Wareham, Carver”

harvest about 40,000 acres each year.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, cranberry harvesting helps to promote community, as many bogs are farmed as a multi-family business spanning several generations.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that the cranberry industry is a critical part of Massachusetts' history and culture, and a significant component of the state and local economy. Recently there was an effort to designate the cranberry-growing grounds south of Boston as the state's first "agricultural heritage area," in an attempt to bring in more tourists to the region and boosting cranberry-related and other regional businesses, though the efforts have slowed since 2008. A Cranberry Heritage Commission was established through a bill passed by the State legislature, but no members were appointed to serve due to budget issues.<sup>20</sup>

The Cranberry Harvest Celebration offers several community benefits in addition to the education, awareness, and economic support to the community. It also promotes other area activities for visitors, in order to further spur economic investment in the region. The celebration acts as an annual fundraiser for local non-profit organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club of Greater New Bedford/Wareham Unit, and the Buzzards Bay Area Habitat for Humanity.<sup>21</sup> In many ways it has a profound impact on the regional economy.

### **Applications for Central Virginia Food Heritage Celebration**

The Cranberry Harvest festival represents one method of implementing

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<sup>18</sup> "History of Cranberries," The Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association, accessed May 5, 2012. <http://www.cranberries.org/cranberries/history.html>

<sup>19</sup> "Massachusetts Cranberry Industry Facts," The Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association, accessed May 5, 2012. [http://www.cranberries.org/images/2009\\_neig2neig\\_cover3.jpg](http://www.cranberries.org/images/2009_neig2neig_cover3.jpg)

<sup>20</sup> Bolton, "Berried Treasures"

<sup>21</sup> "Cranberry Harvest Celebration"

locally significant, or heritage, food celebration. The first idea I will explore in this paper developed from this example. Thus, my first recommendation is to encourage and promote partnerships with corporations or public institutions in order to acquire space and funding for festivals and heritage food celebrations.

In the Thomas Jefferson Planning District, the University of Virginia is one of the largest employers, and can supply a large audience and attention. The University could partner with a local grower to support a satellite festival on University grounds in order to reach the student market, and to make the celebration of heritage foods accessible to the University community, including faculty and staff, many of whom commute to the City for work from other counties in the planning district.

Another means of collaboration with the University is through the health system, which could partner with several local farmers and producers to support an educational day for employees and students that also supports local heritage foods as a means of health awareness. This idea would align well with an existing program, called Hoos Well, the University of Virginia's comprehensive wellness program for employees. The program sponsors educational sessions, counseling, health screenings, and fitness activities for employees to promote healthy lifestyles.<sup>22</sup> The Hoos Well program could incorporate an additional educational element about the power of local and heritage foods in promoting wellness. Through a partnership with the University of Virginia, these ideas present several ways of giving both local and heritage food higher visibility in the community.

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<sup>22</sup> University of Virginia Health System, Hoos Well website, <http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/pub/occupational-health/UVA-WorkMed-Hoos-Well.html>



## CASE STUDY 2: THE NORTH CAROLINA APPLE FESTIVAL IN HENDERSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

The Hendersonville Apple Festival takes place annually over Labor Day, and has been in operation for sixty-five years. The festival events include a street fair with freshly picked apples, arts and crafts, festival food, entertainment, the “King Apple” parade and an 8k run.<sup>23</sup> On average, the festival draws over 250,000 attendants per year,<sup>24</sup> and in 2010, over \$12 million was contributed to the Hendersonville area economy as a result of the festival.<sup>25</sup> Each year the festival honors a local high school student as an “Apple Ambassador” to represent the festival, who also receives a college scholarship. The Apple Ambassador is a program sponsored by the North Carolina Apple Growers Association, which is the primary apple promoter in the state.<sup>26</sup>

The apple is one of the most important crops grown in Hendersonville County, and has been part of the County’s culture and heritage since the mid-1700s.<sup>27</sup> Today there are about two hundred apple growers in the County, and the industry brings in an average income of \$22 million or more per year.<sup>28</sup> Henderson County grows sixty-five percent of all apples in North Carolina, and North Carolina is the seventh largest apple-producing state in the nation.<sup>29</sup> In Henderson County alone, there are thirty-three apple producers and retailers.<sup>30</sup> During the spring apple blossom and the fall harvest tours, apple farms are open for the public to visit in the region, in addition to the farm stands

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<sup>23</sup> North Carolina Apple Festival “Festival highlights”

<sup>24</sup> North Carolina Apple Festival “Interested Vendors”

<sup>25</sup> North Carolina Apple Festival “Sponsorship”

<sup>26</sup> “The Apple Industry in Henderson County Then & Now”

<sup>27</sup> “Henderson County NC Apple Industry History and Heritage,” Blue Ridge Farm Direct Market Association.

<sup>28</sup> “The Apple Industry in Henderson County Then & Now”

<sup>29</sup> Weibel, “Apples are King in Hendersonville, North Carolina”

<sup>30</sup> North Carolina Farm Fresh

selling fresh local apples.<sup>31</sup> These extra events also help to bring in visitors to the area and allow them to spend more time there.

To reflect the importance of the apple in the County, apple sculptures are dispersed throughout downtown Hendersonville, serving as both a symbol of the local economy and of the art and culture of the region and its local artists and apple sculpture sponsors.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from the festival, Henderson County is also involved in the North Carolina Ten Percent Campaign with two local foods coordinators supporting the campaign from the County. The North Carolina Ten Percent Campaign is newly launched, and aims to promote local foods through the encouragement of consumers and businesses to spend ten percent of their food dollars on food from local sources. Through the campaign website, consumers and businesses can pledge to purchase food products from area farmers and food producers.<sup>33</sup> This campaign is another way in which the state, and Henderson County, is supporting local food. Because the apple is such a big part of the region's food industry and history, the campaign also supports the region's heritage food market.

### **Applications for Central Virginia Food Heritage Celebration**

The second idea for developing food heritage celebration in the TJPD is to promote the spending of food dollars, both public and private, on heritage food sources through campaigns and festivals. Currently, the Virginia Food System Council has

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<sup>31</sup> "The Story of North Carolina's Apple Heritage" (audio clip)

<sup>32</sup> Weibel, "Apples are King in Hendersonville, North Carolina"

<sup>33</sup> The 10% Campaign

established a ten-dollar per week challenge to buy local food,<sup>34</sup> which is similar to North Carolina's ten percent campaign. The challenge is based on the calculation that if every Virginian spends at least ten dollars a week on locally grown foods and beverages, a \$1.65 billion investment would be made back into the local economy.<sup>35</sup> This kind of investment keeps money in the region, and supports local jobs and food producers.

However, my recommendation takes the challenge one step further—urging the five-county region to adopt a subsidiary challenge, to spend a certain number of those dollars on *heritage food* from the region. If two dollars, out of the ten spent on local food, are spent on heritage food, that is about \$24.5 million spent annually.<sup>36</sup> To further strengthen this campaign, local governments should pledge to devote a certain percentage of their food dollars on local and heritage sources to set an example to residents of their jurisdictions, and to public support local and heritage food producers and retailers.

These types of challenges support the celebration of food heritage because it raises awareness and serves as an educational tool to support local food producers, many of who are raising heritage foods. They are a means of working with local governments to give both local and heritage foods “a higher priority and more visibility,” a recommendation given in a report aimed to develop a community-based food system in a nearby Virginia county.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Bell.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Note: This calculation is made based on 2010 census data for the five counties and one city in the TJPD, with a population of 234,712.

<sup>37</sup> Bendfeldt, et. al, 2.

### CASE STUDY 3: THE JOURNEY THROUGH HALLOWED GROUND NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are places where “natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally, important landscape... [they] tell nationally important stories that celebrate our nation’s diverse heritage. NHAs are lived-in landscapes.”<sup>38</sup> The Journey Through Hallowed Ground (JTHG) was designated by Congress in September 2007 as the 38<sup>th</sup> National Heritage Area, and is “where America happened,” as well as the self-proclaimed “most historic region in the nation.”<sup>39</sup> The President of the JTHG partnership, Cate Magennis Wyatt, lists three overarching themes of the Area: it is a land of leadership, a land of conflict and reunification, and a land of outstanding natural beauty.<sup>40</sup> These themes establish the area as cohesive and unified, as a series of places that have common threads to be enjoyed and appreciated as a whole. Although the designation as a Heritage Area does not provide the corridor, a 175-mile region reaching from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to Charlottesville, Virginia,<sup>41</sup> with concrete protection, it does serve as an educational tool, promoting awareness to outside visitors and residents alike of the extreme importance of the Route 15 historic corridor.

The JTHG Heritage Area aims “to preserve, support, conserve, and interpret the legacy of the American history created along the Heritage Area.”<sup>42</sup> This purpose is the overlying goal of all Heritage Areas, and is accomplished through programming and educational opportunities organized by the Journey partnership. Another purpose

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<sup>38</sup> “What are National Heritage Areas?”

<sup>39</sup> The Journey Through Hallowed Ground, *Welcome... To Where America Happened*.  
<http://www.hallowedground.org/>

<sup>40</sup> Cate Magennis Wyatt, lecture at the University of Virginia, September 21, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area Act, H.R. 319. April 17, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area Act.

is “to promote heritage, cultural and recreational tourism and to develop educational and cultural programs for visitors and the general public.”<sup>43</sup>

Generating about 419.2 billion per year in revenue, tourism is one of Virginia’s largest industries. In 2008, it supported 210,620 jobs, according to a Virginia Tourism Corporation Study in 2009. Further, tourism related to JTHG-related commemorations and other events was projected to increase the number of visitors to the Heritage Area twofold.<sup>44</sup> The promotion of heritage and history has a strong draw for tourists and is a means of safeguarding and remembering a region’s important history.

### **Applications for Central Virginia Food Heritage Celebration**

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground, and the concept of a National Heritage Area generally, provide a model for preserving and showcasing food heritage on a regional scale. The third idea presented in this paper is to create a regional heritage food area that tells the stories of important food heritage and history in the region. The primary purpose of this regional food heritage area is to develop a cohesive and comprehensive grouping of sites—farms, retailers, restaurants, festivals, related historic sites—that contribute to the “regional heritage foodshed.”

By creating a system that links these different sites, a cohesive story is told about why these foods and this history is important. Gary Nabhan, sometimes called the “father of the local food movement,”<sup>45</sup> uses the term “experiential tourist” to refer to

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Jones, “Orange Downtown Alliance Partners with Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership to Train Tourism and Retail Ambassadors.”

<sup>45</sup> Nabhan’s personal website, <http://garynabhan.com/i/about/contact-gary>.

tourism that is connected to place, and includes heritage and agricultural tourism.<sup>46</sup>

Celebrations can be considered a kind of “value-added initiative,” that brings extra attention and support for a product through the experiential nature of the event, and the economic benefits of being a tourist attraction.<sup>47</sup>

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There are numerous possibilities for developing food heritage celebrations in the Thomas Jefferson Planning District. This paper has explored and recommended the following three ideas for immediate consideration.

- 1) Encourage and promote partnerships with corporations or public institutions in order to acquire space and funding for festivals and heritage food celebrations.
- 2) Promote the spending of food dollars, both public and private, on heritage food sources through campaigns and festivals.
- 3) Create a regional food heritage area that tells the stories of important food heritage and history in the region.

#### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

One of the most important things to remember about the fostering and celebration of food heritage is that the local residents and community members can experience, in the words of Donovan Rypkema, “a renewed appreciation for and pride in their local city and its history.”<sup>48</sup> Although Rypkema makes this statement in reference to heritage tourism and historic preservation, it also applies to food heritage. It is that

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<sup>46</sup> Nabhan, 21.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>48</sup> Rypkema, 4.

pride and sense of community and connections to place that make the celebration of food heritage so important. Economic benefits are often the means of “making the case,” and are welcome advantages, but ultimately what needs to be considered is quality of life, and the preservation of local, or regional heritage—what makes a place unique and special.

Food heritage has the potential to bridge the gap that has been created between producer and consumer, the land and its people, the community, and its history. Heritage and history fosters these connections, and food is a time-honored tradition of bringing people together. With Charlottesville, Virginia named the “locavore capital of the world” by *Forbes* in 2011,<sup>49</sup> the region is poised to take the lead in developing food heritage. Food heritage celebrations can be used as the means of forging these connections to place, to the community, and to food, and to begin to re-establish the region’s unique cultural identity before it is lost.

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<sup>49</sup> Denckla Cobb, 1.

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