



HERITAGE FOOD RETAIL: STRATEGIES FOR CENTRAL VIRGINIA

Virginia Food Heritage: Planning for Sustainability & Resilience
University of Virginia Spring 2012
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INTRODUCTION

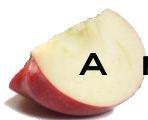
Planning for heritage food is an untapped resource that can be used to strengthen a local food system. This paper outlines strategies that planners and policy makers in Central Virginia can take to facilitate the retail of heritage food through regional and community initiatives. The paper is organized in two parts. **Part I** presents an overview defining and exploring scales of food systems, presenting key players and past proposals/actions in the region, and finally, considering the benefits associated with heritage food.

Part II presents specific recommendations based on and including case studies from food policy leaders around the country. These recommendations include first, a three-step approach to (1) identify, (2) certify, and (3) market heritage food, second, licensing stipulations and financial incentives to encourage the sale of heritage food, and finally, establishment of a Regional Food Policy Council in order to achieve a truly resilient local and heritage-based food system.

To frame this topic of heritage food, first some context will be provided by “zooming out” to some broader definitions. Thus we will see that heritage food is not a niche unto itself, but part of a much larger system as a whole.

PART 1: ESSENTIAL CONTEXT

KEY DEFINITIONS



A FOOD SYSTEM, as defined by the American Planning Association's Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning, is "the flow of products from production, through processing, distribution, consumption, and the management of wastes, and associated processes."¹ Conventional food systems operate on economies of scales, maximizing profit while ignoring costs, both environmental and social. Sustainable, regionally-based food systems are interdependent and dynamic processes that can provide a community a layer of resilience and self-reliance.



THE LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT is a

“collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies - one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution, and consumption are integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place.”² The local food movement ties into a broader concept of promoting locally produced goods and services as opposed to large corporate entities. Localism has many benefits-- dollars and jobs that remain in a community, building relationships with producers and retailers,

promoting self-sufficiency and local control, are just a few (see the text box at the right for more benefits).

Food systems may seem like a relatively new concept in the planning profession, but in looking back to the City Beautiful and Garden Cities movements in the early 20th century, planners were indeed advocating for access to fresh, healthy food.³ However, with the rise of industrial agriculture and globalizing food markets, planners, perhaps thinking too much like

LOCAL FOOD BENEFITS

Every job in agriculture and related industries results in an additional 1.5 jobs and \$1.75 to the Virginia economy.

If \$10 of Virginian's weekly food budget went towards local food, \$1.65 billion would be generated annually.

On average, food travels 1,300-1,500 miles “from farm to fork.” Eating locally can drastically reduce these numbers, and the associated fuel emissions, carbon footprint, energy wasted, etc.

Increased consumption of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fresh foods has been shown to reduce diet-related healthcare costs.

Source: <http://virginiafoodsystemcouncil.org>

economists, began to lose sight of the importance of a local food movement in terms of resilience and food security.



RETAIL is the sale of goods. It is essential, when considering a local food movement, to address the sale of food via various retail methods. Retail involves the purchase of food through one of two venue types: direct and indirect.⁴ Direct Retail venues include:

- Farmers Markets and Roadside Stands,
- Community Supported Agriculture Programs, and
- Food Carts/Trucks.

Indirect venues for food retail include:

- Grocery and Corner Stores,
- Restaurants, and
- Schools and Hospitals.

This paper will touch upon some of the efforts that are currently underway around the country and here in the Thomas Jefferson Planning District in strengthening the retail of local food; however, the paper's ultimate objective is to persuade planners that *heritage food* can play an equally important role in the local food movement that is part of a regional food system.



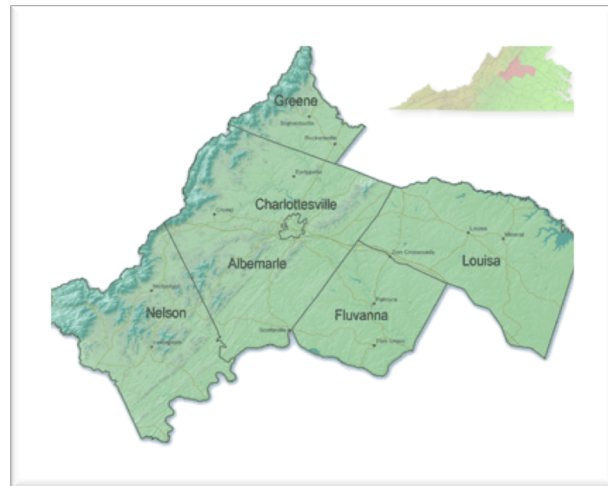
HERITAGE FOODS are those that are unique to a particular region or a community. Traditional ingredients, preparation techniques, timeliness or method

of eating are all ways to identify heritage food.⁵ Food is more than just a means of sustenance; it is telling of social traditions and ties to the land. Heritage foods tell a story about a place, and communities across the county are making efforts to strengthen their economies by drawing on the aspects that are unique to their region. This paper will expand benefits of and strategies for planning for food heritage retail; however, first we must consider the stakeholders.

WHO IS AT THE TABLE?

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District, located in Central Virginia, includes the City of Charlottesville and surrounding Albemarle, Nelson, Greene, Fluvanna, and Louisa Counties. The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) is responsible for planning oversight



TJPDC 5-County Region

in the 5-county area. Specifically, Planning District Commissions “promote the efficient development of the physical, social, and economic policies of all districts by assisting local governments to plan for the future.”⁶ Comprised of

elected officials and citizens appointed by the local government, TJPDC provides technical and program services to localities such as:

- Regional economic development planning;
- Land use planning services; and
- Holding regional forums and meetings regarding regional cooperation on issues such as sustainability and growth management.⁷

While food system are not specifically mentioned in TJPDC's activities, clear corollaries can be draw when the following is considered:

1. Food system activities take up a significant amount of land, and much of Central Virginia is agricultural in nature;
2. Planners play a role in dealing with hunger as well as obesity issues;
3. Food systems are a factor in regional and community economies; and
4. There are ancillary benefits for community with strong local food systems.⁸

TJPDC seems to be in support of food-based planning initiatives. Their website lists past "E.A.T. Local" (Everyone At the Table) events, in which interested parties convened to discuss "enhancing the sustainability of the larger Charlottesville regional foodshed."⁹

University of Virginia

In 2006, students from the School of Architecture, Department of Urban + Environmental Planning prepared a preliminary assessment on the Charlottesville region food system, considering questions of food security, food production, and food distribution services.¹⁰ The report found many

assets to the Charlottesville food system, including numerous farmers markets, farmland protection, and high demand for locally grown food; however, it also identified quite a few barriers for the region. These included high cost of living for farmers, difficulties for year round food-production, and an aging farmer population, as well as the lack of a food processing and distribution center to connect farmers to retailers.

In 2008, students from the UVA School of Architecture, and Darden School of Business (MUEP and MBA programs, respectively) prepared a study for the Jefferson Area Board on Aging (JABA) assessing the state of the local food system.¹¹ The report offered suggestions on how JABA and other area institutions can integrate local foods into their purchasing.

FOOD SECURITY

"Community food security is a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice."

-Mike Hamm & Anne Bellows

Source: <http://www.foodsecurity.org>

Jefferson Area Board on Aging

JABA is a strong leader in the local food movement. The mission of JABA is: “to promote, establish and preserve sustainable communities for healthy aging that benefits individuals and families of all ages.”¹² In 2007, JABA assembled a local food advisory board consisting of faculty and staff from UVA’s School of Architecture and Darden School of Business, Aramark Dining Services, Piedmont Environmental Council, and local restaurant and grocery store owners, politicians, and farmers to guide this initiative.¹³

One of the recommendations resulting from a 2009 report prepared for JABA by Lisa Hardy suggested that an organization be created that could:

1. Develop a network to facilitate communication and collaboration among producers, organizations and community members interested in local food systems issues;
2. Make policy recommendations;
3. Identify and assist with fundraising opportunities; and
4. Help coordinate and develop programs.¹⁴

In 2009 a recommendation from TJPDC staff member Billie Campbell was put forward to TJPDC Commissioners to act as host for this above-mentioned organization called the Local Food Connection. The resolution did not pass due to various factors, including limited staff time to devote to this initiative, as well

as the stipulation that TJPDC would need to file an application for non-profit status even though JABA offered to pay attorney costs associated with this application and to handle the filing.¹⁵ One of the key recommendations of this paper is to reconsider this notion, not only in regards to local food, but with the addition of a heritage food component. It is hoped that the multiple benefits associated with these complementary movements can be realized.

Piedmont Environmental Council

One of the Piedmont Environmental Council's many successful endeavors has been the establishment of Charlottesville's chapter of the Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign.¹⁶ Buy Fresh Buy Local is national program coordinated by FoodRoutes Network, a nonprofit organization based in Pennsylvania.¹⁷ The PEC creates food guides, organizes events, and raises awareness about local food and productive agricultural land.

Local Food Hub

Created in 2009, the Local Food Hub grew out of funding from several sponsors, one of which was the PEC.¹⁸ The Local Food Hub assists with aggregating, distributing, sales and marketing, and most importantly, helps to ensure farmers a consistent revenue stream.¹⁹

It is clear that the region is committed to enhancing the sale of local foods. However, there is a yet-unrealized market for heritage foods to become a viable commodity.

KNOWING OUR PAST, GROWING OUR FUTURE²⁰

Heritage Food is an untapped resource in the region. Food heritage has the potential to affect regional ecology, economy, and social well-being. In terms of biodiversity, genetic variations in the food we grow and eat will be paramount in the survival of humankind. This paper will not focus on biodiversity and genetically modified food issues, but it is important to recognize the role that heritage and heirloom foods can play in this debate.

We know that “dollars spent in our community have a multiplier effect.”²¹ The Virginia Food Systems Council identifies numerous ways in which local food stimulates the economy, promotes health, and supports thriving communities.²² Heritage Food has the potential to create a cohesive identity for a region, thus acting as an anchor for heritage tourism, festivals and celebrations. Heritage food is a component of a community’s shared history. This paper seeks to identify ways in which a community can tap into its history and adopt policies strengthening its food heritage and reaping the associated benefits. The paper is specifically focused, however, on retail aspects of planning efforts.

PART 2: POLICY IDEAS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Three main recommendations are based on research from nationwide case studies examples. The recommendations are listed and will be addressed in the second part of this paper:

Develop a 3-step approach to (1) Identify, (2) Certify, and (3) Market Heritage Foods.

Consider licensing stipulations and financial incentives for business to buy and sell fresh (baseline), local (better), and heritage (ideal) foods.

Establish a Regional Food Policy Council with a Heritage Food Component.

A THREE-STEP APPROACH

Certified food products as a form of intellectual property rights are not a novel idea to the United States. In 1880, a New York firm trademarked “Philadelphia Brand” Cream Cheese; in 1892 the trademark for Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce was registered in the US (not in the shire of Worcester, England).²³ Brands and labels instill trust in the consumer. In more recent years, and with

the increasingly efficient movement of food on a global scale, a demand has grown for year-round access to formerly seasonal foods. At the same time, “localized traditions” have emerged from different regions hoping to capitalize on increased recognition to consumers around the world. For example, the South is known for its “soul food,” the Northeast - for lobster and clams, the Midwest - for cheese and dairy.²⁴

Increased consumer interest in place-based foods has given rise to new levels of association. Through the support of state agencies, successful marketing campaigns and, in some cases, intellectual property right protection (trademarking or Geographical Indicators), several specific products have become associated with particular places in the United States. These include Idaho potatoes, Georgia Vidalia onions and peaches, Florida oranges, Maine blueberries, Washington apples, and Jersey tomatoes.²⁵

While some of these states have pursued specific laws and codes to protect and copyright these foods, most states utilize more general marketing campaigns to further the sale of their regional goods. Therefore, planners should consider the following Three-Step Approach to strengthen the sale of heritage food in the region.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY

If planners wish to pursue a campaign to certify and market heritage food in Central Virginia, the first step is to assess and define what these foods are. Fortunately, this work is currently underway, by way of the Virginia Food Heritage Project (VFHP), a collaborative, community-based project housed within the Institute of Environmental Negotiation at the University of Virginia. A primary focus of the organization is an assessment of “at-risk, threatened, and endangered place-based heritage foods, seeds, and animal breeds unique to the central Piedmont.”²⁶ Their work is funded by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities as well as a UVA Academic Community Engagement Grant. Billie Campbell, TJPDC Chief Operating Officer is an Advisory Partner to the VFHP.

As part of this Three-Step Recommendation, regional planners should continue to support the Virginia Food Heritage Project’s ongoing efforts to

THREE-STEP APPROACH

IDENTIFY: Partner with the Virginia Food Heritage Project and the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants to:

- 1) Establish Heritage Food Criteria
- 2) Identify Heritage Foods
- 3) Create a Central Virginia Heritage Food Guide

CERTIFY: In partnership with Piedmont Environmental Council, establish a *Central Virginia Heritage Food Certification* to:

- 1) Label heritage foods
- 2) Ensure integrity of product
- 3) Educate consumers and retailers

MARKET: Seek sponsorship for a regional food heritage marketing campaign in order to:

- 1) Advertise and promote product
- 2) Support regional farmers
- 3) Keep more food dollars in the five county area

both establish criteria for and identify heritage foods in Central Virginia.

An additional recommendation is to generate and publish a “Central Virginia Heritage Food Guide,” cataloging the variety of identified heritage foods in the region.

One potential partner in this endeavor is the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants. Although the program has a primary focus on the plants that Thomas Jefferson grew at Monticello, it includes broader plants cultivated in America.²⁷ An interesting component to their program could include more vernacular and heritage-based foods as well.

An additional and very fitting partner is Piedmont Environmental Council and the Buy Fresh Buy Local program. Buy Fresh Buy Local’s food guide could be adapted to spotlight regional *heritage* as well as local food producers.

STEP 2: CERTIFY

Once heritage foods have been identified, a certification process should be considered. This certification should include a label of origin, for example, “Certified Central Virginia Heritage Food”. As mentioned above, Geographic Indicators have been proven to “foster market-based support for local traditions and cultures,”²⁸ and serve as an economic driver; however, these efforts usually

CASE STUDIES



Fair Food Philly, in partnership with the SVF Foundation, is working to raise consumer awareness about heritage breed animals by identifying the meat, dairy, and eggs from heritage breed products animals sold at the Fair Food Farmstand, the retail arm of the organization.

Products that contain at least 50% heritage breed stock can be **labeled** a “Fair Food Heritage Breed.”



The Missouri Regional Cuisines Project (MRCP) seeks to market Missouri wine and food products using labels of origin from distinct ecological regions. It is hoped that though identification, Missouri products will achieve greater recognition and increased economic opportunities.

The project is in its pilot stage, currently developing standards for an “eco-region” named the Mississippi River Hills, a six-county portion of Missouri.

Sources: <http://www.fairfoodphilly.org/>,
<http://extension.missouri.edu/cuisines/>

require state-support to administer.

Therefore, it is recommended that regional planners consider a “softer” policy of certification. Two examples of these programs, Fair Food Philly²⁹ and Missouri Regional Cuisines,³⁰ are listed in the text box at the left.

One rapidly growing industry in Central Virginia is that of wine and artisanal beer. If criteria find these to be heritage-based, then the region stands to greatly benefit from a certification and labeling strategy that could bolster the entire industry.

STEP 3: MARKET

The final recommendation in the Three-Step Approach is to seek sponsorship (or that an organization to assume responsibility for) a marketing campaign to promote Central Virginia Certified Heritage Foods at a local,

state, and national level. Efforts such as Buy Fresh Buy Local have made tremendous strides in promoting the sale of local food; it is argued that a heritage food marketing campaign could be just as successful in keeping food dollars within the region, promoting a regional pride and identity, and exposing the region to a broader audience to further capitalize on heritage tourism efforts. The Rutgers Cooperative Extension, an organization that is partially funded through grant money provided by the [New Jersey] Department of Agriculture,³¹ is highlighted in the text box at the right.

CASE STUDY

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension's merchandising project is committed to helping New Jersey farmers sell their produce in a variety of retail locations. From restaurants to grocery chains and pharmacies, the program uses marketplace strategies to build consumer awareness and bridge gap between farmers and retailers, and increase local visibility in a crowded marketplace.

Source: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu>

HEALTHY, LOCAL, AND HERITAGE FOOD AND LICENSING

The second main recommendation to local and regional planners is based on research looking at innovative healthy food licensing stipulations and financial incentives. Places such as Minneapolis, Minnesota and Buffalo, New York are using licensing law to require food retailers in their communities to carry fresh produce and other healthy foods.

In a Public Health Law and Policy (PHLP)-sponsored webinar "Licensing Laws: A Strong Tool for Healthy Food" on Tuesday, March 13th, 2012, various speakers

discussed how healthy food licenses work in their communities. Ian McLaughlin, Senior Staff Attorney for PHLP, provided an overview on business licensing as a policy solution. Licenses, as opposed to laws, are ways to carry out policy decisions. A function of the police power, licenses not only register businesses, but also determine or allow who can do business, where they can locate, what conditions must be met, and finally, how these conditions will be enforced.³² Licenses offer several advantages over zoning - they can apply to new *and* existing businesses and are generally more flexible in nature.

Under review by Center for Disease Control, the PHLP has developed a Model Ordinance for Healthy Food Retailers, a policy guide for localities. For example, local governments could adopt a business ordinance that requires the following:



Corner stores should offer more healthy, local, and heritage foods

- Fresh produce, staple foods (dairy, proteins, & whole grains
- Participation in Federal Nutrition Assistance (SNAP and WIC) programs
- Incentives* for retailers who exceed standards.³³

* Incentives include expedited processing of licenses/permits, reduced or waived fees, technical or financial assistance (like loans), tax incentives or exemptions, and marketing and promotion

Planners in the region should consider the benefits of healthy food licensing and consider a range of requirements and incentives targeted first - at increasing healthy food choices in stores, second - at sourcing food locally and third - promoting the sale of heritage foods in the region.

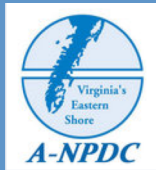
REGIONAL FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

As a means to make all of the above mentioned policy recommendations more feasible, planners should support the establishment of Regional Food Policy Council. A Regional Food Policy Council could engage in some, or all, of these recommendations, and would serve as a united, cohesive voice to facilitate

stronger connections between food producers and retailers. It is recommended that the TJPDC reconsider the notion of a Regional Food Policy Council that was suggested in 2009 and mentioned in Part I of this paper.

A Regional Food Policy Council would be poised to capture state and federal monies (see the textbox at the right for

CASE STUDY



Located on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (ANPDC) received funding from USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) to develop a Regional Food System Policy.

A Regional Food Policy Council was formed to work on the goals of the grant, including an assessment of the current agricultural system in the context of local food.

Source: <http://www.a-npdc.org/news0512.pdf>

an example of a RPO that has achieved such funding),³⁴ as well as private donations or institutional grants. A Regional Food Council is a necessary effort in order to achieve a truly resilient local and heritage-based food system.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented the benefits associated with heritage food as a component of local food planning. To facilitate the sale of heritage food in Central Virginia, local and regional planners and policy makers should consider the three main recommendations that have been explored in this paper. Heritage food is a unique and untapped resource in Central Virginia, and one that is ripe for the picking.



Albemarle Pippin Apple

Images Used:

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Tomatoes.jpg

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MRCP Logo: <http://extension.missouri.edu/cuisines/about.shtml>

Corner Store Shelf: <http://emilyhartphotography.com>

ANPDC Logo: <http://www.a-npdc.org/>

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