

Red Lodge Area Food Partnership Council

"A century ago, we spent more than half our money on food and clothes. Today, we spend more than half of our money on housing and transportation. Our ambitions turned from bread and shirts to ownership and highways" states Derek Thompson, senior editor at *The Atlantic*.



Indoor Farmers' Market – Thursday, May 10

Join us for the next Farmers' Market on Thursday, May 10 from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Elks Club in Red Lodge. With our warm, mild spring, fresh greens are popping! Our local farmers will have a variety of the freshest, local produce for your dining table. Compliment that with local meat, baked goods, herb and spice condiments and your dinner is ready. Don't miss out! For more information, contact Martha Brown at mbrown.mt@gmail.com or (406) 445-7214.

Poultry Clinic – Monday, May 14

Are you interested in learning how to breed, incubate and grow your own flock of heritage poultry? Then mark your calendars for May 14th. This clinic is being taught by Jim Adkins, International Center for Poultry.



Jim is a sustainable poultry specialist that gave a workshop here last July. He is a very knowledgeable and engaging speaker. Topics include breeding for preservation, art of incubation, care of baby chicks and poults. The course will take place at Happy-Go-Lucky Farm, 60 Two Mile Bridge Rd, Red Lodge from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. The cost is \$45, lunch included. To register, call Nicole Barlow at (406) 446-3645, or email nicole.barlow.5@gmail.com. Mail payment to Nicole Barlow, P.O. Box 2269, Red Lodge MT 59068.

FPC Annual Meeting – Thursday, May 17

All community members are invited and encouraged to attend the FPC annual meeting at 4 p.m. on Thursday, May 17th at the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation, 24 West 13th Street, in Red Lodge. The brief agenda will include a discussion of the community initiatives and successes of the past year and hearing from community members regarding what you think are the most important local food-related priorities for the next six months. For more information, contact Martha Brown at mbrown.mt@gmail.com or (406) 445-7214. Refreshments will be served; please join us!



Dance for the Garden – Saturday, May 19

Come celebrate and help support the brand new Community Youth Garden with a stomping good time at the Bull 'n Bear Ballroom on Saturday, May 19th, 6:00-10:00 pm. We all know this community takes a shine to a good contra dance, and this time it's for a great cause. The Pretty Good String Band are "pretty good musicians playing real good music" for your dancing and listening pleasure. They feature a unique mixture of Old Time String Music, Blue Grass, Country, Celtic and Western Swing. No experience necessary and all dances will be taught.

Accompanying the music will be (of course) good food and a silent auction. A \$10 donation is requested to support the Community Youth Garden - for fencing, seeds, tools, supplies, etc. (kids under 18 get in free). The Food Partnership Council and the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation are sponsoring this event. For more information, contact Alyssa Charney at redlodge.foodcorps@gmail.com or (406) 425-0492.

Local Food Access and Awareness Survey

We received requests from you, our readers, to extend the cutoff for our survey and we responded. Our local food access and awareness survey deadline has been extended to May 25. We ask the primary shopper in each household to complete the survey in order to help us better understand and meet the needs of our community and of our local agricultural producers. This information will be extremely helpful in developing our local food economy. The survey takes about 10-15 minutes. Please complete your survey by **May 25**. If you prefer a hard copy, please contact Janet Peterson at foodpartnership@gmail.com or (406) 425-3806.

Here's the link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/localaccess>

Community Gardens Expanded and Ready!

Believe it or not, gardening season is coming! For three years, the Rocky Mountain Flower Farm has hosted a community garden within their deer fence and have provided free water. Ten to twelve new to seasoned gardeners have enjoyed growing fresh produce each year for their families, and to share with the Baretooth Cupboards.

Last year, we had more requests than space for interested gardeners. Fortunately, Messiah Lutheran has offered space that borders the Flower Farm, and Red Lodge Ales gives us a very good rate on water. Last fall, we plowed under about 2,000 square feet and covered it with lots of manure. This spring, we're preparing the ground for planting and raising money for fencing.

These gardens are a wonderful community partnership that provides space for gardeners to grow food for their families and to share with Baretooth Cupboards. We still need someone to help us install the fencing - contact Martha Brown at (406) 445-7214. A huge thank you to Thrivent Financial, Rocky Mountain Flower Farm, Red Lodge Area Community Foundation, Red Lodge Ales, and Messiah Lutheran Church! Community gardeners wanted!!

Wine Tasting Event

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Babcock and Miles for selecting Food Partnership Council as the non-profit group to receive the donations from their recent wine tasting event. Thanks also to The Pollard for providing the space and staffing. This was a fun event with plenty of wine to taste, good venue and great conversation. Many initiatives will benefit from the funds we raised at this event; the development of an online "Food Hub" for streamlining the local producer/consumer connection, funding another year of the Food Corps position (which in turn benefits the farm-to-school initiative, the Community Youth Garden, nutrition education, etc.), Farmers' Market, and other efforts which support our food sources closer to home.



The Story of Poop: An Earth Day Experience

"So next time you see an animal around, whether it's a cow or a deer, a goat or a chicken, make sure you thank them for helping to make the soil that grows our wilderness and gardens."

And with those words of wisdom from local farmers Ivan Thrane and Chia Chen-Speidel, the next group of students jumped up to help spread two-year-old cow manure on the raised beds of the new Red Lodge Youth Garden. At first I was shocked by how eager they were to dig in, so as we filled up the wheelbarrow, I wanted to make sure they really knew what was in the pile.

"It's old cow poop!"

And why are we adding it to the soil?

"To feed our vegetables!"

Excellent.

The activity was part of an Earth Day celebration for kindergarten through fifth graders at the new Youth Garden. In addition to meeting Ivan and Chia's goats and helping to spread cow manure, the students also learned about recycling, ground wheat and made butter, and then enjoyed the local snack they had helped to create.

For some students and teachers, it was the first time they had seen the garden with its filled raised beds, hoop house structure, and tilled plots. Two days earlier, the Red Lodge community had come out in full force to build the garden. Thank you to all who made this happen.

At the end of the day I thought about how well Ivan and Chia's "story of poop" represents the interconnectedness of what we're building here. The manure is connected to local beef in the schools, to the fields where the cows graze, and to fresh produce that is sold throughout the area. These different components rely on each other, and together they form a sustainable food system.

Just as all the complexities of our food system (even the poop!) build sustainability, by bringing more and more youth and community members into the project, we're ensuring the sustainability of the garden for the years to come.

To read Alyssa's complete blog entry, go to <http://www.montanafoodcorps.org/2012/04/story-of-poop.html>.

How We Can Better Value What Nourishes Us

Note from the Food Partnership Council: Jacob and Courtney Cowgill own Prairie Heritage Farm near Conrad, Montana. We asked to share their thoughts in our newsletter.

We've been really struggling to figure out how in a depressed economy, when families are watching every penny, we can make the case for paying a little more for locally-produced food. And, how do we ensure that local food -- food that's produced ethically and with community and health in mind - - doesn't just become, for lack of a better descriptor, designer food?

In our own small world, we've recently been feeling some pressure, from let's just call them false CSAs. As you might know, CSA stands for "Community Supported Agriculture" and this type of direct-marketing has blossomed in the last 10 years as a wonderful, sustainable way to sell and support local food. Basically, you "buy-in" to the farm at the beginning of the season and you reap the benefits when the farm starts bearing fruit. It connects farmer with eater.

Because of the popularity of CSAs, false CSAs have started to pop up -- programs that package like a CSA, but source the produce from all over, including globally, and dramatically undercut both the economics and the spirit of the CSA concept.

..... if price is the only thing people care about, then whammo, we're in the wrong business.

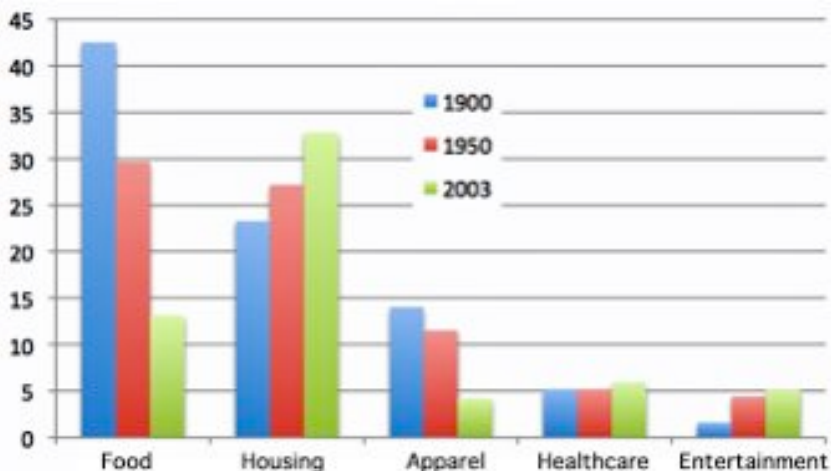
Basically, if we can't produce the cheapest food (which we absolutely can't -- we can't compete with the "efficiency" of our modern food system, year-round growing conditions abroad, cheap labor, etc.) what is our value proposition? Nutrition? Community? Environmental health?

To that end, I've been just fascinated by looking at this within a framework of household spending. We're now paying less for our food than any other time in the last century and I believe we're all suffering for it. Our health, our communities and our environment are all suffering for it. (See this recent piece from Time Magazine that explores the "[High Cost of Cheap Food](#).")

Yet, when we budget our money, we're happy to pay \$120 a month for cable packages or \$500 for an iPad, but an extra \$10 a week on groceries -- to pay for something we actually need to survive -- is sometimes where we draw the line.

This graph, showing the share of family spending per category over the 20th century, from [this recent Atlantic article](#) that illustrates this point well.

Now, I'm not saying that food shouldn't be affordable. It certainly should be. But, we need to more fully explore the difference between "affordable" and "cheap."



And, I would posit, that we also need to think about not only the monetary value we put on food, but also the nutritional, social, environmental value as well.

Still, as much as I believe all of that, we're really struggling with how to make the case to a family who is strapped for cash (and especially because we are certainly in that category) that the cost of their food shouldn't be their only concern.

That is to ask: How can we make local food "affordable" for all, but more importantly, how can we change the way we all see and value the food we put on our tables?

To read this blog in it's entirety, go to <http://www.prairieheritagefarm.com/2012/04/cheap-food-and-how-we-can-better-value.html>. We thank Jacob and Courtney for sharing their thought-provoking blog.



Have you tried?

What is quinoa? While quinoa is usually considered to be a whole grain, it is actually a seed, but can be prepared like grains such as rice or barley. Try a quinoa salad recipe, or serve a vegetable stir-fry over cooked quinoa instead of rice. Quinoa is a favorite whole grain for three reasons: First, it takes less time to cook than other whole grains – just 10 to 15 minutes. Second, quinoa tastes great on its own. Add a bit of olive oil, sea salt and lemon juice and - yum!

Finally, of all the whole grains, quinoa has the highest protein content, so it's perfect for vegetarians and vegans. Quinoa provides all 9 essential amino acids, making it a complete protein.

Want to get More Involved?

Join FPC at our annual meeting if you're interested in helping. The next meeting is May 17 at 4:00 p.m. We meet once per month at the Red Lodge Area Community Foundation, 24 West 13th Street in Red Lodge. Meetings include progress reports on subjects such as gardening, producer/consumer coordination, composting, and school food programs. Contact Martha Brown at mbrown.mt@gmail.com or call (406) 445-7214.

Suggested Reading

City Bountiful: A Century of Community Gardening in America by Laura J. Lawson

Growing a Garden City: How Farmers, First Graders, Counselors, Troubled Teens, Foodies, a Homeless Shelter Chef, Single Mothers, and More are ... of Local Agriculture and Community by Jeremy N. Smith, Chad Harder, Sepp Jannotta and Bill McKibben