



FARM TO FORK ALCONA NEWSLETTER SPRING 2020

This newsletter brought to you by Judy MacNeill

3rd Annual Alcona Small Farm Conference a success!



We were able to deliver our 3rd annual Alcona Small Farm Conference “under the wire” before COVID-19 struck! Two weeks after our Feb 28-29 event, our state and nation faced an unprecedented shutdown.

We count ourselves fortunate that we could bring to Alcona Zingerman’s very own Amy Emberling. Amy is the managing partner for Zingerman’s Bakehouse in Ann Arbor. Amy was our guest speaker for both Friday night and Saturday’s event. She surprised us by bringing with her the founder and managing partner of Zingerman’s Bakehouse, Frank Carollo. Together they presented the history of Zingerman’s Bakehouse and how their vision grew into a multi-million dollar business. They shared how they were able to take their passion and develop it into Zingerman’s Bakehouse, employing a staff of 80 and supplying over 100 wholesale customers with artisanal bread and pastries, a baking school, and a thriving mail order business.

Amy and Frank presented how businesses like theirs want and need farmers that can provide locally sourced ingredients...not only to reduce the ‘carbon footprint’, but to create a superior end product. They then brought out some unbelievable dishes for us to try...no one left hungry!



During her Friday night presentation, Amy demonstrated a Mockmill: a tabletop machine that allows the home-user to create their own flour using a variety of grains. What a great idea for those of us that like to make our own food: one more item to add to our toolbox!

Amy was the keynote speaker Saturday morning, addressing how to create a vision of greatness. She then launched into a workshop on creating your own vision of greatness. The evaluations were effusive in their praise for this workshop, describing it as a “powerful experience”, “great event”, “very enjoyable”, and “it was an excellent experience. I love it. It made me think”.

Amy commented on how impressed she is with Alcona, and would love to see someone(s) take the initiative to grow specialty grains...there is a market for this!

We were fortunate to also snag Doug Paulus, manager for the Northern Market in Grayling, to give us an update on development of the Northern Market.



Our Speaker panel then launched into discussing how to take your vision and bring your dreams to life. They addressed their own experiences, both pros and cons. It was fascinating hearing about each of the five speaker's experiences: Erin Quaine of Wild Hair Farms in Atlanta, James Glazier from Cedarbrook Trout Farms in Harrisville, Katherine Wilbur of New Sun Farms / Woodland Confectionary in Rogers City, Randy Mellberg of Grace Acres in Alpena, and Greg Konwinski from Hungry Hippie in Alpena. Each had a unique perspective on what works and what doesn't.

We wrapped up the day with a short presentation from Dan O'Connor, superintendent of Alcona Community Schools. Alcona Schools is known for their focus on agri-education. Dan was able expound on how Alcona is providing its students experiential outdoor learning through its acquisition of the acreage recently purchased, and what this will mean for future learning opportunities.

It would be impossible to provide a quality program that is affordable for attendees without financial support. Farm to Fork Alcona is very grateful for our generous sponsors that have helped us bring the Alcona Small Farm Conference to life: Carroll Broadcasting, Community Foundation of NE Michigan (CFNEM), the Erwin-VanKoughnett Family Fund, and many others. Please visit our website for a full list of our sponsors and learn how you can donate to Farm to Fork Alcona.



Once again, **Lost Lake Woods Club** did a great job of hosting the Alcona Small Farm Conference. The meals were excellent: French toast casserole and sausage for breakfast; lunch was beef pot pie, tomato salad, and a scrumptious apple dessert. Dawn Mikazes and the LLWC staff went out of their way to make sure we were able to offer a quality program. Ilona Breitmeyer deserves a huge round of applause for developing the menu and recipes and organizing the meals for the conference. Thank you!



Speaking of food, the following local farmers made sure we ate VERY WELL at this year's conference: Bill & Billie Thompson from **White Barn Gardens** in Harrisville supplied the eggs and onions; Adam & Madeline Beckta of **Wandering Winds Farm** in Spruce provided mushrooms and jelly; the greens and carrots came from Molly & Dion Stepanski of **Presque Isle Farms**; the beef came from Cindy and Gary Leeseberg of **Leeseberg Farms** in Harrisville; and Corey Standen from **Standen Acres** in Alpena supplied the pork.

The following generous donations were much appreciated: Boyd Byelich donated potatoes from Posen; **Alcona FFA** once again donated their delicious maple syrup; and **Whispering Leaf Farms** of Tawas donated tomatoes. And we would be remiss if we did not mention that **Zingerman's Bakehouse** donated ALL of the food that was served at Friday night's event. Without all of this, we could not have afforded to bring such a high quality (and delicious!) program to Alcona County.

Zingerman's
community of businesses



Whispering Leaf Farms

This event is made possible by the very hardworking people behind the scenes. A huge shout out to Mary Ellen Jones – without her we would have not been able to bring this year's event to life.

Our F2FA team, consisting of Mary Ellen, Marjorie Tait, Ilona Breitmeyer, Connor Hubbard, Boyd Byelich, Will St John, Denise Thompson, Adam Beckta, Marisa Tear and yours truly put in many, MANY hours to bring this year's conference to fruition. We had some pretty big challenges this year, and still were able to pull off a quality program. Thank you one and all!



And thank you, dear readers, for your generosity, interest, and enthusiasm in keeping Farm to Fork Alcona going. We are just a group of volunteers that believe in Alcona County. We feel that attracting young farmers to our region, while supporting the farmers we currently have is the secret sauce that will help make Alcona prosperous, healthy, and happy.

If you would like more information about Farm to Fork Alcona, please visit our website at: <https://f2falcona.org/>. You can also follow us on Facebook and Instagram!

