

PRODUCERS | CONNECTORS | PREPARERS

SEEDING A SYSTEM of

Local Food

INSIDE THE WORLD OF DIRT, TOIL AND FARMER TANS
THAT MAKE LOCAL FOOD HAPPEN.

WRITTEN BY MEGAN OLIVER

PHOTOS BY JOSHUA LANG

AS THE MORNING AIR TURNS CRISP, MONTHS OF LABOR COME TO FRUITION FOR LOCAL FARMERS AS THEY HARVEST THE LAST OF THEIR SUMMER CROPS. FARM DINNERS FLOURISH, CSAs OVERFLOW AND DINERS PAY EXTRA ATTENTION TO RESTAURANT SPECIALS.



Over the next seven pages, we'll celebrate a sampling of the region's growing bounty. We visited producers who sustainably farm and ranch this fickle yet rich Central Oregon climate; we talked to the creatives who prepare the feasts we get to enjoy and found the connectors who are tirelessly working to unify a growing community around a local food system. From hand-tilled soil to education and e-commerce, the common denominator is grit—these local food heroes have it.

ANATOMY *of a* LOCAL MEAL

Sunny Bowl

Rice and quinoa with coconut curry sauce, topped with vegetables and an egg, sunny-side up.

@ Golden Juice

Carrot, orange, turmeric, ginger, over ice.



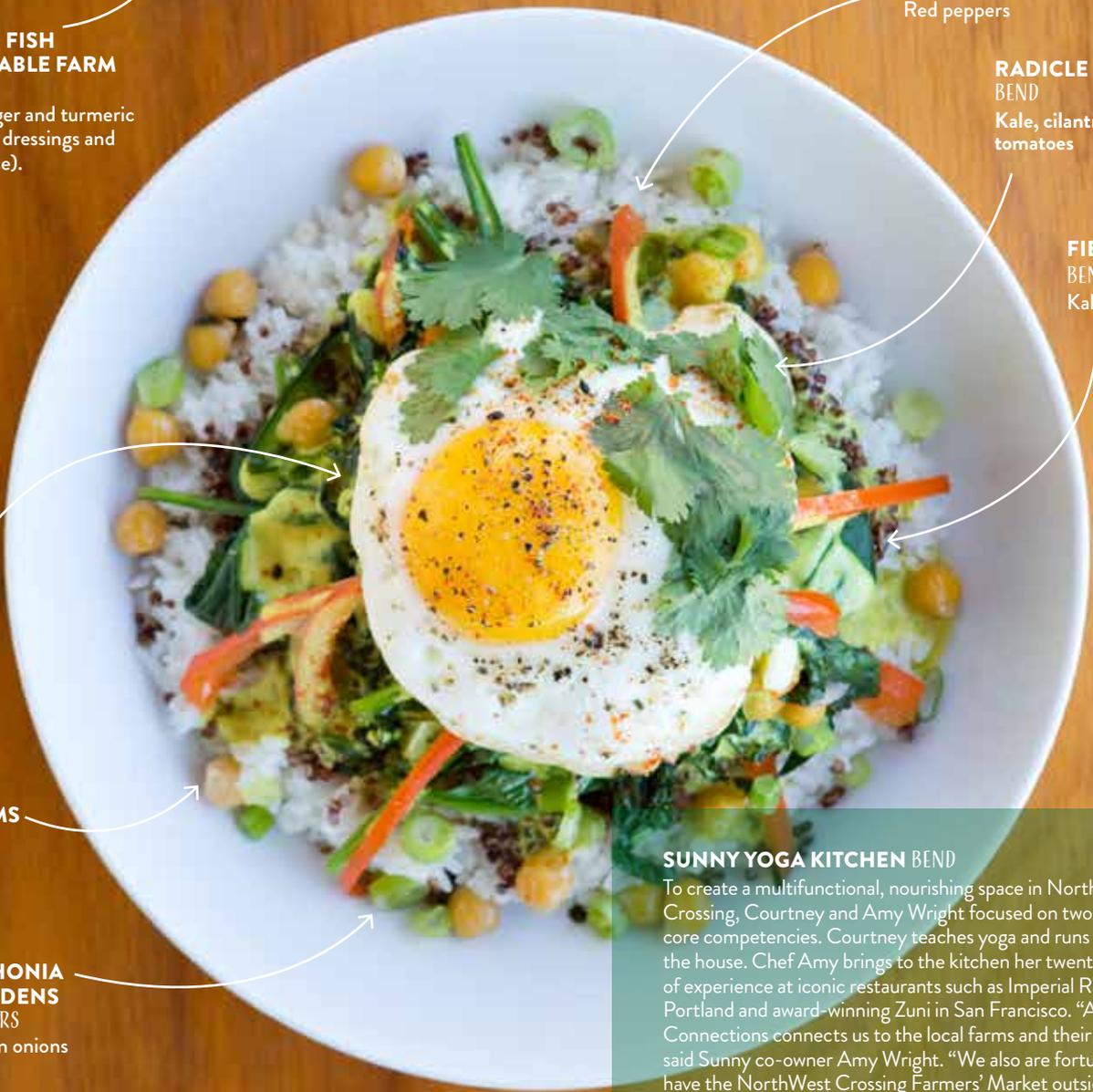
TUMALO FISH & VEGETABLE FARM
BEND

Young ginger and turmeric (in sauces, dressings and golden juice).

ORGANICALLY GROWN COMPANY
EUGENE
Red peppers

RADICLE ROOTS
BEND
Kale, cilantro, tomatoes

FIELDS FARM
BEND
Kale and cilantro



HOME FARM FOODS
CULVER

Local organic, animal welfare eggs

HARICOT FARMS
QUINCY, WA

Garbanzo beans

MAHONIA GARDENS SISTERS

Green onions

SUNNY YOGA KITCHEN BEND

To create a multifunctional, nourishing space in NorthWest Crossing, Courtney and Amy Wright focused on two of their core competencies. Courtney teaches yoga and runs the front of the house. Chef Amy brings to the kitchen her twenty-five years of experience at iconic restaurants such as Imperial Restaurant in Portland and award-winning Zuni in San Francisco. "Agricultural Connections connects us to the local farms and their products," said Sunny co-owner Amy Wright. "We also are fortunate to have the NorthWest Crossing Farmers' Market outside our door every Saturday through the summer where we can connect to our local farmers."



Fresh food. Grown sustainably. Consumed here, by you.

How do we reduce the average distance a piece of produce travels from farm to consumer in the United States from 1,500 miles to a country mile?

“Produce starts to lose nutrients as soon as it’s harvested,” said Food & Farm Director Jess Weiland of High Desert Food and Farm Alliance (HDFFA). The seven-year-old, Bend-based organization focuses on programs—from consumer education to marketing for farmers—that facilitate community access to fresh food that is grown sustainably within the local food system. “We want to make nutrition as easy as possible,” said Weiland. “We want to meet people where they are and be responsive to the community.”

Get a Taste

Taste Local Thursdays highlight a restaurant’s relationship with local farmers and ranchers, shining a spotlight on local ingredients. “Over and over we hear that people care about local food,” said

Weiland. “It’s availability in Central Oregon is a thing of pride here.”

Local Thursdays September

7 | Suttle Lodge

14 | 900 Wall

21 | Ochoco Brewing Co.

28 | Kokanee Café

Local Thursdays October

1-7 | Local Food Challenge: HDFFA will offer seven days of local food deals, prizes and opportunities to taste Central Oregon bounty.

Food and Farm Directory

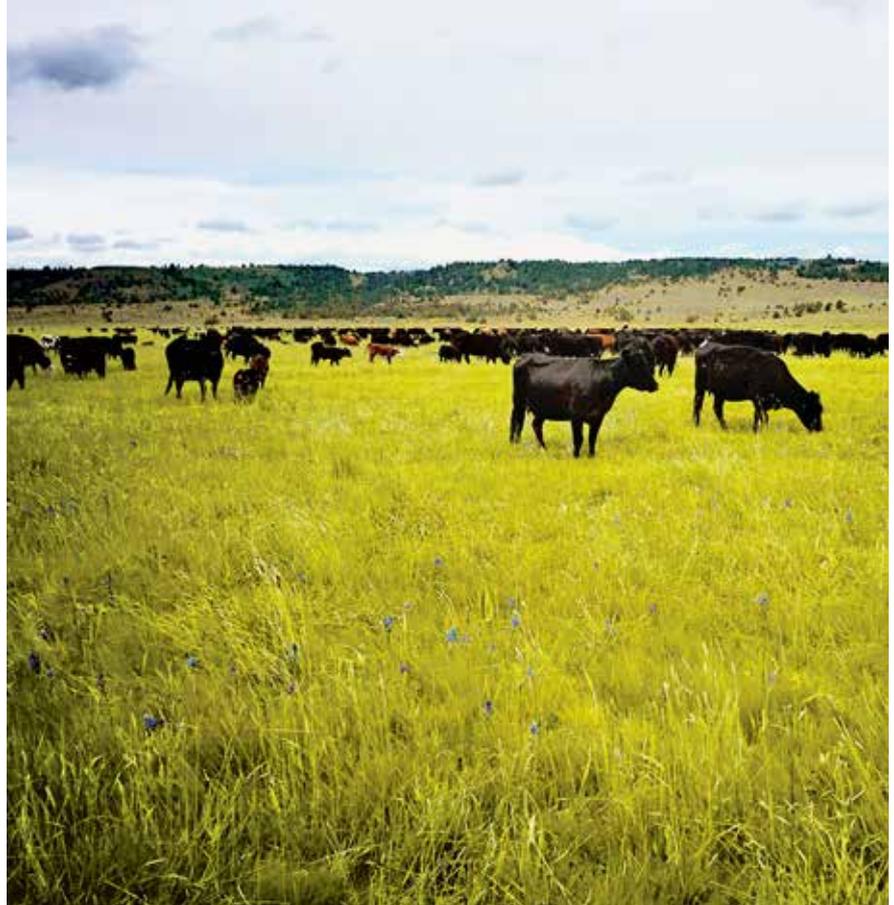
It’s free and it will whet your taste buds. The High Desert Food and Farm Directory, available in print and online at HDFFA.ORG, has sprouted from a trifold into a deeply rooted, 147-business strong resource for where to buy food grown locally. Sixty-two producers and eighty other food-related businesses filled last year’s

guide and Weiland said more are signing up. Farmers and businesses can enroll annually for a nominal fee to become an HDFFA partner. For partners who do online sales, the web directory links consumers directly to that producer’s e-commerce.

“So many—I would say around half—of local farmers also have other jobs. They are so busy,” said Weiland regarding the value of the directory as a centralized marketing tool for producers. “Farmers are really producing a lot but they may not have time to market it and develop distribution avenues. Providing more consumer access points is key.”

Cheap + Healthy = Possible

Preparing meals from scratch can be both healthful and economical with the right set of skills and some fresh ingredients. Part of a national curriculum implemented through state funding and carried out regionally by HDFFA using chef and nutritionist volunteers, **Cooking Matters** classes are available to food insecure families across Central Oregon this fall in six-week sessions. “Cooking with families naturally lends itself to a conversation about nutrition and food budgeting,” said Weiland. “There is an important link between food and health. This is preventative care.”



REGENERATIVE RANCHING

BLUE MOUNTAIN RANCH

“My grandfather owned a dairy for sixty years in Arizona and the whole time he dreamed of becoming a cattle rancher,” said Sarah Teskey, who bought Blue Mountain Ranch in Paulina with four generations of her family in 2006. “These 23,000 acres had a running water source, contiguous land next to BLM with forest

permits and enough property for cattle to support several families. My grandfather lived his last years with everything he had hoped and dreamed for in a ranch.”

Everyone in the family had farm or ranch experience prior to the move from Arizona to Oregon but not on this scale of raising cattle and managing grass. The relatives threw themselves into learning both on the rangeland and on the pages of the latest ranching literature. When they began to learn about holistic management, things clicked.

“Regenerative qualities. It’s a buzz word in ranching now,” said Teskey. “It’s past sustainable. We don’t just want to maintain land with holistic practices, we want to improve it.”

Blue Mountain operates on the principle that grass-fed and grass-finished beef provides the best benefit to the consumer because there are no additives or feed other than local forage. Beyond the consumer, the overall health of their 1,000 head of cattle and the land they graze are equally important priorities for the ranch.

“We believe that a holistic outlook will eventually become what’s best for the pocketbook over the long arc,” said Teskey who, along with her husband, is raising two boys on the ranch.

Their grazing practices maximize growth of nutrient-dense forage, which in turn promotes the soil’s microbial functions and regenerative processes. Blue Mountain times the start of their calving season later in the spring than many ranches do, in order to “reduce the loss that can happen with winter calving and maximize high-energy protein intake by grazing cattle on grass instead of hay when they are about to give birth,” said Teskey.

“The key is to evaluate what you’re doing,” she said. “Is it because it’s the way it’s always been done or because the neighbors do it or because it’s what’s best for our operation, our land, our specific location? It’s a paradigm shift.”

Blue Mountain’s beef is available for purchase by quarter, half or whole animal. Go to BLUEMOUNTAINRANCH.COM

>> Visit BENDMAGAZINE.COM/BLUEMOUNTAIN to read about a year in the life of a Blue Mountain cow.

WELLNESS through FOOD EDUCATION

SEED TO TABLE

On Seed to Table's (S2T) wellness education-focused farm plot, Sisters' students and adults participate in farm based education covering nutrition, science, art, business management, the basics of growing ones' own food, the importance of supporting local farmers and physical activity. Through growing its own food and sourcing food from Oregon farmers, the nonprofit provides fresh produce to families through affordable produce shares, plus distribution to Sisters Kiwanis Food Bank, Bread of Life Food Bank and the Sisters School District.

20,000 pounds of S2T farm-grown food will go to the Sisters community this year.

1,300 students from Central Oregon schools receive S2T farm education each year, totaling **10,000+ hours** of student involvement on the farm.

400 hours of adult participation in S2T community presentations.

12,500 pounds of nutritious, locally grown and processed foods have gone to the Sisters schools, brought in by S2T from Oregon farmers and distributors.



WESTERN GUY *meets* EASTERN GAL EMW FUSION FOOD TRUCK

It started with a wedding invitation and turned into EMW Fusion. Sun Valley native Brandon Walsh was marrying Seoul native Yoonmee Chang (now Chang Walsh). Both designers, they wanted a creative theme for their wedding and East Meets West seemed appropriate. The pair of creatives took that theme with them into their married life, hosting big fusion-style barbecues (that got bigger each time) and creating mashup designs.

"Mashup is compelling, it's fun, nothing too serious," said Walsh, describing their designs of cowboy shirts with Hawaiian fabric contrast and prints of Japanese anime superimposed over Western scenes. "Our philosophy: Never be too serious."

The couple also rewrote traditional Korean street food

recipes with American twists and experimented. A lot. They planned to retire early from their corporate product and graphic design jobs in Portland, turning their passion for cooking into an exit strategy. A food truck in Bend fit the bill.

"Yoonmee grows a huge garden and we've made farmers' market shopping our habit for years," said Walsh. "We like to know where our food comes from. Especially with protein-based products, the animal must have been raised humanely, not just sustainably and organically. We knew if we got into any food business, that was the plan."

Still, it took almost a year after they moved to Bend in 2015 to get the food truck ready and transition their foodie lifestyle into a business. They had to figure out how robust a menu their mobile space could handle and find producers in their newly adopted town who could supply EMW Fusion's needs.

The winning combination? A pando, the organic love child of a Korean wheat-based pancake and a sando (Japanese for sandwich), sold from their truck for \$3-4 a pop. Talk about a low barrier to

entry for locally sourced food.

"We want to source all our protein and vegetables from Central Oregon and we're about eighty percent of the way there," said Walsh.

Even with all their planning, the young business learned one lesson the hard way: winter and EMW don't mesh. Business was "slowwww" and it was tough to maintain their commitment to local ingredients.

Before the truck closes for the season at the end of October, catch EMW slinging pandos at one of many locations around Bend (check EMWFUSION.COM for the most up-to-date info). One of their stops is the up-and-coming 9th Street Village. "As makers and east side Bend residents, we are excited to see a cool, non-chain maker destination on the east side," said Walsh.

To really get to the source, make a trip to the EMW's beef and pork supplier, DD Ranch in Terrebonne, where the truck will be posted up during weekends in October to feed hungry pumpkin patch pickers.



Narrow foot paths are tucked between wide beds to maximize space at Mahonia Gardens in Sisters. Partners Carys Wilkins and Sisters native Benji Negal work with one employee and an intern from Rogue Farm Corps to farm the property—which they share with local farm educator Seed to Table—almost completely without modern tools.



FIELD to FIRE

CHEF DOUG MACFARLAND

What aspects of your background led you to local sourcing?

My career started to take off in San Diego at The Lodge at Torrey Pines with Jeff Jackson. He was a huge proponent of supporting and sourcing local. That's where I got the bug before working at Wildwood in Portland with Corey Schreiber. There I really started to hone in on what it means to utilize what you're surrounded with, the bounty of Oregon. It was an integral experience in my culinary career before my move to Central Oregon two years ago.

How do you address food seasonality at Brasada's restaurants?

There is such an influx of visitors and residents to the area now, and with that comes even more discerning palates. There is a certain expectation and need for dining at any resort. We get to really focus on seasonality in warmer months—especially at Range, which is just open for dinner and closes for the season September 30. Gigj at Windflower Farm is who we use primarily since it's right down the road but we've worked with Agricultural Connections, too. They are an integral part of the local movement.

What's a challenge facing the local food chain?

Buying farm direct is tough for restaurants to keep up with. It's all grown here but the

channels are still growing. Distribution coordinating is time consuming ... so what Agricultural Connections is doing is so great for the future of "going local" in Central Oregon.

Tell us about outdoor dining during your Feasts from the Fire series.

That's our summer series and each of the events is coordinated with live music. We typically feature meat from different local ranches off our outdoor spit and Argentinian grill, combined with produce from an area farm. It's a chance to showcase what they're doing and get it to a new audience. Really every Wednesday and Thursday throughout the summer we narrow the local lens in some way.

What's your secret weapon in the kitchen, outside of the usual growing season?

We're lucky here at Brasada, having our own butcher department with a bandsaw where we can breakdown whole animals that we source from Laney Family Farms outside of Maupin. They raise grass-fed cattle and heritage pigs. Especially in winter, we braise meats and source what root vegetables we can from Central Oregon. We also work with purveyors from Portland that come this way on a regular basis.



FARM to FORK

MAHONIA GARDENS

Most commercial gardens are not biologically thriving ecosystems. At Mahonia Gardens in Sisters, birds, lizards, snakes, bunnies, and a manner of beneficial insects live amid floral perennials and rare plants. Oh, and fifty crops, which all prosper on just one acre.

"We really like doing things by hand. That is sustainability, not using oil and machines," said owner Carys Wilkins. "Also the noise, the aesthetic of it. It's such an art. And a conscious choice that we can make at this point because we are able to sustain economically."

With this year's harvest marking their fifth growing season in Sisters comes a confidence in their hand scale technique. "We've been honing in on what grows best in our climate," said Wilkins. "Lots of crops don't like Central Oregon's big swing in diurnal temperature. Broccoli is a good example—they like stable temps through day and night."

It's also a balancing act between what grows well and

what sells well. "Sometimes that means sacrificing crops because of space," said Negal. "We've adapted within our space."

Jess Weiland of the High Desert Food and Farm Alliance spoke to Mahonia's model. "Carys and Benji have put so much effort into diversifying what they're growing," she said. "They really stay true to what they deem as a sustainable model for them. It's so easy as a farmer to get pulled in a lot of directions and scale up. They are really clear with themselves about what they want to produce and prioritize, maintaining some amount of a work/life balance."

Of course, for a farmer that means mostly working from spring through winter's first snow. The couple prefers working in the field over managing people. "We've said from the beginning: Let's do it by hand as long as we can. We think it works to our benefit to grow more within a small space," said Negal. "Our motto: Let's grow inward rather than outward. Within the confines of our space, let's continue to get better. Better soil, every corner gets watered, every piece of land gets attention."

Wilkins and Negal live on a property they bought with Negal's father just a half-mile from Mahonia and only a couple blocks from the Sisters Farmers'

Market, which Wilkins runs. They keep their cost of living low and didn't take out any loans to start Mahonia (they raised \$9,000 on Kickstarter to fund the business). Benji is also a musician, a talent which also happens to supplement their income.

When the couple decided to move to Negal's hometown after stints in Southern Oregon and Northern California, proximity to family was the primary driver.

Mahonia sells out its CSA (community-supported agriculture) memberships each season, which capped at forty members this year. "CSA is great because you already know it's sold when you plant the seed," said Wilkins. The other three-quarters of their business comes from farmers' market sales and a bit of surplus crop sales to Agricultural Connections. "This is the 'abundance mentality' idea. If people try another farm's CSA or grow their own garden, we feel good about that," said Negal.

"It's a small town and we're very much a community," added Negal, recognizing the work of educators, residents and new farmers to expand the local presence of fresh food. "Of course, that's a benefit for the business but more than that, growing food becomes purposeful and meaningful."

FAMILY FARM

RAINSHADOW ORGANICS

A conversation with local sustainability pioneer Sarahlee Lawrence.

INTERVIEW BY ERIC FLOWERS

You grew up on this property. What is the biggest change that's occurred?

I returned home after a couple degrees in environmental science and ten years of international river guiding to take over my family farm. Committed to raising food for Central Oregon, I converted the farm to certified organic and began my journey toward raising a "full diet."

You said once that you hadn't planted a seed or really eaten vegetables before jumping into this endeavor. What ever possessed you to take this up?

I read an essay by Michael Pollen that stopped me in my tracks. Food as we know it was doomed. Farmers were growing old. Farmland was being developed. With my family land, I knew I could make a difference.

You rely on a fair amount of student labor to make things work. Can you talk about the role of education in the operation?

It would be easier to hire staff for the farm and probably about the same financially, but I believe we need more farmers. I believe that food security lies in the working hands of young people that need skills, field experience, learned perseverance and awareness. I open my farm to people committed to learning how to farm, with the intent of farming themselves, or who are at least raising their awareness about food and want to be more informed, conscious eaters. They are part of a seven-month intensive curriculum through the Rogue Farm Corps.

This is a quiet and remote place, at least by Central Oregon standards, yet it feels very connected to the community. Is that deliberate?

We are dedicated to our community, both in the immediate Central Oregon region and beyond it. We depend on people who are committed



to eating seasonal food, organically grown, right here. This is a culinary adventure. It is not the way people are used to shopping for specific recipes with all ingredients available to them. This is preservation. This is honoring each ingredient as it comes. This is longing. This is patience. This is cooking as a daily act. The people who eat our food bring their families together to cook and to eat. It is community and conviviality. We eat the food we grow as a crew every day. We celebrate the first of everything. We get creative as plants keep on giving. We try to inspire those that shop at the farm with recipes posted regularly to our website, and we'll soon be hosting cooking classes.

Speaking of community, September 16 marks the grand opening of your market and beautiful commercial kitchen. How are these additions going to fit into your existing operation and what are a couple of fun surprises that people might find?

We are so excited about our new kitchen and store. We are cooking through this first season, learning to preserve everything. You will of course find our full fresh market array of veggies, pork, beef, chicken, buckwheat and wheat flour. We're drying and pickling and fermenting like crazy. This is an everchanging place. We'll be posting specials

and new products regularly. The kitchen completes the circle, allowing us to get more of our food into the hands of our community, especially people who aren't used to cooking with farm fresh food. We believe in food access, so we also accept Oregon Farm Direct Nutrition Program vouchers and we will soon take SNAP benefits.

The CSA has been the cornerstone of your business. What are some new and exciting things happening there?

Our CSA has grown into a full-diet, year-round offering. We have both small and large, meat and veggie shares for summer and winter. We have classic veggies that people love, but being a member exposes you to new and fun varieties, too. It is a culinary adventure through the season. We offer two pick up locations in Bend, downtown on Wednesdays and NorthWest Crossing on Saturdays, or you can pick up your CSA at the farm. CSA members often get things first in the season, and we share the abundance of the season as it comes. The farm kitchen is a new and unique aspect for the CSA. We'll be sharing recipes of all the creative, culinary energy that is surrounding how we enjoy, store and preserve this food.



Husband-and-wife team Sarahlee Lawrence and Ashanti Samuels (facing page). A longtable dinner on Rainshadow's property (top). Sarahlee at the Northwest Crossing Farmers' Market (bottom left). Inside Rainshadow's new commercial kitchen (bottom right).



PHOTO TOP MIGHTY CREATURE, BOTTOM LEFT JOSHUA LANGLAIS, BOTTOM RIGHT ALEX JORDAN

5 Ways to Change the Local Food System

Farmers' markets and CSAs (or "community supported agriculture," a direct-to-consumer subscription model for individual farms) are the most common ways people buy local food. Agricultural Connections centralizes local food shopping with one online marketplace, working with dozens of regional food producers to offer consumers more variety in one convenient platform. After the godfather of local food sourcing, Jackson's Corner, signed on as Ag Connect's first commercial partner in 2010, it was clear that restaurants and individual consumers alike were seeking local food from one streamlined source. Today, Ag Connect supplies more than twenty-five commercial partners (mostly restaurants).

CSAs: Orders are available for pickup or delivery across most of Central Oregon. Shoppers either subscribe or make a one-time produce box purchase up to two days before the weekly fulfillment, or go online and fill their digital shopping cart, ordering any item in any quantity. AGRICULTURALCONNECTIONS.COM

Year-round supply: When Liz Weigand bought Ag Connect before the end of its first year in 2010, an existential question hovered over the business: *How can this become a year-round resource in the High Desert?* "There was no way for the local food system to grow, evolve and flourish without the integration of the rest of the state," she said. "We are completely committed to our network of producers here but if people are going to create local food habits, they need consistency. Supplementing with producers from the Willamette Valley was necessary to create the momentum to keep the business alive. Partnerships are invaluable. It's Oregon food. We are all in this together."

Dynamism: While the variety of offerings in the online store doesn't rival a supermarket, Ag Connect does work with at least thirty Oregon producers at any given time, which means that customers can order everything from produce and dairy to meat and pantry items. We've been told we're like a lubricator for the food system," said Weigand, "developing channels for our suppliers and helping our customers get multiple offerings."

Farm to screen: Many Williams is Weigand's new business partner and she is laser focused on the company's e-commerce. "I'm seed to plate—building relationships with producers—and she is plate to seed, looking at things from the customer's



point of view," said Weigand. Having a smooth, web-based platform will help with logistical ease as their team builds out more delivery routes. (Current deliveries in Bend three times a week; Prineville and Sisters once a week.)

Transparency: As long as we are communicating the practices of each farm, we've seen success," said Weigand, when asked about whether Ag Connect has a policy on their suppliers' farming practices. "Most is sustainably grown with organic practices, whether certified or not. The customer can make the decision if they have the information. For example, we had cherries that were conventionally grown this year and if the shopper added it to their shopping cart online, they were notified about the farm's practices."

Symbiosis: The symbiotic relationship between Maker's District grocer, Central Oregon Locavore, and Ag Connect began the year they were each founded, in 2010. Combined, the two companies buy and sell more Central Oregon-grown foods than anywhere else in the region. Locavore looks to Ag Connect for much of their sourcing and Ag Connect buys eggs from Locavore to sell to their customers.



FRESH FOOD BANK

HIGH DESERT FOOD & FARM ALLIANCE

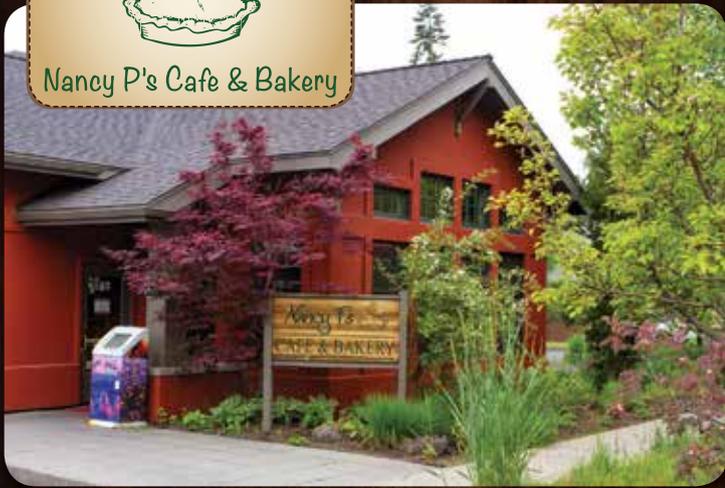
The local food bank is fresher thanks to HDEFFA's Grow and Give program, an initiative benefitting NeighborImpact. At farmers' markets in Bend patrons can donate to the program in \$5 increments and be entered to win a prize at the end of market season. The Madras, Redmond and Sisters markets also

take donations. HDEFFA then buys the equivalent amount of food from farmers at the end of the market, curating purchases based on food bank needs. "Food insecurity is a prevalent issue but it can be a bit 'out of sight, out of mind,'" said Jess Weiland of HDEFFA, noting that farmers' markets play a vital role in our community and provide a good space to facilitate discussion of the issue. Statistically, one in five people in Central Oregon is food insecure—meaning they might not know where their next meal is coming from. The program represents a new frontier of food recovery (a term meaning food waste mitigation). "Farmers see it as a value add," said Weiland. "They harvest more than they may need to be sure they fill demand at farmers' markets throughout the region. The funds help to support the farmers' bottom lines, aid in food recovery and shore up the region's food bank supply." An anticipated 15,000 pounds of food recovery will go to NeighborImpact this year. HDEFFA.ORG

BAKED WITH LOVE



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