

Eat Wyoming statewide local food expos bring together consumers and local growers, producers

Situation:

The Eat Wyoming project was started to enhance and expand existing relationships among specialty crop growers and local food producers and consumers in Wyoming. Over the past two years, successful efforts produced a local foods guide, piloted two local foods expos, and provided training on organizing and hosting regional local foods expos. The project expanded to a statewide effort. Five local foods expos of various styles and collaborations were held the spring of 2012.

Area nutrition and food safety educators coordinated the expos. In the Northeast Area, Kentz Willis hosted the second annual Local Food Expo in Sheridan. Southeast Area educator Diane Saenz collaborated with Laramie

Local Foods at its yearly local foods event, and Converse, Natrona, and Niobrara Area educator Denise

Smith held a local foods expo in collaboration with a high tunnel project in Lusk. Chris Pasley, Southeast Area educator, held a local foods expo in Wheatland and, in the West Area, Jennifer Jacobsen collaborated with the Sublette Local Food Alliance for the second annual Local Fest in Pinedale. Each event was unique to the community in which it was held, but all centered on the theme of bringing local growers and producers together with local community members or consumers. Workshops included various topics from gardening, raising and butchering backyard chickens, worm composting, and food preservation, to Dutch oven cooking, and more. Expos were one to three days long and featured local and nationally known speakers.



Impacts:

Based upon written evaluations from participants and producers who attended the five state-wide local foods expos, the events met expectations and were worth the time to attend.

Of participants surveyed:

- 98 percent responded the expo inspired to explore more about Wyoming local foods
- 94 percent responded the expo inspired to think about growing their own gardens
- 96 percent responded the expo helped acquire knowledge and skills to help use local foods
- 93 percent responded the expo increased knowledge regarding benefits of eating locally produced foods
- 94 percent responded the expo gave greater understanding of local food vendors and opportunities
- 94 percent responded the expo introduced local food resources available in Wyoming

Of producers surveyed:

- 57 percent responded the expo allowed them to better promote Wyoming local foods
- 29 percent responded the expo broadened the scope of their audiences and markets
- 33 percent responded the expo helped connect them with potential consumers in the state
- 33 percent responded the expo helped connect them with other growers and producers in the state
- 24 percent responded the expo increased knowledge of specific venues for selling products

100 percent of participants and producers responded they would recommend a local food expo to friends and colleagues while 99 percent responded they would be interested in taking classes related to local foods.

The majority of participants increased their knowledge about local foods in Wyoming and indicated they were inspired to grow and/or use



them more. Based on the assumption that those participants will use and grow more local foods, there will be an increased awareness of local foods in Wyoming and an increase in purchases and sales from local producers. Since the majority of local foods are whole and minimally processed foods, we can assume there will be an increase in whole and minimally processed food consumption in Wyoming. Expanding these efforts promotes local whole and minimally processed food consumption, which will increase in Wyoming; we hope to see a long-term increase in health among Wyoming consumers of local foods.

*the expo increased
knowledge regarding
benefits of eating locally
produced foods*



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