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The Duluth Grill—A local hot spot using local food!

By Barb Adams

At the Duluth Grill, diners find alternative and healthy menu choices along side familiar favorites. Ingredients are sourced locally as much as possible, and as the steady and growing stream of customers suggests, the food is delicious. The family that runs the Duluth Grill has made it a success with hard work and a holistic vision. And in doing it, they've beaten the odds – it's located next to a Burger King and a gas station. They have done it so well that on an early Sunday morning people are standing out in the parking lot waiting for tables.

Tom and Jaima Hanson have worked in restaurants their whole lives. Ten years ago, Tom was a district manager in a national restaurant chain. Needing a change, they found a restaurant that was closing and leased the Duluth Grill at 27th Ave West. The two ran it as an Embers for awhile, but what they really wanted was their own, family-run restaurant. Tom and Jaima left the Embers umbrella in 2007, gradually implementing an innovative menu; they started making things from scratch and sourcing ingredients locally. Two years ago, they began to see the fruit of their labors – more customers, more repeat customers, and more people from out of town.

While price usually drives most restaurant decisions, Tom says quality is much more important. His goal is for folks to “either love us or hate us, rather than be mediocre.” Sourcing ingredients locally evolved gradually. They wanted better coffee so they switched to Duluth-based coffee roaster Alakef. Locally made items like

jam were another logical step. They started getting some local produce from the Fisher-Merritt Food Farm and “now John just tells me what he has and I tell him what I'll take. I just want the very best for the customers.” When Tom was talking about his problems finding local beef, John said his neighbor, Mark Thell, had grassfed beef. Tom now buys over 10,000 pounds a year – “and you can name the cow it came from!” he says.

In the middle of the menu is a long list of local farmers who provide everything from honey to beets to bison, and the list is still growing. Employees are valued as part of the family and encouraged to gain skills and grow in the organization. Tom says that to be sustainable a business must change the way it makes money. A sustainable business resides in a circle (the community) – not a straight-line growth chart. When the business grows, the circle grows. The community benefits from the business, and the business benefits from the community.

The restaurant donates to and supports many neighborhood projects like the Heritage Hockey Center and the new Children's Museum. (And in November, they are donating Red Flannel Hash to SFA's fundraiser Farmers Take the Stove).

Tom credits his father for his environmental concern – “He was (without knowing it) the most green person!” As an example of green practices, the restaurant quit



Loren Nelson—A Passionate Life



Loren Nelson was the recipient of this year's Farmer's Voice Award presented to Loren at the 2010 Harvest Festival and Energy Fair. Loren is pictured here with his wife Candace and granddaughter.

Loren Nelson was a passionate man. I experienced his passion in the form of conversation as we worked together harvesting and packing Food Farm share deliveries. Loren liked to talk about a wide range of issues while he worked, so we touched on all kinds of ideas: religion, politics, human rights, social justice, and local, national, and world wide food issues.

Loren was passionate about representing a form of Christianity that Jesus unabashedly espoused: the friend of the less fortunate, including outcasts, prostitutes and beggars. In Loren's world, Christianity is dedicated to equal rights and equal treatment for everyone, regardless of color, nationality, sex, age, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation.

A very close second to a sensible Christianity in Loren's list of passionate causes was his dedication to a local, sensible, sustainable food system. And he figured that his efforts in that direction should start as close to home as possible. He grew much of his own food, made his food purchases as close to home as he could, and put his shoulder to the wheel by volunteering

his Thursdays during the delivery season at Food Farm. In doing so, he was making it possible for other local eaters to make the same kinds of food choices he was proud to make.

Loren's passion for a local sustainable food system went far beyond his work at Food Farm. As President of the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association, he inspired us with new ideas and made us stick to business during meetings so we could cover our agenda and end meetings on time. I would call Loren's leadership style one of idealistic practicality.

In addition to all of the above, I just liked Loren. He was fun to be around; he laughed easily and often. He officiated at the weddings of two of my boys. We will all miss him.

Editor's Note: Loren Nelson died at home on Thursday, October 21 after a courageous battle with cancer. Loren received the Farmer's Voice Award on September 11 at the 17th Annual Harvest Festival and Energy Fair. Our sympathies go out to his wife Candace and children and grandchildren. He touched many lives, and he will be missed by all.

The Duluth Grill *(Continued from page 1)*

using the less-expensive cream and jam packets which by Tom's estimate prevents more than 150,000 packets from ending up in the trash each year. He and Jaima have also had several restaurant-mentors inspiring them over the years. Now they teach their employees about local foods, excellent quality and spreading the word.

This summer the long, narrow garden on the northwest side of the parking lot generated greens for salad, tomatoes, interesting garnishes like rat-tail radishes, and a bumper crop of ground cherries (cape gooseberries) from which they made jam. Most customers LOVE their home-made catsup (some still want their Heinz), and they are working with a local registered dietitian on many new menu items, including some interesting chickpea-polenta dishes. They make much of what they serve from scratch, which takes more prep work and more employees, but again – the quality is what is important.

The Duluth Grill is open daily from 7 am to 9pm. Customers, as well as potential suppliers of local products, can reach them at 218 -726-1150 or go to www.duluthgrill.com.

Duluth Grill Seeks Local Ingredients

Local Sources Are Still Needed for the more than 400 dozen cage-free eggs they use each week. Goat cheese is another ingredient Tom is still hoping to source locally. And they are open to suggestions – Tom says most of his local sources found him, not the other way around. He describes his relationship with his local farmers/vendors as “starting out with trust and developing into true friendships.”

Global Climate Change and Farming

By Jim Harkenss

The Minnesota River near Jordan is expected to reach its fifth-highest crest at 32.7 feet

today. Jordan and much of the rest of southern Minnesota were hit with some 10 inches of rain last week -- flooding houses and farm fields and shutting down highways and bridges. People are calling the storms "freakish" and "extraordinarily unusual," the same words they used to describe the record floods that hit the region just three years ago in August 2007.

Two weeks ago, I flew into Mexico City for a meeting of the country's largest farmers association, and was surprised to look down from the air and see that the arid northern part of the country was emerald green. Mexican farmers explained that there has been "freakishly" heavy rainfall there and across Central America all summer, improving harvests in some areas but devastating many more with floods and landslides. "The only way my cattle will get to market is if they learn to swim," one rancher told me.

Extreme weather is on the rise around the globe. Massive flooding has displaced hundreds of thousands of people in Pakistan and southern China in recent months. And fires caused by record heat waves in Russia this summer destroyed a quarter of that country's wheat crop. The last decade was the hottest on record, and 2010 is projected to be the hottest year ever.

When floods that are supposed to occur once in a century and rainfalls that are the highest on record happen twice in three years, we can no longer pretend that these are highly unusual events. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reasserted recently that the dramatic increase in "extreme weather events" we've experienced since the 1970s is the result of climate change.

Not everyone agrees with the IPCC. The scientific community and environmentalists have done a poor job convincing U.S. farmers and rural communities, on the whole, about man-made climate change. They've largely ignored the fact that rural residents are more dependent on fossil fuels (driving distances are much longer in rural areas, and public transit almost nonexistent) and thus have higher fuel costs and a greater sensitivity to rising oil prices.

In the runup to a climate bill debate earlier this year, the environmental movement essentially wrote off rural America as too conservative and hence not worth trying to engage. Corporate-funded climate deniers were more than happy to fill the hole, making it no surprise, then, that farm-state legislators voted en masse against climate legislation.

But if the messages to farmers from the fossil-fuel industry are deceptive, the message from nature is clear:

(Continued on page 7)

Become a Member...or Renew Your Membership Today!

By becoming a member of the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association (LSSFA) you will be supporting the work of the Association to create a more sustainable food and farming system for our region. You will receive the *Farm & Market News*—a quarterly newsletter of LSSFA to "keep you posted" about sustainable agriculture events and happenings in our region. You will also receive the State of MN Sustainable Farming Association Newsletter, *The CornerPost*.

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LSSFA MISSION

The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association is a 501(c)3 non profit that supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking.

Organic Farms on the Rise in MN

The number of certified organic farms and acres is on the rise in Minnesota according to a new Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) report. The Status of Organic Agriculture in Minnesota report provides detailed information about the economic performance of organic farms, organic consumer and market data, environment and human health topics and an inventory of programs directed toward organic agriculture. Highlights of the 55-page report prepared for the Minnesota legislature include:

- The number of certified organic farms in Minnesota increased 42% between 2000 and 2008.
- Organic acreage in the state increased 88% during the same period.
- Consumer appetite for organic products has continued to grow, even during the recent economic downturn.
- Most (78%) Minnesota organic farmers started their careers as conventional farmers.
- Weed control and production costs remain top concerns of organic farmers, while weed management, soil health and nutritional studies on organic foods are their top research priorities.

For additional information contact Meg Moynihan, MDA Organic and Diversification Specialist, Phone: 651-201-6616 or meg.moynihan@state.mn.us To read or download the report visit: <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/~media/Files/news/govrelations/organicstatusreport.ashx>.

2010 Farm Frolic



Families and friends gathered under the big top at Cree and Jason Bradley's Chelsea Morning Farm as part of this year's Farm Frolic. Jason Bradley whipping up a one-of-a-kind herring fish fry—a Farm Frolic specialty (right).



The **Lake Superior Farm Beginnings Farm Frolic** was held August 21 at Chelsea Morning Farm, 8 miles northeast of Two Harbors. Primarily a fundraiser and graduation celebration of the farm beginnings program, the day included food, games, music, a farmers market, and a chance to visit with old and new friends. Graduation certificates were awarded to program students. A local foods feast included a fresh Lake Superior fish fry, Sandy Hills Ranch sweet corn, and an abundant supply of pot luck delicacies brought by participants. Music was provided by the Kettle River Trio. Kids, and also adults, enjoyed the face painting by body artistes Karola and Heather-Marie, as well as games, a treasure hunt, and a shoe-swallowing garden tour.

Passing on the Know-How

By Kelly Smith

The last two summers have been especially busy for Don “Finnish-bachelor-farmer-lives-in-the-house-he-was-born-in” Kinnunen, of the Buttermilk neighborhood of Thomson Township. Along with his usual volunteering at a soup kitchen, providing his best field for a local market gardener, bringing clothes and food to the Damiano Shelter, and helping neighbors, Don is mentoring Alex “Young Grasshopper” Morbacher in the fine art of draft horse-powered farming. Don’s teamster school bestows wisdom, experience, and skill, with a dollop of philosophy here and there: “An empty sack does not stand up,” and, “It’s not what you earn, it’s what you don’t spend.”

Alex is gaining skill and confidence in handling horse-powered equipment, horse care, horse psychology, and horse trading. This year Alex bought his own horse and rented another from Don Johnson of Wrenshall to make a team. Neither of the horses was fully broken, and both had some bad habits.

Attitude adjustment requires patience and repetition, and farming with horses demands all the skills needed for farming with tractors, plus coaching. While pulling the scoot piled with loose hay to the barn, one of the horses who had never been in a building refused to go near it. Alex worked with the team for a half hour, trying to coax them closer. No luck.

When he was summoned to help, Don was in the house having coffee with a visitor. Don’s kitchen court is often in session, solving world issues, casting final judg-



Don and Alex hitching-up the team to the hay mower for some good old horse-powered farm work.

ment on the living and the dead, and sharing the latest misadventures of “That Linda.” An endless river of pickled beets, sahti, mojakka, rescued biscuit, and coffee, and other “simple food” flows from the wood range to the table.

Don climbed stiffly up into the seat of the scoot, and taking the reins, he muttered, “I’m too old for this

bulls@*#!” I reminded him he’s been saying that for the last 20 years. He drove the team around a bit and brought them by the barn. They would only go so close, and then around they would go for another try. With each iteration the horses grew less afraid of the building and gradually drew closer. After several rounds Don was able to drive the team up to the barn under the hay mow door. When Alex and I asked how he did that when we couldn’t

get them to move at all, his brief reply spoke volumes: “Well, I just did it.”

Informal mentoring and sharing are two of the keys to reskilling our younger generations in the vital arts of raising food and mending the torn fabrics of our communities. It’s clear to this reporter we need more people like Don.

Post script. Due to rain and a mishap or ten, the last of the first crop hay finally went into the barn in October. No dusty hay was made. “And that’s the end of it, amen.”

Group Product Liability Insurance for LS-SFA Grower Members

Beginning growers who are selling their first crops at a market may not think about product liability insurance but when your market manager comes to you and asks to see proof that you are covered, panic ensues! Getting your own insurance coverage can break the bank so Woodland General has come up with a good solution for members of the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association. The solution is group product liability. The insurance company writes a policy that covers all the small growers in the group based on their sales or projected sales. so if the entire group sells \$50,000 in produce a member who sells 1500.00 for the year might pay \$20.00. The liability will only cover sales at the LSSFA farmers market at UMD and LSSFA Harvest Fest not any other market or on farm sales. Since UMD farmers market will be requiring product liability insurance, and it just makes sense to have it so that you don't lose your farm if sued, this is a great solution. So think about it and contact Joe Beaupre at Woodland General Agency, 218-384-4236 before the next selling season. **We need at least 30 members to make this policy work.**



Photos by Michael K. Anderson, Photographer

The weather is out of whack. And farming -- always a risky undertaking -- will only get riskier. In Minnesota, this means livelihoods are at stake. Globally, it is destabilizing food security.

Rather than writing farmers off, we should be focusing our attention on them -- and more importantly, listening to them. Farmers know their land, know the weather and have forever been the ones figuring out how to adapt to changes -- not just over one season, but in the long run, too. We will depend on their wisdom to keep us fed as extreme storms become the new normal and on their good practices -- like planting buffers along waterways and using cover crops -- to hold the soil, filter our water and help keep flooding at bay when we're hit with the next round of torrential rains.

But farmers will need our help, too. Even the most-skilled ones will struggle to grow enough food if a changing climate makes Minnesota look more like Oklahoma. We need to support policies for greenhouse-gas emission reductions and mitigation, including on the farm.

Farmers should be rewarded in stable, predictable ways for practices that sequester carbon, like growing more perennials, or using less fossil-fuel-derived fertilizer. And we need to address the challenges farmers and other rural Americans will face as energy costs rise.

I've met very few farmers who don't care about the land, air and water. But to partner in averting climate disaster, they'll need their concerns listened to and addressed. We can't keep talking about farmers and climate change; we need to start talking with them.

Jim Harkness is president of the Minneapolis-based Institute for Agriculture

The Real Dirt on Farmer John and Son

By Kelly Smith

Farm Beginnings students recently benefited from a skill session on soil building at Food Farm vegetable and poultry CSA, located 2 miles south of Wrenshall. Messrs. John and Janaki Fisher-Merritt shared their combined decades of experience in soil management.

"Keeping soil microbes happy is the job of the farmer," extolled John. "Life is a balance of respiration by animals and photosynthesis by plants." Based on years of experience, his criteria for choosing land include suitable soil, close markets, sufficient water, not too many biting bugs, and a farming community. John defined the characteristics of soils suitable for growing vegetables in our climate: well-drained loam with enough small particles and organic matter to hold onto nutrients, but not so fine as to be difficult to work. He described how to take and interpret a soil test, and how to use that test to determine what supplements to add to keep your soil productive. Recommended reading: [Soil Nutrition Handbook](#), by Midwestern Bio Ag.

John's son Janaki, who will be the primary owner/operator of the farm in 2011, led a field tour and discussion of their cover cropping system designed to build soil and control weeds. Even though their production acreage has increased, by using cover crops, Food Farm has been able to reduce the expense and time needed to acquire, process, and spread compost and other soil amendments. The cover crops also make it possible to get into fields with somewhat wet soil without compaction. Legumes and microbes team up to extract nitrogen from the air and fix it in the soil for later use by food crops. Legume and grass cover crops also add organic matter to the soil, thereby increasing its water and nutrient holding capacity, ease of tillage, and productivity. Cover crops

also crowd out weeds and provide habitat for soil-building earthworms, and, when allowed to flower, they also provide habitat for food-crop pollinators.

Different cover crop systems should be used depending on soil, climate, equipment, and food crops. Food Farm fields alternate years of food and cover crops, and rotations are planned a year in advance. For fields with food crops to be planted before June 1, berseem clover and oats are planted the 3rd week of July in the previous summer. The clover/oats winter-kill, allowing for easier spring soil preparation in our sometimes late, wet springs. For fields with food crops to be planted after June 1, winter wheat and hairy vetch are planted the 3rd week of August in the previous summer. The wheat/vetch over-winters and continues growing the following spring. The clover/oat mix is planted at 17/60 #/acre, the vetch/wheat mix at 30/90 #/acre. On poorer soils, Janaki suggested a farmer might consider using cereal rye instead of wheat. To ensure adequate nitrogen-fixing microbes, legume seed is inoculated at every planting. Cover crops are incorporated 2-3 weeks before planting food crops to allow soil bacteria enough time to break plant matter down. To control weeds, they clip the oats/clover mix twice at 3-4 inches before final regrowth; after freeze-up they mow it short and shred it. They kill the vetch/wheat by mowing at 16-24 inches.

Janaki advises that a grain drill gives better results than broadcasting seed and that perennial weeds like quackgrass need to be under control before planting a cover crop. In their high tunnels, they use a cover crop of buckwheat and berseem, using a lawnmower to shred it.

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