

JUNE 2020

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group



ONGOING CGUA PROJECTS

The Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group has several ongoing projects that need your help. Please volunteer today!

Support Grow Southeast Farmers - Grow Southeast is comprised of several farms in southeast Fort Worth. They are navigating the Urban Ag Ordinance and growing food for their communities. For more information about Grow Southeast, contact Charlie at: shinesfarmstand@gmail.com.

School Garden Mapping Project - CGUA is working to update our Local Food System map to include active school gardens in the area. Adding these gardens to the map will help keep them successful and increase access to fresh food. To contribute to these efforts, contact Barb at: bewen48@gmail.com.

Facilitate Community Partnerships - CGUA is helping community gardens and urban farms stay well-resourced with food scraps to compost, garden curricula, expert advice, and guidance on hot topics. To learn more, contact Becca at: becca.knutson@tafb.org.

For questions and more information, contact our Chair, Dave Aftandilian at d.aftandilian@tcu.edu.



SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

BY HARRISON GIBSON

"These are strange times" is an often heard refrain these days, and it certainly applies to our food system right now. Crops are being turned under or rotting in the fields, milk is being poured down dairy drains, and feedlot animals are being euthanized for lack of a processor. Meanwhile, hungry people are encountering bare grocery shelves and longer than ever lines at food pantries. How can we be destroying food while we're seeing record numbers of unemployment and hunger?

This juxtaposition of abundance and need is not new to our society, but the coronavirus pandemic has laid bare the inequities in our food system and perhaps its fundamental problem: distribution. The roots of the problems now visible in our food system are not unique to this moment in time, only especially evident due to the unique stresses of our circumstances. Given this unusual situation, we're offered a unique perspective to view and address systemic deficiencies, recognize the good being done, and consider our own role and power in our greater food network. Before we can consider steps toward change, it's worth taking a frank look at the situation and why we might be here.

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Virtual Events

TARRANT COUNTY FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

Virtual Council

Meeting - June 4th

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87550922477>

TARRANT AREA FOOD BANK

Good Bugs & Bad Bugs in the Garden

June 11th

tarrantareafoodbank.eventbrite.com

WATER UNIVERSITY

DIY Drip Irrigation

June 4th

Rainwater Harvesting

June 16th

Pots in Small Spots

June 23rd

Family Friendly Gardening

June 30th

wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events

BRIT

Nature Journaling and Research - June 2nd

Organic Pest &

Disease Control - June 20th

brit.org/events

SATURDAYS 8AM-12PM

Cowtown Farmers Market

3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD.





"This forest eats itself and lives forever."

BARBARA KINGSOLVER,
THE POISONWOOD BIBLE



June To-Do

Continue to plant corn, okra, peanuts, southern peas, summer squash, winter squash and sweet potatoes.

Harvest potatoes early in the month as the foliage begins to die back.

Replace bolted lettuce with Malabar spinach.

Add a layer of straw or leaf mulch to help retain moisture and inhibit weed growth.

Harvest tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, blackberries, peaches, figs and basil as they are ready.

SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS (CONTINUED)

In the past several decades, we have seen a considerable consolidation of the food industry. Small farm-centric communities and a diverse network of smaller food players have given way to an industrialized food system with concentrated ownership, global interest, long supply chains, and maximized profits for those large enough to reach the economies of scale. Most of this has been done with efficiency in mind, but it has come at a cost of overall resilience. Despite maximizing efficiency and producing record quantities, the system falls short in the face of our distribution problems and rising food insecurity.

The food industrial complex has struggled to divert products as typical supply streams have shifted along with consumer demand. Restaurants, where Americans formerly spent roughly half of their food budget, have closed and struggled to reopen. This has placed a remarkable burden on grocery stores to try to meet customers' needs. Food banks have done well to help bear increased strain and demand, and more Americans are turning to food pantries for help for the first time amidst record unemployment. Meanwhile, many industrial food producers are having to destroy product with their processing and distribution hindered by the pandemic and unable to adjust to the shifted demand. While everyone in the industry is facing hurdles and looking for solutions, some local producers are finding ways to get food into the hands of people that need it.

Throughout this crisis, local members of the food community have found solutions. Some have made creative changes to their business models, while other have stayed their course and increased productivity to meet the new demand. Here in Fort Worth, farmers markets have been full and some vendors have reported their best weeks of sales and increased demand for CSAs. Restaurants and entrepreneurs are coming up with innovative solutions, with restaurants selling to-go boxes of farmer's fare, chefs creating pop-up meals, and entrepreneurs canning, pickling, and fermenting excess produce from farms. The resiliency and success of these purveyors highlights the benefits and importance of building up our local food system.

While these times are strange, they offer everyone an opportunity to reevaluate our food networks and our roles in them. No matter our occupation, background, or diet, we all exist in our food system as consumers, and shifting consumption from a passive act to an engaged one can have a powerful effect. Wendell Berry championed re-establishing eating as an agricultural act, and he summed it up well with, "Eating ends the annual drama of the food economy that begins with planting and birth." So, honoring Mr. Berry's good sense and good writing, it's worth suggesting a few things anyone can do in this chaotic moment to tip the scales in favor of a robust local food system.

- 1. Buy local!** Buying local can help ensure your food's quality, reduces its carbon footprint, and you can know where your dollars are going.
- 2. Grow your own food.** Participate in food production, whether it be in your own yard, a community garden, or lending a hand at a local farm.
- 3. Prepare your own food.** You can ensure your own quality, add your own value, learn about produce, nourish yourself and others, and inspire the culinary arts in your own home.
- 4. Learn about our local food system.** Explore the economy of it, the people involved, the variety of foods produced, their seasonality, and all of its history.
- 5. Participate in the decision-making process.** Learn about laws and policies that affect this system, vote, and voice your opinion to legislators. A good starting point could be getting involved with the Tarrant County Food Policy Council.
- 6. Share it.** Now is the time share your food, your time, your gifts, or your passion with a neighbor, especially if they're struggling in this crisis.

Focusing on local food systems alone won't fix our nation's problems with food insecurity, but it can help nurture resiliency into a larger and more diverse network. Together, through small intentional acts, we can build a stronger local food community.



Wild Rice & Cucumber Salad

Recipe from: *100 Best Fresh Salads*

This unique wild rice salad isn't like your typical boring rice dish. Use your freshly-harvested garden produce to make this refreshing and filling salad for your next meal.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/3 cups wild rice
- 3 bell peppers, various colors
- 1/2 cucumbers
- 1 orange
- 3 ripe slicing tomatoes
- 1 small red onion
- Handful of parsley

Dressing

- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste



PREPARATION

- Put the wild rice and 3-1/2 cups of water into a large pan and bring to a boil. Stir, then cover and let simmer for 40 minutes.
- Wash all the produce.
- Thinly slice the bell pepper. Peel and cube the orange. Chop the tomato into chunks. Halve the cucumbers lengthwise and slice thinly. Roughly chop the parsley. Thinly slice onion and chop. Mince or chop garlic.
- Combine all dressing ingredients in a bowl or jar and mix.
- When rice is finished, mix all ingredients and dressing together in a large bowl.
- Serve chilled.

SUBSTITUTIONS

- Use quinoa or white rice instead of wild rice.
- Canola oil can be used instead of olive oil.
- Balsamic vinegar can be replaced by white wine vinegar with a dash of sugar.

IN THE NEWS

- Details on BRIT managing Fort Worth Botanic Garden: <https://fortworthtexas.gov/news/2020/05/Botanic-Garden-BRIT-Agreement/>
- Double Up Food Bucks at Cowtown Farmers Market: <https://fortworthtexas.gov/news/2020/05/Double-Up-Food-Bucks/>
- COVID-19 impacts Texas ranching industry: <https://www.star-telegram.com/news/business/article242512221.html>
- How gardeners are becoming the new influencers: <https://modernfarmer.com/2020/05/growing-mainstream-how-gardeners-are-becoming-the-new-influencers/>
- Changes announced for this year's Parker County Peach Festival: https://d13crgfdskgopd.cloudfront.net/images/FOR_IMMEDIATE_RELEASE-PF_Pivots_in_2020.pdf

Garden Resources

Local Nurseries:

Archie's Gardenland
Calloway's

Free Seeds:

TAFB Community Garden Program;
communitygarden@tafb.org
GROW North Texas

Bulk Soil/Compost:

Living Earth
Silver Creek Materials
City of FW Drop-Off Stations

Garden Curricula:

CGUA-
<http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/garden-2.html>

Community Food Systems Map:

<http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/local-food-systems.html>

