



REAP Reporter

Newsletter from REAP Food Group · WINTER 2021

Farms to Families Sprouts Further Projects

by Emily King, REAP Board Member

The Farms to Families Fund/Fondo De Granjas a Familias, a collaboration between REAP Food Group (REAP) and Root4Change Co-Op (R4C), has positively impacted local farmers and producers, created jobs, and has provided resilience food boxes informed by the needs of local Latino/Indigenous families to those heavily affected by the pandemic. All of these efforts invested tens of thousands into the local economy, but the venture also has evolved into new projects to further the original mission.

First, R4C has taken the opportunity afforded by the resilience box demographics to design a pointed web of services and educational opportunities for the Latino/Indigenous communities of Dane County. The co-op has supported more than 600 families with housing assistance, has provided access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services, and has offered virtual maternal and child health support.

Second, the Farms to Families Fund team has been developing a bimonthly bulletin that showcases topics that speak to the ancestral lineage of the community. They postulate that this knowledge is not shared after migration to the U.S., and the bulletin is an opportunity for families to share stories, recipes - and the bulletin creates a safe space that embraces roots and traditions.

These burgeoning projects are situated well within one of Farm to Families Fund's original goals of wrap-around services, and creating educational and interactive materials in Spanish. Additionally, its flagship, intended benefits included food security, job creation, community empowerment and cultural sovereignty. To reach these objectives, the program delivers resilience boxes to at least 200 families biweekly, procures and purchases the box contents at a fair price from farmers and food entrepreneurs in Wisconsin and provides temporary employment to community members. There have been ten jobs created from this project, helping people whose income has been severely cut as a result of the pandemic.

While compiling the resilience boxes, the local food products within them were acquired from small farmers, many of whom were shut out of large government programs, and gave them the opportunity to reinvest in their community. A portion of these vendors also



Local farmer Victor Ortega delivering fresh greens to be included in F2F food deliveries in summer 2020.

reinvested by donating products for the resilience boxes. Close to half the farms and food businesses engaged are minority and women-owned.

Funding for the program was leveraged from the WI Partnership Program, United Way COVID-19 Emergency Grant, City of Madison, corporate donations and private individual gifts.

R4C Co-Op works to change the maternal child health landscape to address inequities in perinatal well-being by empowering families and challenging the system, whose mission is to foster allied health professionals for Latinos(as) in Dane County by supporting the native and traditional knowledge nested in the community of well-being practices.

FROM THE DIRECTOR: *On golden beets and pandemic power*



As I write this, we are rounding the corner on 12 months of living in a pandemic. This time last year, schools closed and we found ourselves with 800lbs of organic golden beets that we ordered with nowhere to go. The school district they were destined for was shut down but we could not leave our farmer in a lurch so we bought them.

We put out an SOS for refrigerated storage and NessAlla Kombucha graciously offered us temporary space in their coolers in exchange for a few pounds (to brew a special batch of kombucha, which they shared with us). We then moved the beets to RE Golden distributors, who bought some and exchanged some for some locally-grown potatoes they had in excess. After a sobering conversation with our community partner Roots4Change Co-Op, our two groups launched a plan to get those beautiful vegetables to families in need. And Farms to Families was born.

This window into our work is a powerful reminder that a food system is not an academic concept. It is community of real people working hard to do the right thing and reliant on each other to be successful. We cannot just step out of our commitment as a buyer without hurting the farmer counting on that sale. The need to find a home for these beautiful vegetables required creative partnerships and ultimately sparked an entire emergency initiative that mutually benefited the farmers who deserve to make a

living and families who deserve nourishing food. This crisis has revealed, again and again, the need for a resilient and just food system in a thriving community. But it has also highlighted how brittle this system has become from years of devaluing the spaces, knowledge and infrastructure to grow Wisconsin food for Wisconsin families.

We posted a New York Times article in January on our Facebook page with a quote worth repeating: "Farmers, cooks, environmentalists and anti-hunger advocates – groups often pulling in different directions – were forced to strengthen relationships based on intersectionality and a new understanding of how interconnected and vulnerable the food system is."

At the heart of REAP's daily work is precisely this -- to create a resilient and just local food system in southern Wisconsin that benefits all residents. We didn't wait for a crisis to start thinking about it but maybe this crisis is the opportunity to make some significant strides in Dane County and southern WI to rebuild the infrastructure and human relationships.

Sincerely,

Helen Sarakinos, Executive Director



Nutritious • Delicious • Wisconsin

INTRODUCING HARVEST OF THE MONTH

by Haley Traun, Farm to School Education Coordinator

Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) Food and Nutrition Services, in partnership with REAP Food Group and supported by a US Department of Agriculture Farm to School grant, are launching the Harvest of the Month Program in 2021. Harvest of the Month is a growing national movement to support schools and larger communities in their efforts to use local, seasonal foods as a way to champion sustainable agriculture and healthy food availability. Support with outreach and materials is also provided by a statewide Harvest of the Month education program, launched by UW-Extension in late 2020.

Harvest of the Month programming will support the MMSD Farm to School Project, which boasts a 15 year partnership between MMSD Food and Nutrition and REAP to improve the district's access to locally and sustainably grown foods, and support student wellbeing through educational and community outreach. Activities in the coming year will include taste tests, social media communications and hands-on experiences to explore the rich diversity of WI-grown fruits and vegetables and their relationship to health, environment, and the economy.

While the pandemic and switch to virtual learning has delayed the activities we originally planned, MMSD Food and Nutrition and REAP have been refining our processes for connecting more farms and local food to MMSD school meals, and in March we are excited to feature our first Harvest of the Month local product, sweet potatoes, in MMSD's weekly take-home Market Boxes. Once students are back in school, we will feature cafeteria taste tests to introduce new produce and meal options, featuring local products monthly in school meals, including on our UpRoot Food Truck menu at La Follette, East, and Memorial High Schools, and provide classroom lesson materials, at summer meal site programs, and through social media.

How can we make sure our schools continue to offer locally and sustainably grown foods in school meals? If you are an MMSD family, participation in MMSD's school lunch offerings (especially on days featuring local foods) is a vote for these kinds of initiatives. By participating in school lunch programs, you support the district's efforts to increase local food purchasing and expand meal options. Harvest of the Month is the next big step

forward for MMSD; from local snacks, to garden bars to the UpRoot Farm to School food truck, MMSD has increased their local food purchases from \$25,000 to over \$200,000 over the last 10 years. But we can dream bigger and do more to help make MMSD a model in Wisconsin for students to access local foods in schools and local farms to supply their delicious, Wisconsin grown products to nourish our children.

To learn more about Harvest of the Month, the MMSD Farm to School Project, and ways to support MMSD school meals, follow MMSD Food and Nutrition and REAP on social media and visit the UW Extension Harvest of the Month Website (healthyliving.extension.wisc.edu/programs/harvest-of-the-month/).



PIRI PIRI PARSNIPS

INGREDIENTS	DIRECTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 lbs Parsnips • 1/4 cup oil, divided • 1 medium yellow onion, small diced • 3 cloves garlic, minced • 1 TBS fresh ginger, minced • 1 tsp Chili Flakes • 1 1/2 cup Diced Tomatoes • 2 TBS Tomato Paste • Zest and Juice of 2 oranges • 1/2 tsp Kosher Salt • Pinch Black Pepper <p><small>Piri Piri (single name, "Piper Piper") is Spanish. While traditionally made with African Berbere Peppers and fresh tomatoes, Chef Traun adapted this recipe to contain pantry items found in Wisconsin homes.</small></p> <p><small>For a full meal eat one chicken with half the sauce. Place chicken on one side of a baking sheet. Cook for 15 minutes or until internal temperature reaches 165 degrees.</small></p> <p><small>Place parsnips on other half of pan and continue to cook until internal temperature of chicken reaches 165 degrees and parsnips are fork tender.</small></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peel parsnips. Cut off tops and quarter larger parsnips to even sticks. 2. Heat 2 TBS oil in a medium sauce pan until warm over medium heat. Add diced onion and saute until translucent. 3. Add ginger, chili flakes, diced tomatoes, and tomato paste. Cook for about 5 minutes until tomatoes are soft. 4. Stir in orange juice and zest. Turn down heat to a low simmer and cook until thickened. 5. Turn off heat. Drizzle in remaining oil while whisking. 6. Heat oven to 400 degrees. 7. Toss parsnips in a large bowl with half the sauce. 8. Place parsnips evenly on a baking sheet and cook until fork tender. 20-30 minutes depending on thickness. <p style="text-align: right;"> 6 servings 20 min prep 45 min cook 65 min total </p>

This Piri Piri Parsnips recipe was created by MMSD Head Chef and Wisconsin School Nutrition Association Board President Irene Pawlisch.

THANK YOU, FUNDERS!

During the past year, we have all experienced unparalleled levels of uncertainty and stress. As we reflect on the hardships we have all endured, we also want to recognize the remarkable level of support our funders have poured into our community. We are proud to partner with such extraordinary organizations and companies.

Thank you to the following corporate and institutional sponsors for their generous support in a deeply difficult year:

- Compeer Financial**
- Healthy Dane**
- Perkins Coie**
- Roth Cheese**
- Sitka Salmon Shares**
- TASC**
- Zendesk**

Thank you to the following foundations for their support of REAP's programs:

- American Family Insurance Dreams Foundation**
- Blooming Prairie Foundation**

Thank you to **Heartland Credit Union** and **Alliant Energy** for underwriting our Farm Fresh Atlas of Southern Wisconsin.

Even during this challenging time, your commitment to building a vibrant and just food system has not wavered and we are immensely grateful. You made our work possible in 2020 and we are honored to continue this work with you in 2021. Thank you!

FFA PHOTO CONTEST



This year's contest winner features Lauren and Kyle Rudersdorf, owners of Raleigh's Hillside Farm. Lauren and Kyle are in their 9th year of farming at Raleigh's Hillside Farm and have grown exponentially from 8 members to over 300. You can follow Kyle and Lauren's journey through Lauren's blog, The Leek and the Carrot. Lauren serves on the board of REAP Food Group.

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UPCOMING EVENTS



While the pandemic has prevented REAP Food Group from hosting its usual spread of fundraising events, we have not stopped brainstorming ideas to support our local community and mission.

Coming soon is a brand new, pandemic-friendly event that will support our Wisconsin farmers and producers, and, dare we say, will be a fun break from the current state of affairs.

Stay tuned to REAP social channels and website to find out details of the new event and make sure to get involved!