



Local Food Amidst the Pandemic

Our local growers in and around Alcona County have worked to adapt their business to accommodate the State restrictions and recommendations for public safety in order to continue to provide the community flavorful and nutritious food. From increased pick-up options to increased web presence and online ordering options the people dedicated to feed us are doing their part to make receiving food as fuss-free as possible.

As eaters we all have an opportunity to show

our support and appreciation for their efforts by giving them our business and enjoying the fruits of their labor.

Buying produce at the same time you buy toilet paper will always be more convenient, but putting forth the extra effort to make an online farm purchase or planning a trip to the farmers market can fill your heart knowing you supported your neighbor and later on fill your belly with the

most nutrient-dense food you can get.

Have a full heart and full belly; buy local and eat local.



Brittain Family Farm

Photo Credit: Brittain Family Farm

Q & A with Wandering Winds Farm

F2FA was recently able to catch-up with one of Alcona’s growers: Adam and Madeline Beckta at Wandering Winds Farm. Feeding Northeast Michigan since 2015, Wandering

Winds Farm is located at 6196 F-41 just south US 23. This year you can find them at the farmers market in Oscoda on Wednesdays from 8a-1p and the farmers market in Tawas on Saturdays from 8a-1p. New this

year is their Tiny Farm Store which is open on Saturdays from 9a-1p.

See Page 2 for the full interview with Adam Beckta.

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The F2FA newsletter has a new look!

Watch out for underlined text—those are hyperlinks for our online readers!

Do you have an article you would like to submit to F2FA? Email farm2forkalcona@gmail.com

Q&A with Wandering Winds Farm continued

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Q: When it became evident that the State would be under a quarantine for the spring, and at the time, the unforeseeable future was it worrisome for the success of your business?

A: When we heard there would be a lock down (to the degree that it was, in any case) we certainly felt unsure about our ability to sell at the farmer's market as we have in years past. That being said we had a few things going for us that made it much less of a concern for us than for other types of business. First off we both grow and sell food, both of which were on the approved to do business list. We also had made our plan for the year months before the pandemic was a concern, and we already had our seeds and supplies. We actually ended up doing more than we had planned because there were some concerns about the disruption of the food supply and we wanted to be able to supply as much as possible, just in case. Farmer's markets aren't the only way to sell things and we knew we'd be able to figure something out as long as we had something to sell, so we went full steam ahead.

Q: What changes did you make to your farm and business this year to accommodate for how people planned to get food this year?

A: We bought equipment, are hiring two people, and are scaling up our production. We vastly improved our online store to include contact free pickup options and offer everything we have available (including fresh produce), opened a physical retail space on the farm, and are continuing to vend at multiple farm

markets following current best practices regarding safety.

Q: What products do you currently sell, and what times of the year are they available for purchase?

A: We grow an ever changing variety of fresh, chemical free produce seasonally, generally May through November, including head lettuce, carrots, peas, green beans, sweet corn, tomatoes, herbs, and much more. We offer garlic and gourmet mushrooms, both fresh and dried, as well as mushroom extracts, throughout the year. We have farmstead wood fired maple syrup and fruit preserves available year round (although we're sold out of 2020 maple). We occasionally offer baked goods such as sourdough bread, coffee cakes, and hand made pastries, all of which may also be special ordered.

Q: The Tiny Farm Store is adorable! How would you like to see the farm store, and product distribution in general, evolve over time?

A: Thank you! It would be nice to someday offer other farmer's products at our store (we are not currently equipped to do so) in order to provide a more complete shopping experience to our customers as we aren't able to do everything. Of course we as small farmers need multiple outlets and it would be helpful if there was a local foods distribution business we could work with to help spread our product around. We do offer wholesale quantities (and prices) for mushrooms and are able to accommodate custom grow requests with enough lead time. We work with



Wandering Winds Tiny Farm Store
Photo Credit: Wandering Winds Farm

a few restaurants (including the always excellent Hubbard Lake Roadhouse) and as restrictions ease and dining rooms reopen (or

whatever form of food service we may evolve to) we would like to be part of the story. And we will continue to offer our products directly to consumers at farm markets in store, and online.

Q: What can the community do to support you?

A: Buy and eat the food we grow! People love to talk about local food as if it's special or romantic but the reality is that we grow food and you eat food. If you get more of your food from us we can continue to operate and grow to better serve your needs. Simple as that! And don't worry, my ranting and unsolicited cooking advice will remain free of charge.

Online orders can be made on their website:
www.wanderingwindsfarm.com

Find them on Facebook and Instagram for farm updates and pictures.

Farm Fresh Summer Recipes

Whether you planted a garden in the spring, joined a CSA, or visit surrounding farmer's markets here are a few healthy recipes to help you utilize your summer bounty from Denise Thompson RDN.

Cucumber Salad

Cold, juicy cucumber salad is perfectly refreshing during the hot summer months. This simple, no-mayo recipe comes straight from Denise's grandma in Germany and includes a versatile dressing which can be used with many different veggies including tomatoes, radish, carrots, lettuces, boiled potatoes or blanched wax beans.

Ingredients

- 3 Cucumbers
- ½ cup Olive Oil
- ¼ cup Apple Cider Vinegar
- 1 tsp dill
- 1/2 tsp onion powder
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp sugar
- 1/8 tsp black pepper

Directions:

1. Peel and thinly slice cucumbers with a knife or mandolin. The thinner the better, but don't risk your fingertips. Sample each cuke as you go along to make sure you don't have a bitter one.
2. In a separate bowl whisk together remaining ingredients. Take a few pieces of cucumber and sample your dressing to make sure it is appropriately seasoned.
3. Pour dressing on top of cucumbers and stir. Allow it pickle at least 1 hour.

Tip: You can add a few tablespoons of heavy cream into the dressing to help cut the sour flavor if it's too strong for you.

Grilled Vegetables

Nutritious summer recipes don't get much easier than grilled veg. Are you going to grill meat? Throw some veg on. Almost all veggies can be grilled; a process which brings out their natural sweetness as the dry heat breaks down the starches and fiber into their smaller constituent, sugar.

An important factor in flavorful grilled veg is seasoning it properly. This can be done by marinating it, adding your favorite seasoning blend, or simply by salting it. You could whip up a marinade like this [lemon-garlic recipe](#), or you can take the easy way out like I typically do with Italian dressing which makes a spectacular marinade for veggies.

Ingredients

Italian Dressing

Whatever vegetables you have; cut into approx. 2 inch pieces. Pictured below are:

- Green Pepper
- Zucchini (cut no thicker)
- Mushrooms
- Corn
- Rhubarb (yep.)

Prepare your veggies by cutting them all in pieces which are about the same size. If you don't have a grill topper (pictured below) you may want to cut your veggies in long strips to prevent them from falling through the grates. Place the veg in a bowl and coat with Italian dressing. Allow to marinate about 30 minutes. Stir every once in a while if not all of your veg are submerged in the dressing.

Preheat your grill to medium heat. You don't want your grill at a high temperature which may turn them to ash, nor too low which will end up steaming your veg and reduce the likelihood of the desired grill marks. If you're new to grilling put each type of veg in their own area on your grill. Each one has a slightly different cook time which is dependent on the size of the pieces and the grill temperature. This way, you can pull off each item when it is perfectly cooked vs. having some things overdone and some things underdone. Once you are a pro at knowing the perfect chop size and grill temp you'll be safe to mix everything together.

The total grill time will vary on the veg you choose, approximately 10 minutes. The veg are done when you can easily poke a fork through them. Flip them halfway through and check them often. They can go from perfect to burnt in about a minute.



You can grill almost any vegetable with a grill topper! Using one of these will change your grill game by opening up your grill options.



Grill toppers make cooking veggies much easier because they will not fall through or get wedged in between the grates and burn.



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*Supporting local farmers and
nourishing our community*

2021 Small Farm Conference Update

What do we have up our sleeves for 2021? We are currently working on obtaining grants in order to bring in a BIG name for our 2021 Small Farm Conference: Sean Sherman, author of the cookbook, *Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*. Chef Sherman's book received the 2018 James Beard Award and has been named the best cookbook of the year by NPR, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *New York Magazine* and more. Chef Sean dispels outdated notions of Native American fare, and instead introduces his

audience to modern indigenous cuisine



Sean Sherman, the [Sioux Chef](#)

Stay Local, Stay Healthy Contest

Throughout the summer Farm to Fork Alcona devised a plan to support its farmers and community during the COVID crisis. We want to see our farmers thrive while giving people more options to purchase locally sourced food. The COVID 19 crisis has not only financially rocked our farmers, but has impacted people wanting access to locally sourced food.

F2FA held a contest to give away \$25 gift certificates throughout the summer to use at selected Alcona Farms

The contest begins the week of July 6 until all the gift certificates were gone.

Each week, F2FA Facebook, WKJC (104.7), and HITS FM (104.7 / 94.9) featured an Alcona Farmer by telling a little bit about the featured farm and what they have to offer, and then inviting people to compete for a chance to win a \$25 gift certificate to that farm.

Each Alcona farm is unique in what they have to offer: ranging from fresh and smoked trout, to fresh cut flower

arrangements, to pasture raised beef, and more.

To enter, contestants were to follow the *Farm to Fork Alcona* Facebook page and send an email to farm2forkalcona@gmail.com with the word "CONTEST" in the subject line.

F2FA held a drawing for 1 contestant each week from the submitted emails.

2019 Giving Tuesday Results



Back in December, Farm to Fork Alcona participated in their very first "Giving Tuesday" campaign. The goal was to raise enough money to help F2FA attract prospective future farmers to Alcona. We were able to raise \$1200, and with this, our plan is to create our own 'vendor booth'.

We would like to attend other small farm conferences throughout the state and showcase what Alcona has to offer: a great place where you can bring your family, start your own farm or agri-business.