

Ag Tourism



Exploring Regional Cuisine for Cluster Development

– Notes based on Wes Johnson's
Presentation (Alberta Agriculture & Food)
January 15, 2007
Cluster Coordinator Meeting, Red Deer AB

Overview:

What is Regional Cuisine?

Cluster ideas to develop around.

An example of the process of putting together a Regional Cuisine Event.

What is Regional Cuisine?

- Highlights the unique products in an area (i.e. Taber corn, elk meat, canola honey...)
- Features seasonal foods harvested or processed at their peak
- Locally produced food with global influences
 - Increasingly we are more exposed to cultural influences of cooking techniques, products, herbs and spices
 - There is a trend towards showcasing locally cooked food in different ways

Therefore, Regional Cuisine is...

- A developed commodity
 - Through marketing of a quality product
- A creative endeavor - We have the ability to grow and brand our own Regional Cuisine through:
 - Agricultural production
 - Processing to value-added (i.e. Premium Alberta Saskatoon Pie)

Why Regional Cuisine?

- A growing public interest in where our food comes from and how it is grown and who is producing it
- Fear of food – GMO's pesticide use, animal welfare
- Environmental stewardship, organic movements
- Culinary trends – Slow Food, comfort food, homemade appeal, global cuisine, artisan attention



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Ag Tourism Cluster project ideas to develop around.

- An example of the process is putting together a Regional Cuisine event...



- Food Events can:
 - Promote a specific crop during harvest
 - Market local farms
- Event theme ideas:
 - By culinary geography – prairies, Rocky Mountains
 - Themed areas – Cowboy Trail, Kalyna Country
 - Ethnic and cultural – French, Danish, Japanese, Ukrainian
 - Products – Taber corn, Mundare sausage, Saskatoon berries, Bison
 - Production methods – ranching, greenhouses, fruit orchards, unique breeds

Look To Partners to Grow Your Event

- Partner up to develop a food event for target marketing your farms and region or an area
 - Showcase a greater range of ingredients
 - Pool creative ideas
 - Cross promote and spread the word
 - Other organizations can assist in development



Methods to Success:

- Create a **hands on or learning environment** – i.e. offer honey extraction demonstration and then sell honey products
- **Ambiance creates lasting impressions** – if selling ranch themed food, pull up with a chuckwagon
- **Provide a space** for people to enjoy and relax in – visitors want to eat regional cuisine next to flower gardens or at a picnic table under a shady tree
- Utilize a food event as a **launch or a consistent activity** the public comes to expect year after year
- Understand the **best time of year to host** a regional cuisine event – this can be based on seasonality or tying into other established events (i.e. Benalto Rodeo, Lesser Slave Lake's Songbird Festival)
- Make **temporary or long term changes** to your site (i.e. convert structures into temporary eating areas and rent tents for unpredictable weather)
- **Research, Research, Research**...spend time researching food ideas – look to food magazines, other food events and online
- Don't be afraid to **go to the experts** – work with a local chef or hire a caterer and have them use your local ingredients



Organizing a Regional Cuisine Event – a case study

Showcasing Strathcona County Harvest Festival of Foods, October 2003

Harvest Festival Action Steps

1. Invited potential partners
2. Set up meetings
3. Created a business plan
4. Designed the menu and ordered supplies
5. Selected the venue and entertainment
6. Implemented the promotional campaign
7. Coordinated the ticket sales and seating
8. Set up decorations, lighting and kitchen
9. Hosted the event
10. Learned lessons
11. Gathered results
12. Celebrated success



Points to Ponder...

- What's in it for you
- Time and energy
- What does a successful event look like to you?
- Who is the target audience?
- Location?
- Who will be the project champion?

