



ORGANIZING LOCAL FOOD EVENTS IN ALBERTA

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Organizing Local Food Events in Alberta

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This document has been created by Explore Local, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, to help you plan a local food event. In these pages, you will find reasons to choose local.

The publication explains a variety of formats for presenting local foods to guests, discusses the challenges of sourcing the best ingredients and shares tips learned from past events.

Albertans organize community events across the province, and food is usually one aspect of these events. Specifically, a local food event features foods grown and prepared close to the event location, and extra effort is often required to source local ingredients.

Events can range from a single meeting, where you simply choose a caterer who specializes in local foods, to something complex, such as a multi-day festival of food where chefs, farmers and others gather to present a variety of dishes to a large crowd.

Why local food?

Less than 18 per cent of Albertans live in rural areas, and most are not in direct contact with agriculture in any form. A food event connects urban populations back to the land. It also helps to remind guests where some of their food comes from and to understand the value of agriculture and farming.

Farmers and food processors benefit when buyers take an interest in their efforts. An event is a chance for growers to tell their stories and teach consumers about the foods they are eating. This promotion of local should result in more buyers and a growth in sales. Ultimately, the overall local food system has the potential to grow.

Local food is worth the extra effort. Food consumed close to where it was grown and processed is as fresh as possible and engages all the senses through colour, taste and so on. Producers often know of unique ways to prepare what they grow. Quality, locally grown foods at an event combined with Alberta's culture and history create a unique experience for visitors and citizens alike.

Define local for your event

As you plan your event, write a definition of "local" for yourself. Generally, local means "food less travelled." Local could be defined as foods grown and/or prepared within a 100-kilometre radius of your event. You may also choose to showcase foods from your county, river valley, region or province.

You may want to define a percentage of your meal as local. The smaller the geography and the higher the percentage of local ingredients you want to use, the bigger your challenge. A 100 per cent local menu anywhere in Canada will exclude black coffee and tea from your event; a compromise would be to serve locally roasted coffee.

Local food events can put urban
Albertans back in touch with rural life

Pick a purpose or two for your event

It is helpful to define a purpose for your event. Your purpose will guide your choice of menu, format, theme and partners. Here is a list of purposes from actual local food events:

- grow local economies
- increase the sustainability of the local food system
- serve food people enjoy
- stay within budget and realize a profit
- fundraise for a local food organization or charity of choice
- showcase locally grown food and drink
- create new relationships between farms, food processors and restaurants
- provide opportunity for local farmers/producers to increase their income by increasing their local customer base
- build regional identity based on local ingredients, food preparations and cultural traditions
- sell a complementary variety of farm fresh products and foods in a co-operative manner
- offer visitors a way to tour, taste, and shop locally
- promote fresh foods, vibrant communities and natural areas all year long

Develop a purpose to match the unique needs of your event or adapt statements from the above list to match what you hope to achieve at your event.

Create an asset list

Enthusiasm in the planning will grow when you take time to brainstorm and write down your area's assets. An asset list is an inventory of what is already in your own backyard.

The products, resources, services, sites and events can be placed on a map of your region to create an asset map. This map is useful if you are planning a food trail.

Your asset list can cover many different products, people and locations

Here is a list of potential assets to help you get started:

- processed food products – preserves, baking, etc.
- crops – grains, oilseeds, meats, vegetables, fruits
- beverages – tea, wine, mead, beer or spirits
- signature dish – is your area known for its barbeque sauce, butter tarts or flapper pie?
- interesting people
- celebrity chefs
- food artisans – cheese makers
- heritage/cultures – what cultures first settled your area?
- interesting locations
- farms/ranches
- on-farm stores
- rural tourism destinations
- one-of-a-kind restaurants
- inns
- greenhouses
- historic sites
- existing events
- festivals
- fairs
- farmers' markets

Brainstorming the assets before you start planning can prevent conflicts with pre-existing events. With this picture of what is interesting, build on your local assets. Look for ways your event can complement what your area has to offer. Your organizing committee will be energized as each person adds something to the list.

An asset list will expand the possibilities for your event. New locations, foods and people to involve may be revealed. Events, menus and maps can all be made from this list. Your asset list is key to finding local food experiences within your region.



Having the right assets can mean a good crowd for your event.

Target an audience for your event

Target a specific audience for your event; do not just hope everyone and anyone will come. Families, seniors, foodies, middle-aged women, tourists, city dwellers and local citizens are a few possible audiences.

Your chosen target group should influence many decisions about your event. These decisions include aspects like ticket price, location, timing, event activities and more.

If you want to attract people from nearby cities or towns, consider how long it will take them to drive to your event. If you hope to attract families, keep your event affordable and fun.

Find a format to present the local food

There are many different ways to showcase local food. Before you undertake any local food event, make sure you have all the appropriate permits and permissions. Check with Alberta Health Services and your municipality for their requirements. Be aware that not all food sold at farmers' markets may be permitted for use at a local food event.

Comply with food and safety regulations

For your guests to have a positive experience at your local food event, the environment and the food needs to be safe. There are several steps to be taken to ensure this is the case. Additional insurance may be required, as well as liquor licenses and approvals with Alberta Health Services.

Most local food events will fall under either “Part 4 – Special Events and Temporary Food Establishments” or “Part 5 - Community Organization Functions” of the Alberta *Public Health Act* Food Regulation.

Both Parts 4 and 5 require the event organizer to notify Alberta Health Services that an event with food is going to take place. Make contact with a local Alberta Health Services public health inspector early in your project.

Inspectors enforce the Alberta *Public Health Act* and can help you interpret the regulations for your event. Develop a good relationship with your public health inspector to ensure the success of your event. Check out the Alberta Health Services website for additional resources and information (<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph/Page13999.aspx>).

If there is more than one local food event in your future, consider taking an approved food safety course offered by Alberta Health Services. All food served at local food events must come from approved sources and be prepared in a permitted facility by someone who has been issued their own food permit by Alberta Health Services.

Food safety is a top priority for your local food event

These requirements mean that foods prepared in home kitchens cannot be used. For example, purchasing buns from a farmers' market vendor who bakes in her home kitchen is not allowed nor is purchasing uninspected eggs from a local farmer.

One possible way to reduce risk is to outsource the food purchase and preparation to professionals, either a chef or catering company. Depending on your event and location, some restrictions may apply. It is recommended that you talk to your health inspector before choosing this option.

Insurance and other licenses are also important to acquire as needed and ahead of your event. The collective/organizing body usually holds the event insurance as well as any special event and liquor licenses required. As with everything else, allow extra lead time to get all the paperwork in place; 12 weeks ahead of your event is not too soon to start.

A driving tour

A driving tour with grazing/tasting samples, a formal sit-down meal in a community hall or getting down and dirty digging potatoes are simply appetizers to this section. The tour gives an overview of many ways to present food.

Food maps or trails

A map or a trail is an extension of the asset list. Once you have your asset list, choose locations that meet your criteria or theme. Publish these locations on a map or website.

The map entices guests to seek out several stops on a self-guided driving or cycling tour. Trails can be open for visitors to discover seasonally or year round. Food trails often have three or four special event weekends during the year to further encourage people.

One example of such a trail is the “Ontario Butter Tarts and Buggies,” an event that combines the former Butter Tart Trail with the Mennonite Culture of the former Horse and Buggy Trail (<http://www.buttertartsandbuggies.com/>).

Localize a pre-existing event

Replace an imported food with local food. An agricultural society or other sponsor could buy local 4-H beef to be made into hamburgers, roasts and steaks. This meat is then served at the summer fair and/or fall community suppers.

Be sure to promote the fact that the meat is local meat, both in advance and at the event. The same can be done with bison, pork and other meats. Remember, all meat sold or served to the public in Alberta must be inspected.

Partner with others to help profile your event

Cooking demonstrations

People enjoy learning new ways to cook food. Education around how to prepare meals using local ingredients increases awareness.

A cooking demo can be led by a chef or a farmer and can be done on its own or as part of a tour, festival or fair. If any of the food prepared during the demonstration is being served to the public, it must come from approved sources and be served following requirements put in place by Alberta Health Services. Check with your public health inspector as to sampling requirements.

If the demo is geared towards adults, you may want to serve wine and/or beer. Be sure to check into the additional permit requirements.

If the demo is designed for kids and families, keep that in mind with the colours and shapes of the foods. Also consider the length of time for the activity to hold their attention. Cooking demos can work for large crowds and can be as short as 15 minutes. Have take-home information, including recipes.

Cooking class

A cooking class requires more time, space and a better facility. In this format, the guests actually prepare the food. This idea is a great use for existing commercial kitchens in your community, such as in the local hall or school. Class size can range from 6 to 24 people.

Food preservation is enjoying a comeback. Canning and pickling fresh, local ingredients are great ways to enjoy them year round. Along with renewed interest, there is a need for instruction on the correct techniques to preserve foods in these ways. Check with Alberta Health Services for any permitting requirements.

Featuring local foods in cooking classes and demonstrations can create interest

Foraging/food classes

Taking the experience to the next level, guests can help gather and harvest the foods. Someone with expert knowledge of wild foods can lead a group into the forest or field to find their dinner. Edible flowers and berry picking are two examples of such foraging.

This approach can also be done with domesticated crops like asparagus, potatoes, carrots or peas, as well as fruit. These classes work best with smaller groups.

Community suppers

Community supper events take place indoors at a community hall, and food is served buffet style. The Maritimes have lobster suppers in church basements while the Alberta version often features beef, turkey or chicken.

These are great opportunities to serve and promote local foods. Advance promotion and education about local are great for both marketing and event support. Be sure to provide plenty of notice, and check with Alberta Health Services for any registration and/or approval requirements.

Long lunches

This is an outdoor event that features tables put together to form one long table down the main street of town. The street is closed to traffic during this time, and local businesses participate in the festive atmosphere. The meal is served buffet style, and the menu often features roast meat, corn (or another local vegetable), buns and desserts.

The town of Warkworth, Ontario, population 800, has had a long lunch in August for the last eight years (<http://warkworth.ca/events/warkworth-long-lunch/>). These events would fall under either Part 4 or Part 5 of the Food Regulation. Check with Alberta Health Services for requirements.



Chef preparing the meal for an on-farm local food dinner.

Farm dinners

The farm dinner event takes place at an actual farm. Typically, guests purchase tickets directly from the farm. Meal locations vary depending on the farm and the season. Tables are set up outdoors in the corn patch, beside a sunflower field or among the vines of the vineyard or inside a rustic community hall.

Food is served “family style” with serving dishes passed among the guests who are seated at tables of eight. The growers act as hosts, giving a tour and sharing the story of the farm and the foods being served.

The caterer or tour provider takes care of the logistics and preparation of the meal. Plate & Pitchfork is a company from Oregon that arranges such events (<http://www.plateandpitchfork.com/faq.aspx>).

An Alberta example of this format takes place at Prairie Gardens and Adventure Farm near Bon Accord. The owner works with a chef from Edmonton to offer several “farm-to-fork” dinners throughout the year. The chef prepares five-course dinners using vegetables from Prairie Gardens, proteins from neighboring farms and wines from British Columbia (<http://prairiegardens.org/festival-events/range-road-gourmet-dinner/>).

Taste events and wandering picnics

Taste events and wandering picnics might be either indoor or outdoor events. The venue could be a large park, a farm, community hall or conference centre. Chefs are paired with farms to create and present new dishes using local ingredients. The ticket price includes a number of coupons that guests can exchange for sample size dishes and drinks.

“Feast of Fields” is an outdoor version of this format. Guests are given a cloth napkin, a plate and a wine glass and are encouraged to wander to different stations throughout the site tasting small servings of food and drink.

Several feasts take place across Canada, usually in late summer or early fall to coincide with the peak of the season for fresh fruits and vegetables. Locations include Calgary and British Columbia (<http://slowfoodcalgary.ca/events/> or <http://www.feastoffields.com>).

Farm dinners, community suppers and tasting events are all good ways to raise awareness about local foods

Crop specific food festival

Corn, garlic, tomatoes, strawberries, saskatoons and pumpkins have entire themed events in their honour. If your area is known for a specific food or crop, this type of event could be a good option.

The theme could be carried throughout a whole day or weekend with demonstrations on how the food is grown and harvested, taste tests, meals featuring the food as an ingredient and more. The “Andrew Garlic Festival” is an example (<http://www.andrewagsociety.com/>).

Source the local foods

A local food event requires access to local foods. While local foods are now more available, be prepared to look beyond the grocery store. People are accustomed to accessing foods from all over the world and all year round.

Many foods are not available fresh year round; therefore, searching for local food can feel limiting at first, but Alberta does have four seasons.

Start by considering the landscapes and farms of your area. Review the crops and foods available (see Appendix I for a full list for Alberta). Make sure to explore Alberta-made beverages; there are more local beers, spirits, wines and meads available all the time.



As much as possible, local foods should be served.

Here is a list to help you source local products:

- Farmers’ Markets – There are more than 125 Alberta approved farmers’ markets and close to 3,000 vendors across the province. The Alberta Agriculture and Forestry website, www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmersmarkets, lists all the approved farmers’ markets in Alberta. Many of the markets listed have provided their websites where the vendors are often noted separately. The Alberta Farmers’ Market Association website, <http://www.albertamarkets.com/>, does have a vendor tab that lists vendor members by product category. Keep in mind that only those foods coming from approved sources can be purchased from farmers’ market vendors.
- Alberta Slow Food Chapters – Slow Food is a global, grassroots organization that links the pleasure of good food with a commitment to their community and the environment (see the websites slowfoodedmonton.ca or slowfoodcalgary.ca).
- Alberta Food Matters! – This group works to ensure secure access to adequate amounts of safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate food for everyone (<http://www.foodsecurityalberta.org/>).

Locally sourced food can cost more in both the price per item and the time required to source it. For example, in 2010 Chef Chris Murphy estimated 60 to 65 man-hours were spent sourcing the ingredients for a five-course local meal for 40 people. Then, four additional days were spent actually preparing the meal. Plan and budget your time and dollars accordingly.

Volunteers find this type of work interesting and energizing as they source local foods, learn about their communities and build negotiation skills.

Give yourself lots of lead time for an event. When you think ahead, you can plan for fruits and vegetables to be preserved or processed at the peak of the season to be served at a later date.

To save money, use well prepared, less expensive cuts of meat rather than premium ones. As you build your menu, think of options that require less preparation time such as roasted versus mashed potatoes. Remember to work with Alberta Health Services to ensure all requirements under the Food Regulation are being followed.

You can be budget-conscious and still hold a successful event

Some reasons it may take longer to source local:

- The farmers' market is usually open only one or two days a week.
- The person who tends the crops or herd often also does the marketing and deliveries.
- Farms and processors may require the food be picked up directly from their farm.
- Quantities required for your event might be much larger than the producer is used to delivering at any one time.

Another aspect of local sourcing is ensuring the food is safe. Here is a list of minimum requirements to look for when purchasing ingredients:

- Meat must be slaughtered and processed in an approved facility. All meat sold in Alberta must be inspected. Uninspected meat cuts from an approved facility will have the word(s) “uninspected” or “uninspected, not for sale” stamped on the wrapping and cannot be used as an ingredient at a public event.
- Milk must be pasteurized. It is unlawful to sell or give away unpasteurized milk. Unpasteurized milk also cannot be used as an ingredient except in certain types of cheese. Cheese made from unpasteurized milk must be manufactured in compliance with the *Food and Drugs Act*.
- Fish processors must comply with the Food Regulation. They must obtain and display a food permit.
- Honey sold by the producer directly to the consumer at a honey house or residence or at farmers' market does not have to be graded. It must be fit for human consumption and free of foreign material. Ungraded honey cannot be used by chefs or caterers when they are preparing foods to be served to the public.
- Farmers can sell their unprocessed horticulture products directly from their farms. There are no requirements for grading of those vegetables.
- Only inspected, graded eggs can be used in food being prepared for the public.

Look for farms with an On Farm Food Safety Program (a complete list of programs is given in the Additional Resources section at the end of this document). Ask your potential suppliers questions about their food inspection and grading.

Seek potential partners

Planning your event with others is helpful as many hands make light work. Fast track your first time event by partnering with a pre-existing event to benefit from their experience and expertise. Here are some suggested sources for potential partners.

Community groups

Agricultural societies – there are nearly 300 active agricultural societies in Alberta, and they help organize more than 1,000 fairs and events across the province each year. These groups have several assets: event planning experience, facilities with commercial kitchens that are often under-utilized, sometimes dollars to spare and a mandate to host agriculture events.

4-H – the words “for my community” are part of the 4-H Pledge. Seek members to help in your events and help clubs find easy ways to support local. 4-H members may be willing to work at your event in exchange for project support or a chance to share their stories.

Small businesses

There are both immediate business and future profitability reasons for businesses of all types to be involved in your event. Ask how they can help your event and ask what they need from you, such as profile, promotion, etc. The following business people might be win-win partners for your event: caterers, chefs, restaurants, meeting/event planners or printers/copy shops.

Media

The media are useful in promoting your event, and all media need and want a good news story. Your challenge is to get their help in advance for promotion. There are many ways to involve them and make a story of the planning process:

- Invite them to a short planning session where there will be food to taste and photograph.
- Deliver snacks to the radio stations with a description of your event including a contact name and telephone number as well as the event date.
- Invite the media to be part of a judging panel at a taste test or chili cook-off.
- Have a radio announcer be the master of ceremonies at your event.



Maintain a country feel to your set-up to add to the ambiance.

Find financial support from sponsors

A successful event can be costly to produce; consider sharing the financial burden with sponsors. Sponsorship is a marketing arrangement that allows sponsors to achieve their goals while helping you.

Usually, a sponsor hopes to increase sales and/or positively build an image in the community. Look across the entire local food system to find partners, collaborators and sponsors.

For example, independent grocers and health food stores have provided cash sponsorships to food events. Seek sponsorship from local government, service clubs, associations or food/farm related suppliers and businesses.

Promote, communicate and educate as you celebrate local food

Publicize and share the menu or excerpts of the menu ahead of time; an enticing menu can sell an event. Include a sample of the menu in your promotion of the event.

Having attracted people to your event, you now have a great opportunity to educate them about local food. Ensure you have a positive and interesting story to tell. Use your menu to feature farm, grower and food artisan names, stories and/or photos.

Another way to help make the connection for your guests is through keepsake menus with farm logos and contact information.

Use photos of the farm, food and the surrounding landscape to visually stimulate your guests. This strategy can be presented in the form of posters, postcards, tabletop tents, programs, displays, bookmarks or a slide show projected on a large screen.

Promote your local food event well and raise your attendance figures

A master of ceremony with a microphone will help your event flow. This person does not need to talk the entire time, but can buy time if needed and could achieve several purposes:

- thank guests for attending
- share local food stories/issues
- thank volunteers and hands that prepared the meal/food
- announce raffle prize winners
- guide guests through logistical challenges if needed

Beyond food – make your event great

Use a theme to unify

Once you have an event purpose, a theme helps focus your project. Pioneer/old fashioned fun, harvest, everything pumpkin, French or Ukrainian heritage – each approach succinctly targets energy and interest.

Once you pick a theme, stick with it and resist the temptation to include everything. “Let’s leave something for next year,” is a good phrase to use and keep a file of ideas.

Joan Tobin says it best in her document “Event Planning: Marketing Local Food,” (<http://ezinearticles.com/?Event-Planning:-Marketing-Local-Food&id=306803>):

A consistent presentation of your event’s theme is the key to success. Your theme should connect to the food served, the décor, the music and the atmosphere. For example, an Autumn Harvest celebration could showcase locally grown pumpkins and apples in traditional pies and butters. Remembering your purpose is to sell local food,

locally grown potatoes, squash, and onions should all be displayed as key ingredients in traditional autumn harvest dinners. Having the recipes on hand for customers will encourage them to buy the ingredients and make the dishes at home. Visually appeal to your customers with traditional harvest-themed décor with cornstalks, pumpkins, and gourds. High spirited music will round out the event and provide a fun and lively atmosphere.

While this example may seem straightforward, I have been to several events where the presentation was inconsistent and the theme was lost. For example, a country fair should not offer music by the local church choir. While the choir may be excellent and the lead singer may be your wife, the tone set by the music is inconsistent with the theme. Your message will be lost in the contradictory presentation and customers may lose interest.

Shopping adds entertainment value and profit

A favourite activity, after eating, is shopping. Have something for sale at your event for guests to browse and buy. Be sure that sale items match with your theme and goals.

Local foods, including sauces and jams featured on the menu, make sense as long as they are properly made, packaged and labeled. Local arts and crafts, souvenir shopping bags, magnets, and/or postcards can also work.

Maximize manpower – use volunteers

A well run food event requires lots of manpower. You will need help in the kitchen as well as servers, greeters, and ticket sellers. Look to your partner organizations, friends and family as a source of volunteers. You may want to specifically target a partner organization as a source of volunteers.

At your event, make your manpower visible to your guests by using name tags, t-shirts, or costumes that match your theme. Make the event enjoyable for everyone by being organized and well staffed.

If your event is large and complex, orient volunteers ahead of time. Reward your volunteers by having a special after party for them. Use their experiences at the event to help improve the next one.

Event evaluation

After the event is over and while it is still fresh in your mind, take time to evaluate the experience. One way to know if your event was a success is to go back to your original purpose. Did you achieve what you set out to do?

Another evaluation approach is to review the number of tickets sold. You could review comment cards or visitor surveys to gain some insight. You could also survey the farms and food producers involved to see if they gained profile or sales from the event.

If you have an organizing team, you could simply ask yourselves what do we need more of? Less of? What do we need to continue to do? If you do a working group evaluation celebration, collect the stories and get them to the media with a photo of the fun you had. If they run an article, you will find even more volunteers, partners and sponsors for the following year.

Evaluate the event and learn
how to improve for the future

Common elements of success

This section features tips gleaned from interviews with food event organizers.

Admissions and ticket sales

- Taste trails and other driving routes are usually free.
- Food event tickets range in price from \$25 to \$90 although some exclusive events have charged as much as \$200 for an afternoon or evening event. Sell and distribute tickets through partner organizations or local businesses.
- Food tours cost the most at \$85 to \$95 per tour and include transportation, meals, interpretation/guided experiences on location, and may also include a cooking class.
- Pre-selling tickets lets you know how many participants to expect and simplifies entrance to the event.



Setting your table to view the farm adds to the authenticity of the event.

Event logistics

- Pair food events with another specific interest area such as photography instruction, local history/exploration of historic locations, agriculture fairs or events, instruction on how and where to shop for food or instruction on how to prepare and cook new foods.
- Provide frequently asked questions (FAQs) in your program or on your website ahead of time. This technique provides an opportunity to give visitors an idea of what to expect about the format and rules for your event.
- Use a host to welcome guests and help them find everything from parking to coat racks and places to sit. Give hosts interesting facts to share to spice up their welcome messages.
- Work to reduce line-ups. Keep the crowds moving by having sufficient food, drink and information stations. It might help to have the event entrance and registration area separate from the area to buy additional tickets. And keep the drink ticket sales area separate from the bar.
- Raise revenue with alcohol sales. It is best for the event organizer to be responsible for the liquor licence and sales. The bar is usually a moneymaker for your organization. There are lots of interesting local drinks to offer to your guests.
- Reduce portion sizes at tasting events so guests can taste at many/most stations without losing their appetite for more.

- Supply entertainment. Here are some ideas:
 - live music, including locals with a CD to sell
 - farm reports from farmers
 - guess the original purpose of the antique object, led by an expert
 - storytelling
 - cowboy poetry
 - have a First Nations group offer a blessing
 - cooking demos
- Use signs to help your guests find their way to the event location (way finding), especially if you are expecting out-of-town guests. Clearly indicate where to park.
- Site signs need to show the washroom locations.
- Show where tickets are being sold or where visitors can get more information about the event.
- Assign someone the task of picking up signs after the event for use next year.

Trail logistics

- Most trails start within an hour's drive of a major urban centre.
- The number of stops/operations on self-guided tours and trails varies from as few as 4 to nearly 50.
- Consider different modes of transportation: bicycles, motorbikes, buses and motor homes.
- Give direction and guidance to visitors, so they can find their way from all directions and manage their expectations. Let them know if they will be driving on pavement or if there are gravel roads as well.
- Communicate with potential visitors about children, pets and other concerns. Include an FAQ section or checklist of reminders on your website and brochure.
- Feature a searchable directory or database and some form of map on the website.
- Post a printable pdf version of trail maps online. Most websites also include downloadable versions of other marketing materials such as flyers, brochures, magazines and recipes.

Media relations

- Press releases are both energy-rich and free. Make a standard template with the words “Press Release” on it. Add contact information and the facts about your event. Leave out the cost of registration.
- Radio promotion works well for your event profile, especially close to the time of the actual event.
- Foster a personal relationship with the media by buying advertising, offering complimentary tickets to events and having the same person contact the media each time, so they establish a personal relationship.
- The best press response is generated when the media actually experience the event, tour or trail. A pre-event media tour or taste works wonders.
- Track some statistics about your event (revenue, amount of media/coverage, number of people who attended). Report the good statistics to the media soon after your event.

Partnerships and sponsorships

- Partner to fundraise for a not-for-profit organization at your food event. You can charge slightly more, and this approach positions you to enhance your ticket sales. Incorporate a cause into the story and promotion of the event. Use wording like “proceeds to go to...for...” and “proceeds to help support...” to be clear on the purpose.
- Include a silent auction to increase the event’s revenues, and give guests something to look at while wandering and tasting. Local artisans and accommodations/restaurants are good partners.
- Use tracked numbers and results from previous events to build a case for why sponsors should invest in making your event even more successful and, most importantly, what is in it for them (positive public relations, media coverage, and exposure to your event’s guests).

**Use all potential networks
and contacts to make your
event stand out**

Provincial resources

Two noteworthy provincial organizations should be accessed whenever you are planning an event. These organizations may be able to provide you with guidance and support as you develop your plan.

Travel Alberta: Travel Alberta (TA) is the tourism marketing agency of the Government of Alberta. Established on April 1, 2009, as a Crown corporation, TA operates under the authority of the *Travel Alberta Act* within the Ministry of Alberta Culture and Tourism.

Among other resources, TA provides a free digital marketing service called ATIS – Alberta Tourism Information Service. ATIS allows you to easily and effectively promote your tourism products and services. Check out their industry website: <http://industry.travelalberta.com/>

Alberta Culinary Tourism Alliance: In 2012, the Alberta Culinary Tourism Alliance (ACTA), a not-for-profit professional association, was created to bring together agricultural, culinary, tourism and hospitality professionals in a forum for positive, sustainable growth.

By working together across sectors and geographic boundaries to build alliances and communication channels, ACTA’s members can increase Alberta’s culinary appeal for travellers to be enlightened, enlivened and enriched. Check the ACTA website: <http://www.albertaculinary.com/>

Conclusion

With creativity and energy, you can ensure that great food events are possible. There is growing enthusiasm for all things local.

You now have a good idea of the resources required to source local food and the variety of formats available for your event. There are many excellent guides and resources on planning events. Use them, as well as this document, for insight into what it takes to organize an excellent local food event.

Remember, it is your responsibility to research and comply with all federal, provincial and municipal regulations related to food and its handling.

Additional resources

Planning

- Explore Local Website – <http://www.explorelocal.ca>
- Plan Your Earth Dinner Tool Box – <http://earthdinner.org/resources/index.html>
- Planning an event – Consider serving local food – <https://learningstore.uwex.edu/Planning-an-EventConsider-Serving-Local-Food-P1398.aspx>
- Setting the Stage – A Community-Based Festival and Event Planning Manual – <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/b47485e9-9939-4a8e-b845-2d73ccc2c151/resource/c3194e63-a918-4823-81c9-9d05458fb262/download/zz-2009-Setting-the-Stage-a-Community-Based-Festival-and-Event-Planning-Manual.pdf>

Food safety

- Marketing Food Safely Manual – [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/explore13314](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/explore13314)
- Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations – [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex13504](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex13504)
- *Public Health Act* – Food Regulation – http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=2006_031.cfm&leg_type=Regs&isbncln=9780779785742
Environmental Public Health, Alberta Health Services – <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph/Page8302.aspx>
- Food Safety Courses, Alberta Health Services – <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph/page3151.aspx>

On-farm food safety programs in Alberta

Recognized programs

- Beef Cattle – Verified Beef Production
- Chicken – Safe, Safer, Safest
- Dairy – Canadian Quality Milk Program
- Eggs – Start Clean, Stay Clean Program
- Pullets – Clean Start
- Grains, Oilseeds, Pulses – On-Farm Food Safety Program
- Herbs and Spices – Good Agriculture and Collection Practices
- Hogs – Canadian Quality Assurance Program

Horticulture – CanadaGAP programs for:

- Combined Vegetables
- Greenhouse Production
- Leafy Vegetable and Cruciferae
- Potatoes
- Small Fruit
- Tree and Vine Fruit

Sheep – Food-safe Farm Practices

Turkey – TFC On-Farm Food Safety Program

Appendix I: an Alberta food inventory

Grains	Wheat, rye, barley, oats
Oilseeds	Flax, canola, sunflower, mustards
Pulses	Lentils, chickpeas, green peas, yellow peas, beans
Greenhouse vegetables	Cucumber, peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, lettuces, micro-greens, sprouts
Field vegetables	Asparagus to zucchini, edible flowers and culinary herbs
Fruit	Apples, black currants, blueberries, buffalo berries, tart or sour cherries, chokecherries, crab apples, strawberries, gooseberries, high bush cranberries, honeyberries, melons, raspberries, plums, rhubarb, red currants, saskatoons, wild cranberries
Eggs	Chicken, duck, quail
Dairy	Milk, cream, butter, yogurt, sour cream, ice cream, cheese
Meats	Beef, bison, chicken, duck, lamb, pork, turkey, farm-raised wild boar, rabbit, elk, deer, ostrich, alpaca meat, goat
Fish	Tilapia, whitefish, lake trout, pike, walleye, whitefish caviar
Processed foods	Pastas, flour, cereal, sauces, dressings, jams, jellies, pickles, spices, seasonings, condiments, baked goods, confections, oils
Other	Honey, sugar beets, mushrooms
Drinks	Beer, spirits, fruit wine, mead, coffee (locally roasted), fruit syrups, barley tea, rosehip tea

