

Ag Tourism CLUSTER

AG TOURISM NEWS FROM AROUND THE PROVINCE AND BEYOND



Volume 4, Issue 2
Fall 2008



BRINGING ALBERTA TO YOU!

CLUSTER REFLECTIONS

Wow – what a summer it was! The media was hungry for stories about local food. Consumers also took an interest in local ag tourism destinations, which resulted in a very busy summer. There are many reasons to celebrate.

A few key projects were undertaken this summer, which you may be interested in. A Cluster Assessment project saw a mystery shopper visit and participate in four different cluster events this spring and summer across the province. Results show there is amazing stuff happening at driving route events and regional cuisine events - keep up the good work! There are always opportunities to enhance your events and some common themes came up during all of the assessments.

***Build the EXPERIENCE** - Is being open on the day of a driving route enough? What can you offer that will give the public something they can remember and learn from? Maybe a behind the scenes tour or an interactive activity?

***Incorporating local food** – People love to eat, especially if it's local food. Providing opportunities for people to purchase food can only enhance your event and your profits.

***Spotlight the producers of local food** – Regional cuisine events do a great job creating awareness of the tasty local food in the area, but be sure to feature the producers of this great food. This can be done in a variety of ways, including PowerPoint presentations, brochures and displays and in-person.

Another project that was recently completed was the Cluster Benchmark project. This report has shed some light on the financial benefits of working together collaboratively! It has also highlighted the importance of tracking and evaluation. Stay tuned for some simple tools and templates to help in this area. Special thanks to the Flavours of the Foothills group for its efforts in making this project possible.

BEST PRACTICES AWARD

Don't miss the opportunity to apply for the Best Practices Awards. Three customized business development packages valued at \$10,000 each will be awarded to three applicants who submit their business plan for a new and innovative idea that will add value, diversify or strengthen their existing farm business. The application deadline is 4 p.m. on January 8, 2009.

In addition to a chance to win a Best Practices Award, all applicants will receive a free registration to the AgChoices 2009 Conference, where the three Grand Prize winners will be profiled. The conference will be held Wednesday, February 11, 2009 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. Be sure to attend the conference to experience big ideas and celebrate the spirit of innovation!

Go to www.agriculture.alberta.ca/renewal for more information or call the Ag-Info Centre at 1-800-387-6030 for an application.

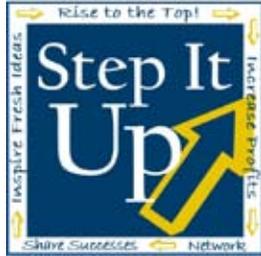
This program is funded through the Agricultural Policy Framework, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative that aims to make Canada the leader in food safety, innovation and environmentally responsible agriculture production.



STEP IT UP...TODAY FOR TOMORROW CONFERENCE

February 18 & 19, 2009 at The Black Knight Inn in Red Deer.

For information and to register, call toll-free 1-800-661-2642, or e-mail director@albertamarkets.com or webmaster@albertafarmfresh.com



GROWING RURAL TOURISM CONFERENCE

- Camrose April 6-8, 2009
- Camrose Regional Exhibition
- For more information or to register go to <http://www.growingruraltourism.ca> or 1-800-296-8112

TRAVEL ALBERTA IN-PROVINCE

are conducting a series of workshops at various locations throughout Alberta from October 6, 2008 - February 26, 2009. The workshops are as follows:

MARKETING PLAN WORKSHOP

- Whitecourt: January 21, 2009 12 p.m. For questions or registrations regarding Travel Alberta workshops, contact Bill Ozard Travel Alberta In-Province, 780-732-8776, or bill.ozard@travelalberta.com or visit the Travel Alberta Industry website www.industry.travelalberta.com

E-MARKETING WORKSHOP

- Pincher Creek: January 6, 2009, 12 p.m.
- Fairview: January 13, 2009, 12 p.m.
- Peace River: January 14, 2009, 12 p.m.
- Grande Prairie: January 18, 2009, 12 p.m.
- Hinton: January 22, 2009, 12 p.m.
- Westlock: January 27, 2009, 12 p.m.
- St. Paul: January 28, 2009, 12 p.m.
- Lethbridge: February 5, 2009, 12 p.m.
- Medicine Hat: February 19, 2009, 12 p.m.
- Drumheller: February 26, 2009, 12 p.m.



DINE KALYNA – ALTO AWARD FINALIST!

Gourmet Dining Experience with Local Flair

A successful Dine Kalyna Regional Cuisine event was held August 7, 2008 in conjunction with the Vegreville Fair. The main purpose of this event was to raise awareness of locally grown foods from the Kalyna area.

Six executive chefs from high end Edmonton and area restaurants, and two highly experienced regional catering businesses were on-hand to prepare gourmet cuisine dishes using local products supplied by area producers. Fifteen different dishes including Chipotle Honey Braised Venison and ApriKat Wheat Ale Stew, Alley Kat Braised Emincé of Beef with Sundried Cranberries on a Herb Bouché, Garlic Mashed Potato Martinis and Spit Roasted Succulent Wild Boar were professionally presented at the event, showcasing both the producers and chefs to visitors. Guests were given a stack of coupons, which were exchanged for food items at the different booths. They originally set out to sell 200 tickets in advance and 100 at the door, however due to their great promoting of the event, they were able to sell 350 tickets in advance, with 50 people on a waiting list.

We would like to congratulate Dine Kalyna for being chosen as a 2008 Alberta Tourism (ALTO) Award finalist in the marketing excellence under \$5,000 category! Another exciting outcome from this event was the new relationships and sales that were made between producers and chefs. Plans are already underway for 2009. For more information, please contact Kevin Kisilevich, Marketing Manager for Kalyna Country, 1-888-452-5962, or e-mail info@kalynacountry.com.



For more information on Ag Tourism development in Alberta go to www.agtourism.ca

or contact an Ag-Info Centre New Venture Specialist at 310-FARM (3276)

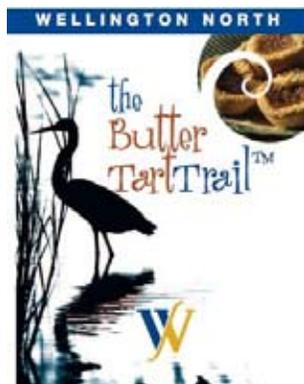
REGIONAL FOOD CLUSTER REVIEW – FROM BARBEQUES TO BUTTERTARTS!

This fall Martine Piebiak has been on the phone and email doing interviews with 12 groups from New Zealand to British Columbia, and from Ontario to Indiana's Amish Country. All of these organizations are working to promote local foods, agriculture awareness and/or ag-tourism in their regions. What can we learn from them that is applicable here in our own backyard?

Here is a quick sample of ideas and learnings:

- Amish Country in northern Indiana, USA has audio CDs available at their visitor's centre and downloadable mp3 audio files to play in the car while on the Heritage Trail.
- Slow Food Cycle Sunday in Pemberton, BC is a self guided bike tour. Bikes make the event green and create less parking headaches.
- The North Carolina Historic Barbecue Trail's business profiles feature contact information plus a full colour photo and a 200 – 300 word description of the food and atmosphere visitors will find at each site.
- The Niagara Culinary Trail in Ontario has a 100 kilometre kitchen section on the website, that includes a specialist who develops recipes and tells her perspective on local foods. For this section they first had to develop a definition of a Niagara Dish and then proceeded with the development of the recipes. Recipes name specific local farms for many of the ingredients.
- The Butters tart Trail in Kenilworth, Ontario is a self-guided driving tour providing the opportunity for visitors to stop at bakeries and Mennonite kitchens for over 14 different types of butters tarts and baked goods. They can also shop for flea market treasures, artisans' wares and farm gate surprises. The trademark of this trail is the butters tart. Tarts need to be home baked (actual ingredients are not necessarily tied to local growers and producers). Tim Hortons' tarts don't make the trail!

Stay tuned for more information and updates from this research including the Smart Practices Guide.



THE REAL EXPERIENCE WITH THE “DAMES ON THE RANGE”

Have you ever considered combining holistic therapy sessions and shopping with a country western flavour? Well, the “Dames on the Range” have!

This ambitious group of ladies span west and south of Calgary from Millarville, down to Turner Valley and Okotoks/High River and extending through the heart of Nanton, onto Claresholm, back across the Porcupine Hills to the Chain Lakes and further south to the Oldman River. They have worked hard to create the ideal vacation getaway for urban women wanting to experience life in the country.

To create the perfect escape, visitors can combine activities from a variety of local businesses giving people an up-close and personal look at the rural lifestyle and authentic cowgirl culture. The Dames provide a real experience where guests get to learn about the western lifestyle, landscape awareness and rural appreciation. They have the opportunity to participate in activities like environmental wagon rides, holistic therapy sessions, edible and medicinal plant hikes, leadership and life coaching sessions, shopping, riding over the range, trailing cattle, and exploring the landscape. There is so much to do, learn and see while staying in authentic rural accommodations with home cooked meals serving many local products.

Many visitors express amazement at the variety of experiences that are so close to Calgary that they were unaware of. The “Dames-in-training” are awed by how welcoming and involved they get to be in something that is generally exclusive to those in the industry or familiar with the region.

With a year under their belts, the Dames have learned lots - solidifying their working relationships, and identifying, utilizing and learning from the strengths each partner brings to the group. “Dames on the Range” are already in the saddle with a pack full of 2009 promotions, so stay tuned!

For more information you can contact Debbie “Ma Dame” Webster at 403-646-0151 or chimneyrockbandb@telus.net or www.damesontherange.com

Investor Spotlight

Your local independent grocer or health food store

Two events in the neighbouring province of British Columbia have been able to secure cash sponsorship by partnering with grocery stores. The mainland Feast of Fields is sponsored by Choices Markets, Western Canada's largest grocer of natural and organic food, and Slow Food Cycle Sunday has great support from the Pemberton Valley Supermarket. In addition to providing dollars, it is a cross promotion opportunity with the events displaying their posters at the stores. It

only makes sense that people who choose to shop at the local grocers would be interested in food events and ag tourism as well. Think about what other businesses are connected to local food. Find out where your potential clients shop for food and look for support, sponsorship and cross promotion opportunities there.

<http://www.choicesmarket.com/index.php>

<http://www.pembertonsupermarket.com/>

ODDS AND ENDS

- A group of key culinary tourism stakeholders from across the province have met and are in the process of working with Erik Wolfe from the International Culinary Tourism Institute. The group is developing a culinary tourism strategy for the province which should be completed in early 2009. To accompany this strategy, a provincial inventory of food experiences from fish fry events, to back road bakeries, to on-farm cafes, to rocky mountain cuisine restaurants, to pyrogy church suppers, as well as provincial food heritage report is in the process of being completed. For more information contact bill.reynolds@gov.ab.ca or elizabeth.kuhnell@gov.ab.ca
- Hot off the press is the Regional Food Cluster research project which took a look at the smart practices of 12 groups working to promote local foods, agriculture awareness and/or rural tourism in North America and beyond. Key areas addressed included everything from standards of participation, event logistics, organizational structure and human resources, to producer-chef relations. Information regarding our existing tools and templates, as well as these recent projects can be found on our website www.agtourism.ca
- Be on the lookout for the highlights in the next Cluster Newsletter from the Provincial Cluster Project Meeting which happened on November 18. It's great to see cluster projects from across the province network together.
- Agri-Preneur Scholarship - Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) supports continuous learning and innovative educational opportunities for Alberta agripreneurs. They will sponsor experienced agripreneurs to attend educational out-of-province, national and international conferences, tours or workshops. This year the scholarship program supports leadership skill development and mentorship training of industry association administrators and board members to promote the growth and sustainability of our industry associations. A secondary program focus is on self directed learning tours and new entrants. A maximum of two scholarships may be provided to new entrant applicants to attend appropriate provincial events. There are two deadlines remaining, December 12, 2008 and January 30, 2009. For more information go to the website www.exploredirect.ca and click on Scholarships and Awards.

Contributors to this edition are: Carmen Andrew, Martine Piebiak and Marissa Verbeek.