



# AK Agriculture Insider

June, 2017

## Take the \$5 Challenge

We're kicking off a fun challenge asking Alaskans to spend \$5 weekly on Alaska Grown at the grocery store.

## ASD Potato Trials

One of Alaska's largest school district kitchens is exploring ways to process Alaska Grown food for student and staff lunches.

## From the Director

The latest on the Agriculture industry in Alaska from Division Director Arthur Keyes.

## Recipe of the Month

With Alaska Grown rhubarb and strawberries in season, this pie will get you an invite to any barbeque.

## Farm Family of the Year

Submit your nomination for Farm Family of the Year that will be presented at the Alaska State Fair.

## Specialty Crop Grants

Learn about some interesting projects Specialty Crop Grant recipients are doing.

## Meet the Team

Get to know our Market Access and Food Safety Manager, Johanna Herron.

## WPM Meeting

The Alaska Division of Agriculture co-hosts the annual Western Plant Board Meeting.



## From the Director

Hello,

June is one of my favorite months of the year when producers get their crops in the ground, our local greenhouses are filled with beautiful flowers, and we get to see friends and neighbors buying Alaska Grown at our local Farmer's Markets. It's also a time when Alaskans are really excited about Alaska Grown and have more access to fresh, local food.

The Division of Agriculture is ready to make this one of the best farming seasons yet and is launching the \$5 Alaska Grown, Five Month Challenge from June through October. Every week Alaskans are asked to spend \$5 on Alaska Grown products. If we all participate in this challenge, not only will we sell out every Alaskan farmer and producer, but we will be putting tens of millions of dollars back into our local economy. To make this Challenge easier for participants, we have partnered with dozens of retailers across the state that have committed to creating a special Alaska Grown display within their store. That way when you go to your local grocer, you will be able to easily find Alaska Grown products and spend your \$5 on some of the best tasting food you will ever have. We hope you participate in this challenge and spend \$5 weekly on Alaska Grown over the next five months.

In other news, I'm pleased to inform you that the private sale of the state-owned Mt. McKinley Meat and Sausage Co. plant was finalized last month. The new owner of the plant is Mount McKinley Meat and Sausage Properties LLC, and they have received approval to continue as a year-round, USDA-certified slaughtering and meat processing facility. We look forward to the opportunity this new ownership of the plant will bring to Alaska's livestock industry.

I hope you enjoy the sunshine, the solstice and Alaska Grown.

Until next time,

*Arthur Keyes - Director of Agriculture*



## \$5 Challenge



This June, the Division of Agriculture is launching its newly created \$5 Alaska Grown, Five Month Challenge. From June through October, Alaskans are asked to spend \$5 every week on Alaska Grown at their local retailers. If every Alaskan participates in the challenge, we will put tens of millions of dollars back into our local economy.

To help make finding Alaska Grown products in grocery stores easier, the Division of Agriculture has partnered with more than 40 retailers across the state. These participating retailers will be creating specialty displays within their stores that prominently place and showcase the Alaska Grown products they carry, making it simpler for customers to find Alaska Grown products to spend their \$5 on weekly.



The challenge will run for five months when the most Alaska Grown products are available. Each month new produce, flowers and meat are introduced into stores when they become seasonally available. Customers can also find other year-round Alaska Grown products including meat, fresh eggs and packaged products at their area retailers and local Farmer's Markets. So help support our local economy and take the \$5 Alaska Grown Challenge.

## ASD Trials Potatoes

There are some exciting things happening on the Farm to School front. This June the Anchorage School District's Student Nutrition Department is working on a trial potato wedge processing project. The trial will take small, cull potatoes (too small to qualify as the large U.S. Number One grade potatoes), process them into wedges, and store them in freezers. This trial will also include an economic analysis to determine the best process for acquiring Alaska Grown produce for student and staff lunches.

The Anchorage School District's Central Kitchen is one of the largest kitchens in Alaska. Using the facility in the summertime for processing may help fill a huge gap in the food system for Alaska.



Also this summer, the Central Kitchen Facility is conducting several demonstration growing projects around the grounds for staff to enjoy and to model small-scale food production. The Central Kitchen will also begin a food waste composting program this summer to model a large-scale food waste composting project.

We are very excited about where these projects will lead the Anchorage School District as well as model great Farm to School projects that can be implemented throughout the state in other school programs.



## Specialty Crop Grants

Applicants to receive Specialty Crop Grant funds for 2017 have been selected. The grant funds are provided by the USDA, AMS to enhance the competitiveness of Alaska's specialty crops including fruits, vegetables, horticulture and nursery crops. These funds are awarded through a competitive review process guided by industry, nonprofit and government stakeholders. The following applicants have been selected to receive specialty crop grants for their projects (summarized below):



- Homer Soil & Water Conservation District: A local food market study for Homer, Alaska.
- Palmer Soil & Water Conservation District: Enhancing irrigation effectiveness through soil moisture monitoring.
- Arctic Alaska Peonies Co-operative: Improving peony post-harvest handling and profitability through developing a procedure and monitoring temperature and RH to reduce the cut stem rejection rate.
- Fairbanks Soil & Water Conservation District: Centralized cold storage – a feasibility study for market planning and for centralized cold storage in the Interior.
- Kenai Soil & Water Conservation District: Growing networks – connecting farmers and buyers by organizing a variety of networking events for small scale specialty crop producers and gardeners.

Additionally the Division of Agriculture will launch two programs: the Restaurant Recognition program will promote, advertise, and recognize restaurants that are serving Alaska Grown Specialty Crops. The Community Specific Specialty Crop Technical Assistance program will select communities to provide expertise for growing specialty crop industries in rural Alaska.





## Meet the Team

Johanna Herron has been with the Division of Agriculture since 2010 and has enjoyed working on a variety of projects and programs for Alaska's agriculture industry. She currently serves as the Market Access and Food Safety Manager, and initially joined the division as the Farm to School Coordinator.

Prior to serving with the Division of Agriculture, Johanna worked for the Center for Alaska Native Health Research in Fairbanks, Alaska. She earned a Master's of Science degree in Community Nutrition and enjoys teaching youth about their health and nutrition through local food sources. She



is a chair of the National Farm to School Advisory Board and was recently nominated to the USDA Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee. This committee provides recommendations to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture regarding a variety of industry topics such as the Food Safety Modernization Act, grant and funding programs, nutrition education, infrastructure needs, crop risk management, labor issues, and anything else that impacts the fruit and vegetable industry.

Johanna's goal for Alaska's agriculture industry is to get producers to a scale that allows them to be successful, full-time farmers in the Last Frontier.

## Farm Family Nomination

The Alaska Division of Agriculture invites you to submit nominations for the 18th Annual Farm Family of the Year award. The award will be presented during the Alaska State Fair's opening day. Nominations should include details about the family and how they

fulfill the following criteria:

- Production of quality Alaska Grown products (not based on quantity).
- Community involvement (civic organizations, school, sports, church).
- Involvement in agricultural industry organizations (local, state, and federal).
- Overall farm family image, farming history, and unique or special production.

Nominations are due by June 30 and can be submitted by mail, email, or fax to:

Johanna Herron – Farm Family  
Alaska Division of Agriculture  
1800 Glenn Hwy, Suite 12  
Palmer, AK 99645  
Johanna.herron@alaska.gov  
Fax: (907) 745-7112

## WPB Meeting



The Alaska Division of Agriculture recently co-hosted the 2017 Annual Western Plant Board Meeting that was held in Anchorage, Alaska May 8th – 11th. Approximately 55 people attended the conference from around the country including members of the Western Plant Board, National Plant Board, Customs and Border Protection, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Plant Protection and Quarantine. Attendees discussed important plant health issues facing the western states and enjoyed an inside look at various aspects of Alaska's unique agriculture industry. National Plant Board members work cooperatively with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS), Forest Service (USFS), and Agriculture Research Service (ARS) to prevent the entry of new pests and diseases into the country.

# Recipe of the Month

## Grandma's Strawberry Rhubarb Pie

(Recipe adapted from Food Network)



### Crust Ingredients

- 2 Cups all-purpose flour (Alaska Flour Company)
- ½ cup cake flour (Soft as Silk)
- 3 tsp. sifted powdered sugar
- ½ cup butter-flavored shortening
- ¼ cup salted butter
- Pinch of Salt
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. vinegar
- ¼ cup ice cold water

### Pie Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups chopped Alaska Grown rhubarb
- 2 1/2 cups de-stemmed, washed and cut Alaska Grown strawberries (in larger pieces)
- 1 1/2 cups sugar (1 1/4 cups for high altitude)
- 2 tablespoons minute tapioca
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour (Alaska Flour Co.)
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 tablespoons butter, cubed small
- 1 egg white beaten with 1 teaspoon water
- Large granule sugar

### Directions

#### Crust Preparation:

Using 2 pastry blenders, blend the flours, sugar, shortening, butter and salt. Whisk the egg, vinegar and water in a 2-cup measure and pour over the dry

(Directions Continued...)

ingredients incorporating all the liquid without overworking the dough. Toss the additional flour over the ball of dough and chill if possible. Divide the dough into 2 disks. Roll out 1 piece of dough to make a bottom crust. Place into a pie dish. Put dish in refrigerator to chill.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.

#### Filling Preparation:

Mix the rhubarb, strawberries, sugar, tapioca, flour, zest and juice of lemon, dash of cinnamon, and vanilla. Mix well in a large bowl and pour out into chilled crust. Dot the top of the filling with the butter. Brush edges of pie crust with egg white wash. Roll out the other piece of dough and place over filling. Crimp to seal edges. Brush with egg white wash and garnish with large granule sugar. Collar with foil and bake at 425 degrees F for 15 minutes. Decrease temperature to 375 degrees F and bake for an additional 45 to 50 minutes, or until the filling starts bubbling. Higher altitude will take 450 degrees F and 400 degrees F respectively. Also, you can use a pie bird for extra decor. Let cool before serving.

## Events

**June 1 - Start of the \$5 Alaska Grown, Five Month Challenge**

**June is National Nutrition Month!**



Make sure you share the nutritional benefits of Alaska Grown products on your social media.

## #BeSocial with us

