



AK Agriculture Insider

July, 2017

The \$5 Challenge

The Alaska Grown \$5 Challenge is going on at retailers & Farmer's Markets throughout the state. See some of the displays.

Summer Meal Sites

Farm to Summer Meal Sites are in full swing. We check in at Petersburg, Alaska to see what projects students and youth are working on.

From the Director

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

Farm Food Safety

The Division plans to provide Farm Food Safety workshops and safety plan development for interested Alaskan Farmers.

Nursery Survey

The Division is working with Nurseries throughout Alaska to find out what kinds of pests are creating problems for plants.

July Availability

See what Alaska Grown products are available this month in stores and at the markets.

Meet the Team

Get to know Erik Johnson, who helps locate and sell state land for agricultural development.

Recipe of the Month

If Popeye ever tried some Alaska Grown spinach, he may have even bigger biceps. This recipe brings some "balled up" energy to a special spinach appetizer.

From the Director

Hello,
I hope your summer is going well and that you've had time to get out and enjoy the sunshine - when it's there. This certainly has been an interesting summer with colder temperatures and rainy days. I know this has caused some delay for many growers throughout the state but it sounds like this month many Alaska Grown products, including fresh greens, will be coming to market.

Last month the Division of Agriculture launched the \$5 Alaska Grown, Five Month Challenge. It has been exciting to walk into many participating retailers and see the Alaska Grown displays they have set up. We are so appreciative of their efforts to prominently showcase and display our locally grown and produced agricultural products. If Alaskans continue to participate in this challenge, we will grow our in-state economy by millions of dollars this year. Not to mention, you're consuming a fresher, healthier, local product. So remember when you head to the grocery store or to your local Farmer's Market each week, please spend \$5 on Alaska Grown and make a difference in your community.

During the past few months, my staff and I have tried to get out as much as possible and visit with as many Ag producers around the state. We are trying to get more connected to our Ag community, and market our Alaskan growers and producers more frequently. We plan on visiting the Interior in August and if you would like us to stop by your farm, garden or greenhouse, please let us know. Please contact our Publications and Marketing Specialist, Jennifer Castro at jennifer.castro@alaska.gov to set up a tour.

Don't forget about our Peony growers; many of them will have flowers available this month! They produce some of the most beautiful, colossal flowers right here in the Last Frontier. Make sure you support our peony growers and all of the hard work they put into producing this extremely challenging crop.

Until next time,
Arthur Keyes - Director of Agriculture



\$5 Challenge

The Alaska Grown \$5 Weekly Challenge is in full swing with dozens of retailers promoting the Alaska Grown products they carry with specialty displays in their stores. Each month, new Alaska Grown products will be featured in the displays as they become available. Please share with us your \$5 weekly Alaska Grown purchases on our social media, #AlaskaGrown



Nursery Pest Survey

The Alaska Division of Agriculture, in cooperation with the USDA, is conducting a Nursery Survey through the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey Program in Alaska. This survey will be conducted in three phases. The first phase of the survey was conducted in May and June of this year, and focused on the Anchorage, Mat-Su, and Fairbanks regions. Phase two will begin in Summer 2018 and will focus on the Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak regions. Phase three will begin in Summer 2019 focusing on Southeast, Alaska.

The purpose of this survey is to determine if pests are entering the state on nursery stock from other states and/or countries, what pests are entering the state from where, and to engage the nursery industry in Alaska on their concerns and ideas on how the state can better serve their industry. During the survey, nurseries are asked to fill out a survey questionnaire and are inspected for major pests of concern by State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources staff and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection staff. The major pests of concern focused on in this survey are: Asian Longhorned Beetle, European Black Arion Slug, Vineyard Snail, Western Flower Thrips, Sudden oak death, stubby root nematode, Tomato spotted wilt virus, and Tobacco rattle virus.



If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Jacquelyn Schade at (907)761-3858 or email Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov

Farm Food Safety

Back by popular demand, with the Food Safety Modernization Act and development of a state program, there has been a resurgence of interest in farm produce safety requirements.

Alaska farmers have been eager to get more produce safety training and development of farm plans. To build on our past workshops, the Division of Agriculture intends to return to communities and host a refresher course for basic farm food safety principles. We will also assist in developing farm food safety plans for interested farmers, and provide tips and guidelines for farmers to create plans tailored to their operation. Let us know if your community is interested in having a workshop.

Please contact Jaman Hitchcock at:
jaman.hitchcock@alaska.gov

FSMA Produce Safety

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule was proposed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and was adopted in 2015. It covers a variety of commodities and has detailed guidelines for growers to follow. If you sell produce that falls under this category, you might be covered in some capacity by this rule. Currently the Alaska Department Environmental Conservation is creating training/ educational material for this regulatory program for the state and it will soon be ready for distribution. To see if you are covered by this rule go to: <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/UCM472499.pdf>

If you want more information or have questions on how this regulation might affect you, please contact Jaman Hitchcock at jaman.hitchcock@alaska.gov or call 907-761-3864.





Meet the Team

Erik “Moe” Johnson is not only a lifelong Alaskan, his family has rich ties to Alaska Agriculture. Moe’s grandparents came to Palmer, Alaska as part of the Matanuska Colony and ran a dairy farm until 1956. In high school, Moe was heavily involved in the Palmer FFA, serving as President his senior year. He still continues to be a part of FFA, assisting with judging events at the Alaska FFA annual state convention. Following high school, Moe went to the University of Alaska Fairbanks where he earned a Bachelor’s of Science Degree in Natural Resource Management. His first job with the State of Alaska was in the Division of Mining, Land, and Water where he worked on federal land transfers to the state.

Today Moe works for the Division of Agriculture, identifying state lands suitable for agricultural development; he then works to get those lands into the hands of farmers. He also assists ranchers with state grazing lease authorizations and assists them through the bureaucratic process.

During the summer, Moe likes to fish for salmon and halibut, play disc golf, go for four-wheeler rides with his wife, and tend to his vegetable garden. In the coming years, Moe would like to see an increase in smaller farms selling Alaska Grown products in the marketplace. He would also like to see an increase in greenhouses and hoop houses to allow for longer growing seasons and/or year-round production.



If you ever have any questions concerning agricultural land in Alaska, please feel free to reach out to Moe by email at erik.johnson@alaska.gov

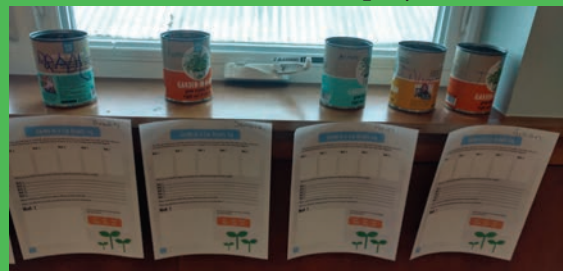
Summer Meal Sites

This summer there are several exciting agricultural projects happening with the 2017 Farm to Summer Meal Site program in Alaska. Nearly \$37,000 in grant funding was awarded to 13 communities across the state to assist with agricultural related projects that are connected to youth and students. The Division of Agriculture is conducting site visits throughout the summer and most recently caught up with the Farm to Summer Meal Site in Petersburg, Alaska.

Youth in Petersburg are learning about aquaponics by growing microgreens over beta fish tanks.



They are also collecting plant growth data for their Garden-in-a Can projects.



We also toured the Petersburg School’s greenhouse, high tunnel, outdoor gardens and their unique Native plants garden that is surrounded by a student-made wood fence.



The Division of Agriculture will continue Farm to Summer Meal Site visits and provide support. We will share updates and information on other Farm to Summer meal site projects happening throughout the state.

Available in July

What's sprouting, blooming, growing and going into the grocery stores and markets this month?

Lettuces and Spinach



Strawberries



Peonies



Cabbage



Cauliflower



Eggs (year-round)



Find local milk in the dairy section.



Meat (check local meat shops)



Recipe of the Month

Spinach Balls

(Recipe adapted from Food.com)



Ingredients

- 12 cups of fresh Alaska Grown Spinach cooked and squeezed dry
- 3/4 cup melted unsalted butter
- 1 medium Alaska Grown onion, finely chopped
- 4 Alaska Grown eggs
- 1/2 cup fresh grated parmesan cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups seasoned bread crumbs

Directions

- In a large bowl, combine all ingredients until well mixed.
- Roll into 2 inch, walnut-sized balls.
- Chill in the refrigerator for 2 hours.
- Place on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 350°F for 20 minutes.

Events

July is National Culinary Arts Month!



Celebrate our chefs and cooks who use Alaska Grown!

#BeSocial with us

