



# AK Agriculture Insider

May and June, 2018

## \$5 Challenge Begins

The second annual \$5 Alaska Grown Challenge has started with more grocery stores participating in this year's challenge.

## From the Director

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

## Recipe of the Month

Alaska Grown tomatoes are in season and this recipe is a great, refreshing way to enjoy them.

## Meet the Team

Get to know Erin Shepard, our WUSATA intern at the division.

## Alaska Grown App

The Division has developed a new Alaska Grown app to help Alaskans and visitors locate restaurants that serve Alaska Grown dishes.

## Meet me at the Market

It's officially Farmer's Market Season giving Alaskans weekly access to fresh, quality food! Learn more about the markets.

## Celebrating Ag Week

The first week of May was filled with agricultural activities across the state to highlight Alaska Agriculture Day!

## From the Director

Hello,

Can you believe we are already halfway through the year? June is certainly one of the busiest months for our farmers and growers - from making sure crops are growing well, livestock is eating well, and preparing the first harvests to go to market.

I was thrilled by this year's participation in the "Drive Your Tractor to Work Day" event. It was a great moment to have the Governor at the division signing the Alaska Agriculture Day proclamation among dozens of farmers from around our state. It's a memory I will never forget from serving as the Director.

We have a lot of great summer programs that have kicked off to support and raise awareness of Alaska agriculture including the second annual \$5 Alaska Grown Challenge, our new Restaurant Recognition program, and Meet me at the Market. Whether Alaskans get it at the grocery store, order it on the menu, or pick it up from their local farmer, we want all Alaskans to enjoy the fresh, clean, healthy Alaska Grown products that you create. Each one of these programs invests in educating our consumers, and encourages growth and support of our local agriculture industry.

I also want to share some great news for our livestock industry: the Division of Agriculture will be hiring a state veterinarian to serve and support you. We hope to continue to grow our livestock industry and the demand for Alaska Grown meat. I look forward to sharing more information about this new role in the future. Our slow start to summer sure hasn't slowed us down, and I want to wish everyone a very successful season!

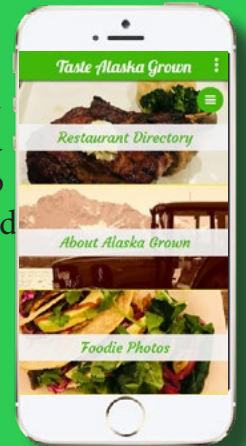
Until next time,

*Arthur Keyes - Director of Agriculture*

## Alaska Grown App

The Division of Agriculture launched the Restaurant Recognition Program this summer to promote the use of Alaska Grown products served in restaurants throughout the state. A total of 37 restaurants have signed up for the program that is supported by specialty crop grant funding through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Participating restaurants are provided with speciality Alaska Grown marketing materials, and are also featured in a new Alaska Grown restaurant directory app that is available for free download in the Google Play and Apple stores. Just search for "Alaska Grown" in your app store. App users can find participating restaurants, their location and contact information, view photos of their dishes, read reviews, provide reviews, and share their "foodie" photos in the app gallery. The new app is being promoted on social media and to visitors at the Anchorage International Airport during the summer. There will also be Restaurant Recognition promotions on the official Alaska Grown Facebook page featuring Chefs and their unique Alaska Grown dishes.



While the program is specifically focused on restaurants that source Alaska Grown specialty crops, many of the participating restaurants also incorporate Alaska Grown meat, oysters, and seafood into their dishes.

Restaurants may apply to join the Restaurant Recognition program until June 30th. Branded promotions will run through September.



# \$5 Challenge

The Division of Agriculture launched the second annual Alaska Grown \$5 Challenge on June 1st. The campaign promotes Alaskans to spend \$5 weekly on Alaska Grown products at their local participating grocery retailers. Grocery stores market and create speciality displays in their stores to promote the Alaska Grown products they carry throughout the challenge which wraps up at the end of October. More than 45 grocery stores have signed up to participate in this year's retail challenge including Carrs-Safeway, Walmart, Fred Meyer, AC Stores and Three Bears. The stores are judged for their consistency in Alaska Grown labeling and advertising, as well as their creative displays. Last year the Palmer Carrs-Safeway was the winning store of the challenge, and they received the golden carrot award. If every Alaskan spent \$5 each week on Alaska Grown products at their grocery store and Farmer's Markets, it would generate tens of millions of dollars for our in-state economy. Many grocery stores carry Alaska Grown products year round including milk, eggs, honey, flour, chips made from Alaska Grown potatoes, and Bambinos baby food which is sourced from local vegetables. During the challenge fresh seasonal Alaska Grown produce is sold in stores including lettuce, broccoli, chard, tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, and squash, just to name a few.



“The \$5 challenge really focuses on promoting Alaskans to buy Alaska Grown in the stores where they do a majority of their grocery shopping, and to make that local choice over other products that are imported,” said Director Keyes. “Not only are you getting a fresher, healthier, cleaner product with Alaska Grown, you are also supporting our in-state economy.”

# Market Season

Many Farmer's Markets across the state are now open for the summer. According to the Alaska Farmer's Market Association (AFMA), there are more than 40 markets throughout Alaska. To help residents find Farmer's Markets in their area, AFMA has released a new online Farmer's Market map directory which is available at [this link](#). The directory includes information on the location, hours, and benefits (WIC/SNAP) accepted at the listed farmer's markets. The guide is also organized by region and includes a list of the markets in the Interior, Southcentral, Southwest, Southeast and Kenai Peninsula areas of the state. To help support vendors and promote Alaska Grown, the Division of Agriculture will be at various markets throughout the summer; just look for the bright blue Division of Agriculture tent with the Alaska Grown logo on the tent top. Goodie bags and prizes will be given to attendees while supplies last.



For an updated schedule of which markets the division will be attending, please visit the events section of our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown/>



# Celebrating AK Ag

The first week of May was full of agricultural activities throughout the state in celebration of Alaska Agriculture Day, which was on Tuesday, May 1, 2018. The Division of Agriculture began the week with an open house serving an Alaska Grown breakfast while Gov. Walker participated in the second annual “Drive your Tractor to Work Day” event. At the division, the Governor signed the Alaska Agriculture Day proclamation in front of a full house of farmers and community members. On the official Ag Day,



the Division hosted the Antique Power Club in the parking lot to show off their tractors while staff went out to teach students about Alaska Agriculture. During the week, division staff continued outreach in schools and communities with learning activities such as seed potato planting, compost building, soil analysis, and preparing school gardens for summer planting. The Plant Materials Center staff did soil tests and tilling on some school garden beds at Sherrod Elementary where 50 third-graders later planted seed potatoes.



In other parts of the state families, schools, (cont..)

farms, and other community members participated in agriculture activities. A total of 600 people participated in the activities and nearly half of them were youth. Getting youth involved with and thinking about agriculture is important to help shape a generation that is passionate about growing and eating healthy, local food. Other activities included things like tapping birch trees and making syrup, planting seeds, cooking local foods, working on community gardens, helping senior citizens plant gardens, teaching lessons on nutrition, and going on agriculture related field trips.



The activities were a great opportunity to spread the word about Alaska Agriculture., and support farmers and producers who have helped shape Alaska’s Agriculture industry, We look forward to next year’s Alaska Agriculture Day celebration and learning about all of the fun activities that are shared.

## Nominate a Family

The Division of Agriculture invites the public to submit nominations for the 19th Annual Farm Family of the Year award. The award will be presented at the 2018 Alaska State Fair. The award was established in 2000 to honor an Alaska farm family that epitomizes the spirit of the industry, and to show appreciation for hardworking Alaskans committed to agriculture and aquaculture. For nomination criteria and submission information, please [click here](#). Nominations are due by June 30th.

## Meet the Team

Erin Shepard serves as the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) intern at the Division of Agriculture, assisting farmers and producers with getting their products in to international markets. She also works on a variety of other projects including the Alaska Grown membership program, Farmer Market outreach, and social media.

Erin is a UAA college student, and has worked at Sun Circle Farm, an organic produce farm in Palmer. She also worked previously as a costume consultant. Erin enjoys being able to assist farmers and other agriculture related businesses to promote sustainable local agriculture. Her favorite Alaska Grown item is fresh, beautiful greens whether she eats them solo, puts them in smoothie, or combines them with other Alaska Grown veggies.



Erin tries to make the most of every nice day by getting outside and enjoying activities including hiking, kayaking, longboarding, camping, and gardening. When it's not so nice out, she likes to paint or draw, read books, and play and listen to music. Erin is enjoying interning at the Division of Agriculture and exploring her educational interests.

## Last Call for Census

Alaska farmers and producers can still submit their USDA Census form online through the end of July. Paper census returns were due by June 15th. You can submit your census data online here: <https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/>  
The data is expected to be released early next year.

## Recipe

### Marinated Alaska Grown Tomato Salad (adapted from the Food Network)



#### Ingredients

- 6 to 8 ripe medium Alaska Grown tomatoes
- 4 green Alaska Grown onions
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 to 4 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Handful of fresh parsley leaves, lightly chopped
- 12 fresh basil leaves, finely chopped/sliced

#### Directions

- 1) Cut the tomatoes into 4 wedges, then cut the wedges in half and add to a bowl.
- 2) Cut off the tops of the green onions, then slice the white and mostly light green parts really thin. Add to the tomatoes.
- 3) Add the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, brown sugar, dash of salt and pepper to a jar. Screw on the lid and shake to combine.
- 4) Pour the dressing over the tomatoes and toss. Add the herbs and gently toss to combine. Cover and refrigerate for a couple of hours before serving. Makes 6 servings.

Take the \$5 Alaska Grown Challenge and purchase Alaska Grown tomatoes at your local grocery

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