

minnesota cooks™

Minnesota Cooks brings certified ingredients to Minnesota State Fair

By Jill Grunewald, Food Alliance Midwest

Presented by Food Alliance Midwest and Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Cooks™ is a unique one-day event that occurs each year at the Minnesota State Fair in St. Paul. The event celebrates sustainably-grown food produced in Minnesota, and educates consumers about the importance of supporting sustainable agriculture through discussions and demonstrations with area chefs, Food Alliance Certified farmers, and influential celebrities.

It is an honor to feature these sustainably-minded entrepreneurs and especially to showcase our Food Alliance Certified growers. They really value the program and we value what they bring to this important event that really drives home the importance of our choices.

The 2009 event, which took place in September, marked this popular program's seventh anniversary. The praise from our certified growers, the esteemed chefs and restaurant owners who support these farmers, and area politicians and media representatives keeps rolling in. The presenters are always proud to hear that Minnesota Cooks gets better every year; the crowds continue to grow and many of the chefs say it is the most important program in which they participate.

Featuring 16 of Minnesota's premier chefs, this year's event featured eight 45-minute demonstrations largely drawing upon ingredients grown on Food Alliance Certified farms. During each presentation, two chefs interact with an emcee about their award-winning recipes and engage in rich discussions about the sustainable philosophies they hold for their restaurants. Food Alliance Certified growers and ranchers, along with area political and media celebrities, make up panels of official tasters, each of whom have the opportunity to share information about their business or operation, and how it embraces environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

Minnesota Cooks was created by Doug Peterson, Minnesota Farmers Union President. The event is highly respected among Twin Cities media, and regularly achieves notable media exposure. Supporters included Minneapolis Star Tribune, Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine, The Heavy Table, Eco Metro/Blue Sky Guide, Sustainable Farming Association, FM 107.1, WCCO TV, KARE-11, and KSTP Channel 5.

Minnesota Cooks calendar

With a new layout and design and all new, original photography by professional photographer Amy Eckert, the legendary 16-month Minnesota Cooks calendar was again a huge hit. Debuting at the event with fresh recipes and new and engaging stories about chef/grower relationships, this accompaniment to the event proves to extend the Minnesota Cooks program and mission throughout the year. This year's Minnesota Cooks calendars are already sold out.