

College Farm Feeds Students, Others in More Ways Than One

CARLISLE, Pa. — At Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pa., students do more than discuss a social challenge such as food insecurity. They do something about it. And in doing so, plans for their future might change entirely.

Just ask Scott Hoffman. When he came to Dickinson from Venango County three years ago, he had no idea he would be interested in farming. The summer after his freshman year, he took a job on the Dickinson College Farm because he needed the money. Little did he know it would be a life-changing move.

"It started this cascade of events," said Hoffman, now a senior majoring in biology who has grown a passion for providing alternatives to the industrial food system and plans to farm after graduating.

Hoffman is not alone. The thriving 50-acre College Farm gives dozens of students an opportunity to grow fresh food for their own dining hall as well as market it to people in the local community. And through a partnership with a local interfaith effort, Project S.H.A.R.E. (Survival Help And Recipient Education), the farm also helps to feed the area's needy.

The farm recently received Food Alliance Certification, which requires on-site inspection and compliance with rigorous standards, including environmentally responsible pest management, soil and water conservation practices, and biodiversity and

wildlife habitat protection.

Dickinson's College Farm is recognized as Food Alliance's first Certified Partner Farm, which is a program for educational and research farms using Food Alliance's standards and inspection process as tools for framing and teaching about sustainable agriculture.

The College Farm, which is also USDA Certified Organic, cultivates an agricultural landscape that supports biodiversity, promotes sustainable land management practices and grows healthy food for the Dickinson College community.

"Each year we meet with the head chef of the dining hall to map out our crop plan for the (college) kitchen's needs," said Jenn Halpin, the farm's director. "Our goal is to be the main supplier for key crops that we raise during the growing season. For instance, during the tomato season, we are their main tomato supplier." That adds up to more than 1,000 pounds of tomatoes each week.

The farm's bounty goes well beyond the campus, supplying a 140-member CSA (campus supported agriculture) program, vending at Carlisle's local producer-only farmers market and providing food to Project SHARE to be distributed to those in need, of which about 30 percent are children and 20 percent are seniors, according to Project SHARE's website.

The College Farm works closely with

the Cumberland County Juvenile Probation Program to help meet the needs of Project SHARE. A local probation officer helps to find seeds designated for Project SHARE crops.

Dickinson students plant and manage the seeds in the spring until field transplanting time. Then, during the summer months, area youth charged with fulfilling community service hours work alongside College Farm staff to manage crops destined for Project SHARE.

"It's a great alternative to picking up trash, which they do most days," Halpin said. "And it gives the youth exposure to young adults (college students) who are motivated and excited about a cause."

As a result of this cooperative relationship, the College Farm has succeeded in growing thousands of pounds of fresh produce that is donated to Project SHARE. Additionally, the juvenile probation program for winter distribution to Project SHARE recipients processes canning tomatoes.

Project SHARE has always had a close connection to the college — Elaine Livas, a Dickinson graduate, founded the organization in 1985.

Project SHARE operates out of a 23,000-square-foot space provided rent-free by Dickinson College. The facility provides food storage and distribution space, a walk-in freezer and cooler, loading docks and a training kitchen.

Origin of College Farm

The 50 acres of the College Farm are part of 180 acres bequeathed to the institution in the 1960s. The remaining 130 acres are rented to a local dairy farmer. Halpin and assistant manager, Matt Steiman, proposed the College Farm program, which launched in 2007.

The farm-to-table movement had been underway at Dickinson since 1999 in the form of a three-quarter-acre student garden, which has now become a community garden.

The farm today serves as an educational program that provides food for the campus kitchens as well as academic opportunities for faculty and students.

It includes six acres of USDA Organic and Food Alliance Certified vegetables as well as culinary herbs and small fruits. Sheep, laying hens, broilers and beef cows graze 18 acres of pasture on the farm.

A dozen or more student farmers help with all aspects of the farm program throughout the academic year. The farm also provides full-time summer jobs to four students each year and offers full-season internships for recent graduates.

At this point, the farm provides produce from the fields to the college dining hall and the community, but beginning this coming year, plans are to begin supplying beef on



Photos courtesy of Dickinson College
Biology major Scott Hoffman plans to go into farming because of a life-changing experience working on the Dickinson College Farm.

campus as well.

Student farmers such as Hoffman get involved in "every little job on the farm," from seeding and transplanting to harvesting and market prep, he said.

Dickinson also offers some courses that allow students to explore social movements and ecology as they relate to farming and food.

Hoffman is enrolled in one that examines La Via Campesina, which means "the peasant's way" in Spanish. He has also undertaken an independent study at the College Farm on beneficial insects in farming as part of his biology major.

In 2002, before the College Farm program existed, students involved in the garden on campus were already reaching out to Project SHARE to find ways to help the program by going to local farms and glean-ing surplus produce.

To learn more about Dickinson College Farm, go to <http://www.dickinson.edu/about/sustainability/college-farm/>. To learn more about Project SHARE, see <http://www.projectsshare.net/>.

Source: Dave Lefever, Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture



Dickinson students have a "weeding party" at College Farm.

Traditional Moravian Recipes

(For a full article about the holiday theme behind these Moravian recipes, see page B17 in this issue.)

Lovefeast Buns

From the Winkler Bakery
Winston-Salem, N.C.

- 1 cup hot, dry mashed potatoes, unseasoned
- 1/2 cup scalded milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1-1/2 pounds flour for soft dough (approximately)
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 packages yeast
- 2 tablespoons orange rind
- 2 tablespoons lemon rind
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon mace

Cream butter and sugar, add potatoes, mix well. Add lukewarm milk and eggs; mix well. Dissolve yeast in warm water and add to mixture. Combine seasonings and rinds; mix in. Add enough flour to make soft dough. Knead on well-floured table. Form into a ball; place in greased bowl. Cover with cloth. Let rise in warm place until double in size. Punch down; let rise again 5-10 minutes. Flouring hands well (dough will be

sticky), form into small balls (about 3 ounces each). Place on cookie sheet. Slash tops with knife (to release air). Cover. Let rise until double in size. Bake at 350 degrees until golden brown all over (15-20 minutes.) Makes about 30 buns.

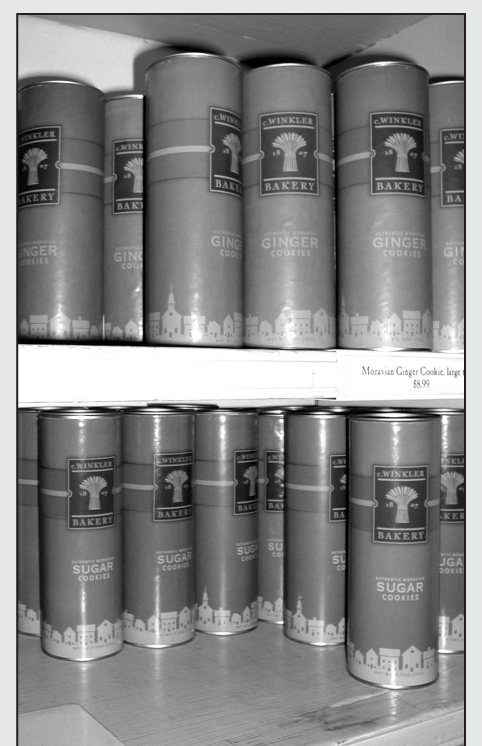
Moravian Molasses Cookies

From the Winkler Bakery
Winston-Salem, N.C.

- 1 pound light brown sugar
- 6 ounces butter
- 6 ounces shortening
- 1 quart molasses
- 2 rounded tablespoons soda
- 1/2 cup boiling water
- 4 pounds flour (approximately)
- 2 tablespoons cloves
- 2 tablespoons ginger
- 2 tablespoons cinnamon

Melt shortening and butter until it bubbles and then add sugar. Stir in the molasses. Dissolve soda in boiling water and add to mixture. Sift in approximately 4 pounds of flour. Add spices along with the flour.

The dough should be almost stiff enough to roll. Cover and let set overnight. Do not refrigerate. On a floured, cloth-covered board, roll dough as thin as possible. Cut with a cookie cutter and place on a greased pan. The recipe makes 1,200 paper-thin cookies.



Moravian paper-thin cookies in a variety of flavors including lemon and ginger are packed in tins and sold across the country.