



Growing Together

Investigating Community
Assets While Living and
Working In a Local Food
Economy

Flying Cloud Farm
Fairview, NC

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Folklore

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Background

This summer I lived and worked on an organic family farm in Fairview, NC. Flying Cloud Farm grows fruits, vegetables, flowers, and herbs for four local markets, a roadside produce stand, and a one-hundred and twelve member community supported agriculture (CSA) program. Flying Cloud Farm's economic success reflects a growing trend in the United States, as consumers choose to prioritize local and sustainable food sources.

While working at Flying Cloud, I studied the role of this small, local farm within its community . Through experiential research and interviews with CSA members, I investigated the value that community members place upon their local economy and its food shed. Specifically, **“What role does a local farm play in the economic and cultural vitality of its community?”**

I asked CSA members a series of questions that highlighted their economic decision-making in food purchases, as well as their perceptions of the Fairview community: its unique qualities and its foodways.

This research contributed to my own program of study in Southern Folklore, as well as to a comparative data set for a larger study of local food economies in the Piedmont, directed in part by my faculty advisor.

Conclusions

My work with CSA members answered my original research question in fascinating and deeply personal ways. People warmed to the topic of food quickly—some of my interviews even took place in the kitchen as interlocutors talked and cooked from their box of weekly Flying Cloud produce.

Interlocutors spoke of the importance of supporting local business and responsible growing practices. Fairview is still a primarily agricultural and rural community. People feel a deep connection to the valley they live in, and the neighbors that inhabit that space with them. Because of these attachments to land and people, thinking within a local food shed comes naturally to consumers. However, the people I spoke with understood the uniqueness of such a close-knit community, and thus consciously worked to prioritize the continuing economic and cultural vitality of Fairview via their food purchases. Flying Cloud Farm was an important and valued part of that local food economy.

These interviews, once transcribed, will be added to the primary documentation of the ongoing study “Food Retailing and Enterprise Development: Identifying Cultural and Economic Assets for Successful Value Chain Partnerships,” a joint collaboration of the Anthropology and Urban Planning departments at UNC.

For more information, please see Flying Cloud’s web site at www.flyingcloudfarm.net, or visit my blog “Growing Together” at <http://growingtogether-alena.blogspot.com/>.