

September 2017



Dear Friends of the Whidbey Island Farm Tour,

You may be curious to know what the status of the Whidbey Island Farm Tour is for 2017. From 2006 to 2015, the Whidbey Island Farm Tour successfully held 10 annual farm tours that raised awareness of the island's farms and farming practices, and helped to improve the economic sustainability of Whidbey's farms. After the latest farm tour was complete in September 2015, the Farm Tour Committee, in concert with the Whidbey Island Conservation District, decided to take a hiatus from the Farm Tour format as a response to the diversity of farm characteristics, as well as to thoughtfully address the evolving needs of Whidbey Island's farms by initiating discussions among the farmers themselves.

### **Oct. '15 – Sept. '17 and ongoing: Whidbey's Farmers Meet Monthly to Discuss Farm Marketing**

Beginning in October 2015, the Whidbey Island Conservation District and Washington State University Extension Island County Farms and Food Systems Program began coordinating a monthly "farmer potluck" on the second Monday of each month at the Coupeville Nordic Hall, 63 Jacobs Road. Open to any rural business owner associated with agriculture, as well as the organizations that support agriculture on Whidbey, the goal of the "farmer potluck group" has been to share food, network, and discuss topics of importance to the island's farmers, including the future of the Whidbey Island Farm Tour and marketing of Whidbey Island farm products. Now officially known as the "Whidbey Island Growers Association," this group has been meeting monthly for almost two years –to build community, share resources, learn from experts in agriculture, and promote collaborative marketing efforts. The Whidbey Island Growers Association's next meeting will be on Monday, October 9, 2017 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at 63 Jacobs Rd., Coupeville, WA and is open to Whidbey Island rural business owners and farmers. Come meet your fellow farmers, but please be sure to contact Kelsi Mottet at [kelsi@whidbeycd.org](mailto:kelsi@whidbeycd.org) to notify us if this is your first time attending so we can add you to the Whidbey Island Growers Association email list.

### **Oct. '16 – Jan. '17: Whidbey Island Farm Marketing Evolves into Collaborative Effort**

In the fall of 2016, after the Whidbey Island Growers Association group had been meeting for a year, the group members desired to bring in a larger audience for group marketing than just farmers. On January 30, 2017, a large "collaborative kick-off event" was held in Coupeville. With over 130 attendees, this event brought together Whidbey Island's farmers and farm product users in an effort to refine and relaunch the Whidbey Island Grown (WIG)



*The Jan. 30, 2017 Whidbey Farm to Table Forum gathered over 130 attendees and featured a keynote from Finn River Farm & Cidery to learn and discuss how Whidbey farmers and other businesses could work together to market Whidbey Island Grown products.*

brand as a broader, more inclusive and collaborative marketing effort island-wide. The WIG Brand was developed in 2009 by Whidbey Island farmers in an effort led and funded by the Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC). WIG's relaunch intends to be more inclusive than the original brand was and its revised mission indicates that inclusive by "preserving and promoting Whidbey Island as an authentic rural, farm, and culinary destination through taste-driven experiences, products, and attractions." Whidbey Island Grown, at its core, is designed to increase awareness and consumption of agricultural products grown on the island – but the new relaunch has expanded membership to include, in addition to farms, restaurants, caterers, event planners, wineries/libations, lodging associations, and support organizations/individuals who all play a role in supporting Whidbey farms.

## Jan. '17 – Today: Whidbey Island Grown Relaunch Takes Farm Tour to Next Level

Since the January 30th event, a Whidbey Island Grown Steering Committee consisting of farmers, restaurant owners, caterers and event planners, and support organizations, currently meets monthly and guides the direction of the WIG brand. An interactive website – [whidbeyislandgrown.com](http://whidbeyislandgrown.com) – has been developed, as well as a printed rack card, nearly 10,000 copies distributed in multiple locations throughout Whidbey Island and the greater Seattle area. A “WIG Week” promotion is currently in progress and coming up this week starting **Friday, Sept. 29 to Sunday, Oct. 8**, a variety of local events will take place on Whidbey Island to support local agriculture at farms, restaurants, and more.



Members of the Whidbey Island Grown Steering Committee thank the generous support of the Northwest Agriculture Business Center, Goosefoot, Port of South Whidbey, and the Island County 2% Lodging Tax Advisory Committee, and additional funding is being sought.



### How Can You Participate in the Whidbey Island Grown Relaunch?

There are new and exciting changes happening here on Whidbey Island and we encourage you, as a friend of the Whidbey Island Farm Tour, to participate in the Whidbey Island Grown relaunch. **The Whidbey Island Farm Tour Website and Facebook page will be closing on October 31, 2017.** All Whidbey Island Farm Tour fans are encouraged to “Like” the Whidbey Island Grown Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/WhidbeyIslandGrown/> to receive information on events, news, and updates supporting Whidbey Island’s local farming community.

### How Can You Become a Whidbey Island Grown Member?

Farms and other local businesses that support Whidbey’s agriculture are encouraged to become a member by visiting <http://www.whidbeyislandgrown.com/membership-join/>. Should you have questions about membership, contact Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey Island Grown Coordinator, at [sherrye@whidbey.com](mailto:sherrye@whidbey.com).

Finally, a special thanks to Northwest Agriculture Business Center, Goosefoot, the Port of South Whidbey, and the Island County 2% Tax Advisory Committee for their generous support toward the implementation of this effort. Thank you to everyone who has supported and continues to support Whidbey Island’s agriculture.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bauermeister".

David Bauermeister  
Executive Director  
Northwest Agriculture Business Center

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Burks".

John Burks  
Board Chair  
Whidbey Island Grown

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Bishop".

Karen Bishop  
District Manager  
Whidbey Island Conservation District

## Five Ways You Can Support Whidbey Island Agriculture

1. Learn more about the WIG relaunch by visiting [whidbeyislandgrown.com](http://whidbeyislandgrown.com)
2. Attend a WIG member event. Visit [whidbeyislandgrown.com/events/](http://whidbeyislandgrown.com/events/)
3. “Like” and “Follow” WIG on [facebook.com/WhidbeyIslandGrown/](https://www.facebook.com/WhidbeyIslandGrown/)
4. Check out WIG on Instagram & Twitter [twitter.com/whidbeygrown](https://twitter.com/whidbeygrown)
5. Visit Whidbey Island during “WIG Week” and check out the awesome variety of events taking place – starts Sept. 29 through Oct. 8, 2017.

