

Spring 2018



Dear Friends of the Whidbey Island Farm Tour & Whidbey Island Grown Supporters,

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 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. (April – September) and 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. (October – March). Open to anyone who considers themselves a farmer or rural landowner, as well as staff from 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 over two years – to build community, share resources, learn from experts in agriculture, and promote collaborative marketing efforts. We encourage attendance, so come meet your fellow farmers, but please be sure to contact Kelsi Mottet at 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. To access the most recent meeting notes and resources of the Whidbey Island Growers Association, visit whidbeycd.org/local-agriculture-outreach/

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 inclusivity 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 – Current: Whidbey Island Grown Relaunch Takes Farm Tour to Next Level

Since the January 30th, 2017 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 has been developed – whidbeyislandgrown.com – as well as a [printed rack card](#), with over 10,000 copies distributed in multiple locations throughout Whidbey Island and the greater Seattle area. The first annual “WIG Week” promotion took place Friday, Sept. 29 to Sunday, Oct. 8, 2017, which featured a variety of local events put on by WIG members to highlight local agriculture on farms, in restaurants, and more. To view a recap of the 2017 WIG Week events held and promotion surrounding the event, visit <http://bit.ly/2Agfvek>.



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 closed 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. Explore the Whidbey Island Grown website at www.whidbeyislandgrown.com and visit [member business profiles](#), check out the [Events Calendar](#) to see what’s happening year-round on member’s farms, restaurants, and more.

Are You a Business Interested in Becoming 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 info@whidbeyislandgrown.com, (360) 336-3727, or send a note to PO Box 490, Coupeville, WA 98239.

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 the relaunch of this effort. Thank you to everyone who has supported and continues to support Whidbey Island’s agriculture.

Warm regards,

David Bauermeister
Executive Director
Northwest Agriculture Business Center

John Burks
Board Chair
Whidbey Island Grown

Karen Bishop
District Manager
Whidbey Island Conservation District

Five Ways You Can Support Whidbey Island Agriculture in 2018

1. Learn more about the WIG relaunch by visiting whidbeyislandgrown.com
2. Attend a WIG member event. Visit 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
5. Become a sponsor of the Whidbey Island Grown brand to help us continue our momentum. Contact us at info@whidbeyislandgrown.com to learn more about sponsorship and support opportunities.

