



Carolina Meat Conference Brings Entire Meat Supply Chain Together, Highlights Emerging Opportunities in New Markets

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Where else can you find James Beard Award-winning chef [Andrea Reusing](#) and Emmy Award-winning chef [Vivian Howard](#) rubbing shoulders with internationally-renowned pasture management advocate [Allan Savory](#), alongside master butchers, commercial meat processors, and hundreds of rural livestock producers – all in the same room?

“There is nothing else like this,” acknowledges Sarah Blacklin, NC Choices Program Director, looking over the exhaustive list of more than 50 speakers who will be attending the Carolina Meat Conference on October 12 and 13 in Winston-Salem, NC. “We tend to think in terms of silos but this is a systems conference. We are reinventing local meat supply chains and need to get everyone in the same room together to do it.”

A major theme of the conference – and subject of several workshops – is how to make businesses profitable across the entire supply chain – “from pasture to plate” – while scaling up to meet growing demand for local meat. “Sales of local meat have reached \$20 million each year in North Carolina and over 90% of these farmers plan to grow or maintain their businesses, spurring economic growth throughout the state. Collaboration and innovation are key to supporting the growth of this industry,” says Blacklin. The conference provides education, training, and networking opportunities to the nearly 400 people who will attend from all over the country.

Rebuilding local meat supply chains – along with the processing and distribution infrastructure it requires – creates opportunities for new people to enter and access economic opportunities. The Carolina Meat Conference includes programming exclusively for women, who have traditionally been under-represented in the meat business. Previous *Women Working in the Meat Business* participants have gone on to author books and establish new businesses including whole animal butcher shops and one of the only butcher training schools in the country.

And new connections are forming between local livestock producers and owners of ethnic markets and restaurants, who represent a demand for animal parts (tongue, brain, tripe, etc) that are usually difficult for producers to move. Gerardo “Tolo” Martinez, a butcher and meat cutter at Cliff’s

Meat Market in Carrboro (and subject of the recent documentary *[Un Buen Carnicero](#)*), will give one of the conference's several butchery demonstrations and be available to answer questions about how he has adapted Cliff's offerings over the last 18 years to meet new demand from Latino patrons.

The Carolina Meat Conference is hosted by NC Choices, a Center for Environmental Farming Systems initiative. For more information please visit carolinameatconference.com.

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NC Choices promotes sustainable food systems through the advancement of the local, niche and pasture-based meat supply chain in North Carolina. NC Choices provides information, technical assistance, educational programming and networking opportunities for farmers, extension agents, meat processors, buyers, distributors and consumers. For more information please visit <http://ncchoices.ces.ncsu.edu/>.

The Center for Environmental Farming Systems is a partnership of NC State University, NC Agricultural and Technical State University and the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. CEFS develops and promotes just and equitable food and farming systems that conserve natural resources, strengthen communities and provide economic opportunities in North Carolina and beyond. For more information please visit <http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/>.