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Local Food Hub

Trish Preston had the food producer contacts. Chelsie Casagrande-Smith had the idea and business background. Together, they started a year-round grocery store carrying locally produced food.

"It started on a high note and has only continued to grow," says Preston. "We had 20 vendors when we opened this past August, and today we have around 70. We have a lot of customers from the surrounding area, but also quite a few regulars who travel 45 min. to an hour to shop with us."

In the first quarter of 2025, the Winchester

Farm Exchange welcomed 13,000 customers through the door and sold 50,000 products. For the vendors, who include farmers, bakers and makers, it's been life-changing. Where they once relied on weekly farmers markets, they now have an outlet for their products that's open seven days a week.

"They have a sales volume like they've never had before," says Preston. "I had one vendor tell me he was able to buy a large piece of equipment he couldn't afford before. Another said they were able to purchase health insurance for their family for the first time."

Preston is enthusiastic about the collaborations taking place between vendors.

"Our apple farmer worked with our jam producer, who worked with a bread baker to put their products in one of their breads," she says. "We had a meat producer, a bread baker and a produce farmer create a bundle to sell together."

Vendors pay a flat fee for their space in the store, as well as a two percent fee on sales. This pays for staffing and the central checkout. Preston gives them credit for their time commitment as well.

"Our farmers each come in for a 4-hr. shift to talk to customers," says Preston. "Part of what we want to do is to educate our consumers. They love to talk to the people producing their food."

The Exchange has a full-time manager and staff to handle day-to-day operations. Preston and Casagrande-Smith still handle the back-office efforts, including marketing. For them, it's a labor of love with no pay. They do it on the back of their own full-time jobs and family responsibilities.

Their goals include expanding their product list and vendors.

"We're always on the lookout for farm business start-ups and greater diversity in vendors, as well as products," says Preston. "We've looked for ways to diversify the type of families who provide the food. The neighborhood is diverse, and we want our vendors to be reflective of that."

Another goal is to build on the store's existing efforts.

"When Chelsie first suggested the store, she was looking for a better way to feed her family farm fresh foods," says Preston. "It had always been a dream of mine to have more impact and educate the community, and provide food to the community."

That goal is being taken to another level. The two partners are starting Fishes and Loaves Food Alliance. Plans include a food garden for both classroom and home education, as well as exploring ways to support families who are food insecure.

Preston recognizes that the Exchange's price points are usually higher than those of the local big-box supermarkets.

"If you can support local producers, that's great," she says. "The food is fresher and holds more nutrients because it takes fewer days to get to market. However, whatever budget you have, we want people to eat good food."

"We want to do it in a way that won't strain financial and time resources," adds Preston. "We're hoping to provide people with a crockpot or air fryer and recipes to make it as easy as possible for them to eat better."

Meanwhile, they'll continue working with their staff and vendors to maintain the same high note they started with.

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Partners control the supply chain from seeding to the finished product. Each batch is separately sampled and sent to an independent laboratory for testing.

Malting Facility Uses Custom Grains And Malts

In May 2024, North Dakota farmers David Anfinson and Paul Weyrauch opened their malting facility, ND Malting & Hops, acting on a nearly five-year-old shared idea. Anfinson had experience growing malt barley for a large brewing company, and the pair had noticed a local barley surplus combined with an area shortage of malt.

Each of the partners grows approximately 500 acres of a unique barley variety developed by North Dakota State University in a crop rotation on their farm.

ND Malting & Hops targets quality and traceability in offering custom-grown grains and malts to nearby breweries and distilleries.

"It's a big thing for us that we know everything about our different samples," Weyrauch says. "We know exactly where it came from, the date and the field. Plus, we can afford to make better malt and keep the best and plumppest barley kernels as our surplus goes for animal feed."

The partners control the supply chain from seeding to the finished product. Each

batch is separately sampled and sent to an independent testing lab in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Batches receive certificates of analysis, which are critical to the needs of brewer and distiller buyers.

"Another big claim to fame we hold that others don't is that our barley never touches the floor," Weyrauch says. "It goes directly from the field to the combine, to a hopper bottom trailer, a hopper bottom bin, and into the plant. No one has ever told me they like to drink a beer off the floor, so that's something we're passionate about."

ND Malting & Hops produces approximately 30 tons per week, which are shipped to local brewers and distillers in North Dakota, Minnesota and Arizona in 50-lb. bags or large super sacks. The small operation has even been featured at Major League Baseball's spring training facilities in Phoenix, Ariz.

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Coyote Academy Provides Trapping Resources

Coyote Academy is an online community and resource center focused on managing mesopredators such as coyotes, foxes, bobcats and raccoons. The academy offers private videos, forums and other forms of expert guidance.

"We specialize in predator management and knowledge," says founder Colton Morris. "It's a place for both experienced outdoorsmen/women and those just starting to come together to learn and discuss various topics surrounding the outdoors. We cover trapping, predator hunting, trapline tips and tricks, homesteading, gear and more. We strive to target those who are like-minded about the outdoors."

Morris has considered himself an outdoorsman since adolescence. He's a medically trained professional with over twenty years of experience trapping predators and consistently catches over a hundred coyotes a year in Ohio.

"I'm highly knowledgeable in the art of trapping/hunting," he says. "The outdoors has been a large part of my life, and I want to share these experiences with my audience in hopes of expanding their knowledge and experiences."

The Academy Master Class costs \$10.99 per month or \$120 per year. Membership includes everything needed to become an efficient, proficient predator management specialist—also known as a trapper. It offers a competitive edge for those looking to further their education in the industry.

Available courses and resources cater to both beginners learning the basics and experienced trappers looking to sharpen their skills. Topics include selecting the right gear, identifying the best hunting and trapping locations, and trapping safely and ethically.

"We have various resources available for our subscribers," Morris says. "Our Masterclass, covering multiple topics and aspects of the outdoors, is available with a monthly or annual subscription. Subscribers get access to a private forum, exclusive



"We cover trapping, predator hunting, trapline tips and tricks, homesteading, gear and more," says Morris.

courses and content, and a percentage off of all the products we make. Email subscribers get first dibs on the newest products and launches, while social media subscribers get access to a smaller amount of exclusive content not shared on our regular pages."

Products include coyote tanned furs (\$65 to \$150), Apex Predator Bait (\$24.99), Coyote and Red Fox Urine (\$18 each), ALPHA and OMEGA "squirtable" lures (\$16 each), Kamikaze Coon Crunch (\$8.99) and Comanche Canine Pudding (\$15).

"I repurpose as much of what I harvest as possible," Morris says. "I don't like to waste the furbearer or nuisance predator that I harvest."

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