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Lafayette County's rich soil is inspiring chefs, farmers and artists alike to dig into the landscape.

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Oxford's dining scene blooms where the fruits of the farmland and the carefully-crafted cuisine meet

OPINION

Trump's 'trade war' a blow for farmers, market economy

ETHEL MWEDZIWENDIRA
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Referred to as “the biggest trade war in economic history,” the trade war between China and the United States is shaping up to be as real as the critics are fearing. President Trump announced \$50 billion in tariffs on Chinese imports in the beginning of July, with \$34 billion already imposed and another \$16 million expected in the coming weeks.

The administration threatened China on July 10 with \$200 billion in additional tariffs in response to Chinese trade policies seen as a national security threat to the United States, according to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer. The administration has said that maintaining the tariffs will pressure China to address trade complaints from the U.S., which include intellectual property theft.

On the campaign trail and now in office, Trump has put an emphasis on his ubiquitous slogan, “Make America Great Again.” What he is doing with this latest trade war is the exact opposite of making America great. In reality these tariffs between the two largest economies will have a lasting impression on his supporters and ultimately on rural America – otherwise known as “Trump Country.”

China's biggest agricultural products in this deal are soybeans which are one of Mississippi's top exported products and the largest U.S. agricultural export – this means that there will be dramatic changes in soybean shipments.

The United States Department of Agriculture reported that Mississippi exported a total of \$109.7 million in soybeans in 2017 to China. According to Mississippi Today, days after Trump imposed the tariffs, soybean prices plummeted to a nine-year low as China sought to buy the crop from other countries. In fact, the country started to shift its purchases from U.S. farmers, and toward Brazilians. Other countries such as Thailand, Egypt and the Netherlands began increasing their purchases of U.S. soybeans.

Farmers will not be the only ones hurting from this deal as tensions between China and U.S. grow. The tariffs could also affect American manufacturers. The Peterson Institute for International Economics estimates that 85 percent of Chinese imports hit by Trump's initial tariffs are machinery made in the United States. Because of that, U.S. manufacturers, will have to pay additional prices for parts and equipment.

In brief, it's a trying time for U.S. farmers, with effects reaching coast-to-coast, as China has already turned to other soybean-producing countries. Right now, the damage is little, but in the long run, the tariffs will be hurtful for both economies if they continue to escalate. Furthermore, with a cost increase in products already, additional taxes will hurt supply chains. If demand in crops drop, then jobs will be in jeopardy and this could potentially lead the country into a recession.

Ethel Mwedziwendira is a journalism and political science major from McKinney, Texas.

LIBBY CALLICOAT
 “I just farm the same way I've done my whole life. It's all natural, and it's better for you. You can control what goes into the cow or tomato or chicken, and it's just better.”

DEAN DOUGLASS SULLIVAN-GONZALEZ
 “The world of honey bees invites the observer and beekeeping into an intricate world of insect democracy.”

CAROL ROARK
 “There is no place like the South, especially the Mississippi Delta. The Southern culture is so tied to the land.”

KATHERINE FLANNIGAN
 “I think Chicory Market brings a new way of looking at food, and a new way of growing it and sharing it among your loved ones. I think it's a beacon of hope [in Oxford].”

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CHICORY MARKET

CLASSIC STORE REPRESENTS MODERN FOOD CULTURE

ANNE MARIE HANNA + CAROLINE HEWITT + HANNAH GLASS
THEDMFEATURES@GMAIL.COM

On a county road north of town, Chicory Market finds its home in a shed-like gray building with the market's name painted on the front in huge block letters. The shelves of this farmer's market-infused grocery store are filled with vibrant produce and fresh food options, complete with labels explaining just where the foods in stock were grown.

Chicory Market, co-owned by John Martin and Kate Bishop of Indianola and Greenwood respectively, functions as both a continuation and preservation of a 30-year-old local farm stand.

Originally from the Delta, Martin and Bishop pursued education and living in the Northeast and returned home 12 years later to take over this Oxford food space from its previous owners.

The market first opened in June 2017, with a public opening that October, in an effort to make healthier foods more accessible. Since then, Chicory has expanded its enterprise to encompass nearly 20 Mississippi-based farmers and food makers, including organic practice-based Native Son Farm of Tupelo, as well as Oxford's Canebrake farm, Clear Creek Produce and Yokna Bottoms Farm.

The co-owners became interested in produce as a public health issue after observing the Delta's current food desert crisis. Martin explained that the Delta has some of the richest, most fertile soil in the world, but most of the area's farming and producing is commodity farming. The agricultural constructs leave little room to grow sustaining fruits and vegetables for low-income communities.

"There's a public health component and emergency down there with people not eating as healthy as they should," Martin said. "That puzzled us, because how do you fix that? We still don't have an answer, but that's what got us interested in food and in this business."

The Chicory team is also working to promote unique Mississippi produce, and to expand locals' current food palates beyond what foods are more easily found in restaurants. Martin said this mission is sometimes stifled by the conundrum of combining the state's long growing season with new food pairings.

"You have things like tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and bell peppers, that are part of the cultural diet, you know? But then there are things like eggplants that grow like weeds here, or kale, that aren't part of the cultural diet," Martin said. "A place like Oxford is unique because there are a lot of different dietary preferences, and we want to show how to use some of these things that aren't really familiar to [people]."

The co-owners are working to curate monthly, seasonal menus and newsletters for their customers, utilizing foods residents are familiar with and introducing uncommon regional fruits and vegetables into their everyday eating.

"People might be interested in these crazy mushrooms we get from Memphis, but have no idea what to do with them," Martin said. "This idea of putting together recipes really introduces our goals from a marketing standpoint and an educational standpoint."

Along with fresh produce, Chicory Market fills its space with local meat and dairy options, organic grain and nut dispensers, and racks of organic oils and dry foods. The store also carries multiple brands of all-natural cleaning and household items.

Chicory Market accepts Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) and food stamps, a fact that Martin says is relatively unknown to most shoppers. He said he hopes that as the business continues to expand, the team can make a larger push to incorporate the wide variety of socioeconomic demographics found within the Oxford-Lafayette county.

"Everyone knows food, because food is a very traditional aspect of all life," Chicory Market employee Katherine Flannigan said. "I think Chicory Market brings a new way of looking at food, and a new way of growing it and sharing it among your loved ones. I think it's a beacon of hope [in Oxford]."

Managing Director of the Southern Foodways Alliance Melissa Booth Hall said Chicory Market and other markets make themselves available to all demographics by accepting EBT cards.

"The fact that both [Chicory Market and local farmers markets] accept EBT cards means that they're providing produce to people across all income brackets is important," she said.

Hall believes that projects like Chicory Market put "control of the food

system back in the hands of the people."

"The farmers markets plus Chicory Market is a really clear sign that lots of folks in the area are excited about this and engaged in the process," she said. "You're not eating the variety of food that's easiest for Kroger to source and ship - you're eating a variety of tomato that grows best in your area and is going to taste good."

Apart from making fresh food economically accessible, the team behind Chicory strives to provide options for all ranges of food palate preferences, sensitivities and intolerances.

"As someone who was once a vegetarian, I really appreciate how Chicory Market is there for all different types of eaters and all different walks of life," Flannigan said. "We have food that's gluten-free, we have vegetarian meals, we have meat-eating meals. We hit all the marks when it comes to food and what you can make with the ingredients that we sell."

In striving to make Chicory Market a communal space, the store's managers operate a commissary-style kitchen, allowing local food makers to rent it out for cooking, curating and producing much of the space's pre-made goods. Brad Hayden, owner and operator of barbecue business Oxford Smoke Shop, has rented the kitchen space before, working on his craft in the hopes of opening a food truck within the next year.

"One of the great benefits about working with the staff and the owners of Chicory Market is the fact that they're trying to create their own niche," Hayden said. "I think [they] appreciate the fact that I'm offering something that's both authentic and not necessarily readily available in a lot of different places, and I appreciate the fact that they're so kind, and gracious, and allow me space to work."

The mutual appreciation between staff, shoppers and providers helps sustain an independent business with a growing network.

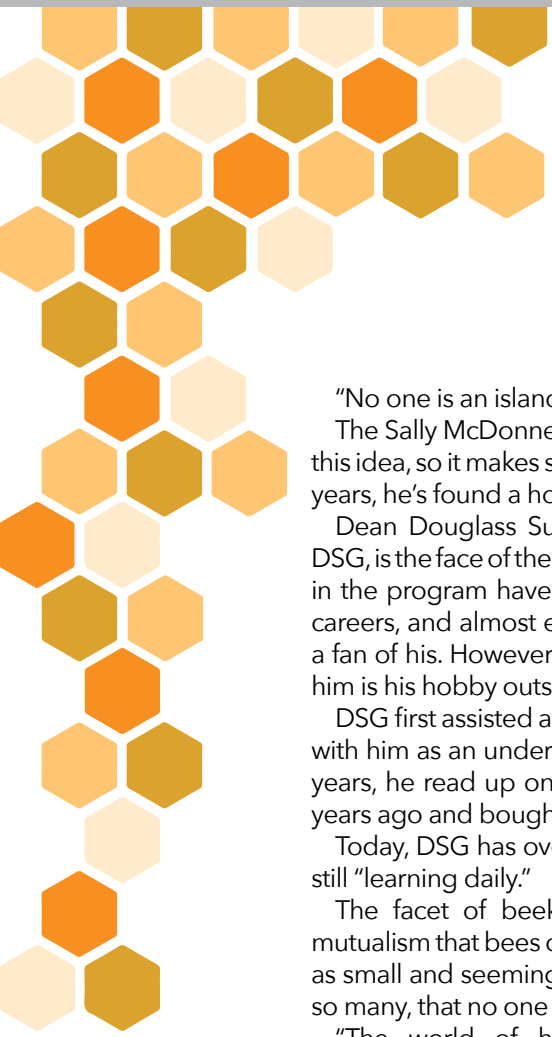
"We always say it's like our avocation became our vocation," Martin said. "And that's kind of what happened."

Chicory Market is open from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays, on Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.



PHOTOS COURTESY ANNE MARIE HANNA

TOP: A customer pays for her local produce at Chicory Market in Oxford. **BOTTOM:** A worker at Oxford's Chicory Market prepares chicken to sell.



THE BEEKEEPING CLUB

DEVNA BOSE

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"No one is an island unto themselves."

The Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College functions on this idea, so it makes sense that its dean does, too. In the last few years, he's found a hobby that embodies that same sentiment.

Dean Douglass Sullivan-Gonzalez, known affectionately as DSG, is the face of the Honors College. Almost all of the students in the program have met DSG at some point in their college careers, and almost every one of them have instantly become a fan of his. However, something many might not know about him is his hobby outside of the office - beekeeping.

DSG first assisted a beekeeper and worked a couple of hives with him as an undergraduate. Over the course of the last five years, he read up on beekeeping and "took the plunge" two years ago and bought his first hives.

Today, DSG has over 10 hives on his property and said he is still "learning daily."

The facet of beekeeping that really drew him in is the mutualism that bees offer humans, and the idea that something as small and seemingly insignificant as a honey bee can affect so many, that no one is an island.

"The world of honey bees invites the observer and beekeeping into an intricate world of insect democracy," he said. "Bees talk to the beekeeper. Learning to understand their conversation, their distinctive hum when pleased or displeased is thrilling."

DSG said he finds the challenges confronting beekeeping intellectually stimulating as well, reminding him of the sensitive nature of the relationship between humans and bees. One of the recent challenges facing beekeeping is the Varroa mite, "a nasty little critter that attaches to the bee larvae and plants a deadly virus that deforms the wings of the new honey bee."

"It has wiped out tens of thousands of colonies in the USA in the last two decades," he said. "How researchers work with

beekeepers to combat this challenging pest has proved to be intellectually stimulating and provides an incredible passageway between the academy and the world of nature and human economy."

That "passageway" is something DSG is sharing this year with some students in the form of the newly-formed Beekeepers Club within the Honors College at Ole Miss. After a group of students contacted him about helping pioneer the club, they met and began to take action.

The club plans to purchase hives and raise bees starting next spring. The project allows students to get a hands-on approach to beekeeping, and they will get to see the fruits of their labor if everything goes well. The honey should be ready to harvest 15 months after they begin.

"Students need to step into this dynamic world to get a sense of the key questions beekeepers and biologists are asking in order to sense future challenges coming their way," he said. "We humans, how we organize, how we combat our challenges, are not all that different from the world of bees."

Honors College student Caroline Bailey is acting as the current "go-between" the University and the club while it gets firmly on its feet.

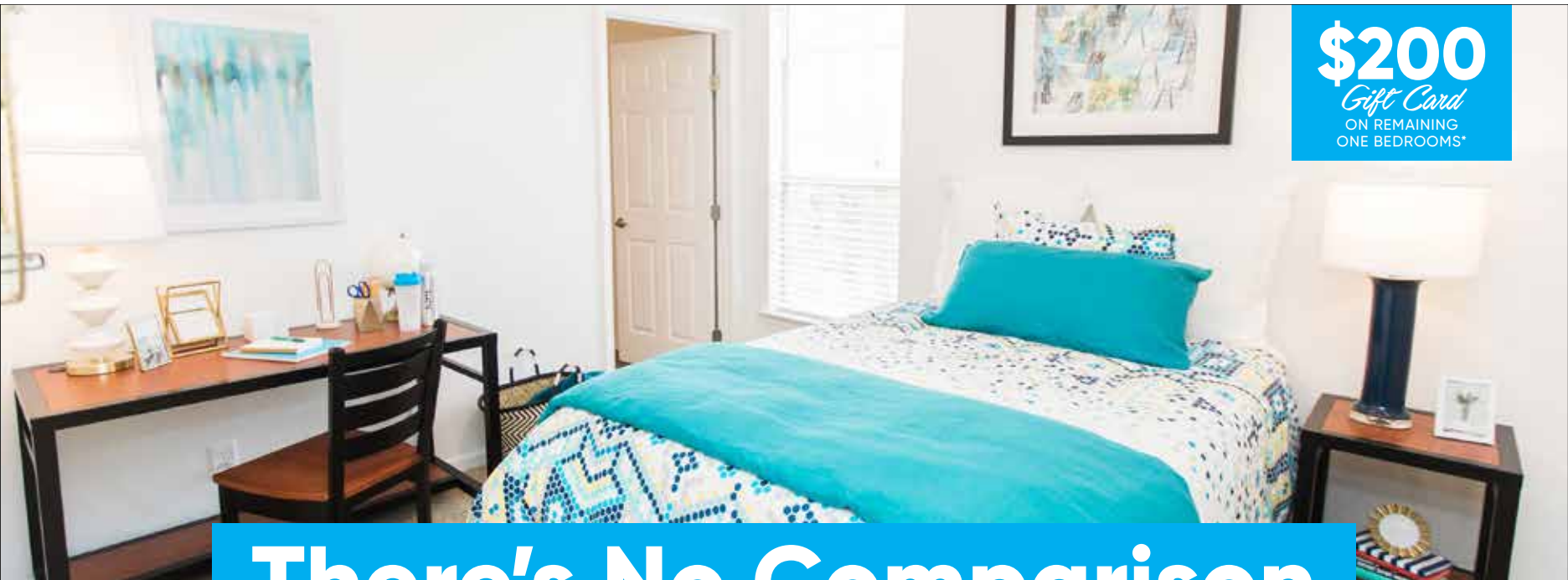
Bailey decided to get involved with the club because she has been interested in honey bees and the beekeeping lifestyle for a couple of years, but she never had the opportunity to keep bees until the club was formed.

"When I saw the announcement about the club, I knew this was something I had to try," Bailey said. "I am fulfilling a dream."

Bailey's initial interest came from a misconception detailed in the opening credits of The Bee Movie, funnily enough.

"The narrator mentions the myth that bees should not be able to fly, but they are able to anyway," she said. "I was astounded by how

SEE BEEKEEPING PAGE 5



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LEFT: Douglass Sullivan-Gonzalez smokes one of his bee hives prior to pulling out honey trays and checking on his bee colony. **MIDDLE:** Sullivan-Gonzalez carefully extracts a honeycomb from one of his hives. **RIGHT:** Sullivan-Gonzalez feeds his bees a sugar water mix to keep them healthy and allow them to build up enough honey to survive through the winter.

BEEKEEPING

continued from page 4

a small black and yellow insect could defy the laws of physics. While I now know, bees do not defy any scientific laws, I am still interested in the important role they play in our world."

And that, they do. Honey bees pollinate about a third of major US agricultural crops and serve as an essential part of the agricultural economy.

The club plans to host elections in August and appoint its first president. They will start with four to six hives, cultivating their growth. The club also hopes to make beekeeping more affordable by doing the project as a group.

"It is pretty expensive on the front end - suits, smoker, hives, bees -

so working with a group mitigates some of those costs," DSG said. "I would encourage anyone with an interest to join the bee club and get a sense of the year-round commitment to the world of honey bees."

Bailey said she loves being a part of the club because it allows her to discuss her shared interest in beekeeping with her peers.

"I am so glad DSG wanted to share his wisdom and love for beekeeping with the next generation," Bailey said. "He will be a great resource when our gives come in for questions and advice."

The club's goal is to continue to grow in number, in bees and beekeepers. Right now, the club is mainly made up of Honors College students, but anyone is allowed to join... "as long as they don't mind being stung a few times."

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Q&A WITH DANIEL ZIMMANCK of Yokna Bottoms Farm

CHRISTIAN JOHNSON
THEDMPHOTOS@GMAIL.COM

What's your position at the farm?

Field manager of Yokna Bottoms Farm.

What are you growing right now?

Sweet potatoes, squash, purple hull peas, green beans, dragon's tongue, rattlesnake. Those are all beans. We have like 15 types of peppers going. Everything from really sweet peppers to purple ghost pepper. We are also growing peppers for another person who makes pepper sauce; we're not going to sell those to anyone but him. Those are all seriously hot. Then we have our tomatoes, okra, cantaloupe, watermelon, squash, winter squash.

Where is all the produce grown here going to go?

Mostly to the markets, the farmers market. We do have shareholders that every week they get a share of the harvest. They purchase a share at the beginning of the year or the end to help sustain ourselves over the winter. When they purchase it in the beginning of the year, that helps us to order seeds, prepare the fields and what not. But then they get a portion of the harvest for the 32 weeks that we're open. What they don't get from us, we sell to everyone else at the market. The Snackbar, the Ravine, they get vegetables from us. Sometimes other restaurants do too. We don't ship anything out of the state or out of the county.

Why do you choose to stay local with who you provide produce to?

[Our owner] wanted to benefit the county he was living in. He wanted to produce an organic farm. We are a certified naturally grown farm, not organic. I mean, we are organic, we just don't jump through hoops and pay out the money. It's pretty much the same. When he started, the farm bureau, or whatever they're called, they said it couldn't be done. Organic farms couldn't be done around here. They said this was the wrong area. You needed all the chemicals and whatnot. He proved them wrong. He was the first organic farm in the area nine years ago. He hasn't missed a market yet since he's been going.

Do you think it's better to farm the organic way?

Oh, yes. You know, you're not destroying the soil. You're not destroying the ground. You can see the farm beside us, they're growing only sunflowers for one purpose, one day. The opening day of dove hunting. That's the only reason. But you can see the effects of roundup on the ground next to them. It's just all barren and brown. He does that on his field and we have a 20 foot breaker of trees beside us and him to prevent his crap from coming over here. And you can see a difference after he sprays in the trees on our side and his. If we didn't have that, we wouldn't be able to plant where we plant.

How important is it for restaurants to source their food locally?

It's real important. It helps the farmer who is benefiting the economy and it shows people in the community that there is quality food here and they don't have to go to big box stores to get it. We have healthy food growing right here in the county.

Is it harder for farmers and restaurants to source or deliver produce this way?

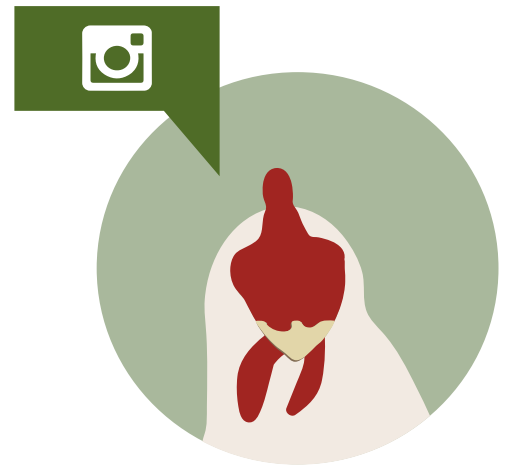
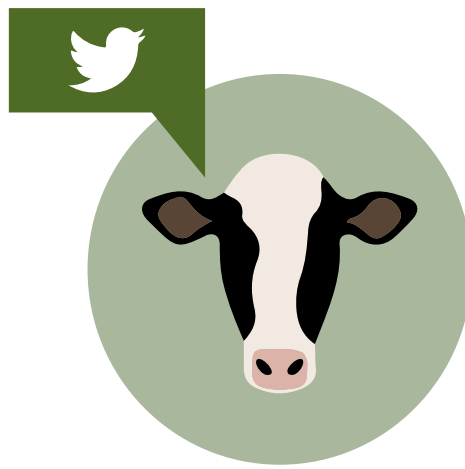
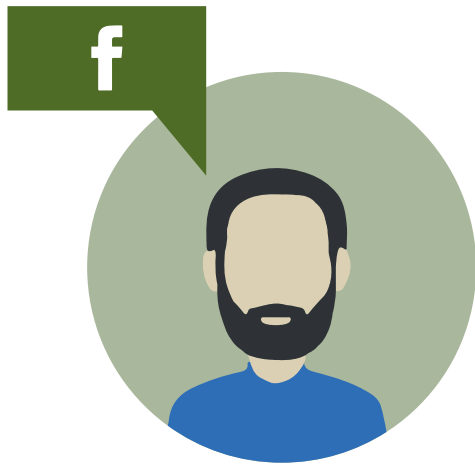
We don't overcharge anybody. In fact, the restaurants, they get a mark down from the market price. We sell a watermelon for about three to five dollars, and that's not a bad price for an organic watermelon. You can go to Walmart or Kroger and you'd get a personal watermelon like this for five dollars and it's not organic. You don't know what's been done to it. We invite people to come out to the farm and see what's going on. You can look through our stuff and see what we have. You're not going to find any major chemicals anywhere. When we do have to spray we spray pyrethrin or spiniced. One is plant derived and one is fungus derived and they're certified organic.



CHRISTIAN JOHNSON

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Social media bridges gap between farmers, consumers

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Social media has become an increasingly important entity for businesses hoping to bridge the rural and urban gap between farmers and consumers. Social media's power in agriculture lies in its ability to connect others, through building relationships and developing a community. It also allows producers the ability to tell their side of the story.

Bost Farms' director of social media, Rachel Bost, has experienced the digital age's effect on agriculture and her company. Since 2012, she has found that their posts have gained more traction in terms of likes and shares. She said the online platform has allowed for transparency between producer and consumer and is something from which Bost and the company have benefitted.

"Pictures of the farm help give credence to our 'homegrown' mantra," Bost said. "We also use Facebook to make other business-related announcements such as changes to our operating hours, since we do not have a storefront."

This new approach to a once isolated occupation has allowed for farmers to connect with community members and to thrive in a competitive market.

"People want to buy delicious and safe produce from someone they know and trust," Bost said. "In addition to communication, the interactive features help foster personal relationships between the farmer and the public."

For companies such as Clear Creek Produce, Facebook has been a frequent tool since 2015. Owner Matt Britt is a part of this virtual universe that is being used to bring his company exposure. The business owner advertises his company's social media in the form of business cards, imploring customers to "find us on Facebook."

"We do a lot of Facebook. That's the biggest thing to do," Britt said, whose girlfriend runs the social media facet of the business. "We have around a thousand followers and every time we post we reach 660 people."

Clear Creek has a wide reach, its customers extending from Memphis all the way to Jackson. Whether it be virtual, through Facebook, or going to farmers markets and grocery stores and personally connecting with consumers, being able to connect with a variety of people is an important principle to Britt.

Britt said Facebook is more person-related, and with Instagram he wouldn't receive as many direct messages, which is why he chooses to focus his social media efforts on Facebook.

While Bost Farms and Clear Creek have relied mainly on community engagement through Facebook to get the word out, Katherine Sharp of Farmstead Florals has done almost the opposite – allowing consumers to increase her business' recognition through shares and likes.

Situated in the breezeway near Uptown Coffee and Holli's Sweet Tooth, Sharp introduced the concept of a local self-serving flower stand towards the end of June. She credits the concept to her father, who had the idea of opening the self-serve farming stand after a visit to the Midtown Farmers' Market. It started first as trial and error, but if there was any place for the stand to thrive, it was right here in Oxford, said Sharp.

The stand runs solely on an honesty policy regarding payment. Customers pick up the flowers at the stand and then send a Venmo payment to Farmstead Florals. The tool was an attraction for college students and for people who rarely carry cash – Sharp said it was the most efficient method possible. She said the honesty policy, a unique aspect about the project, has worked well so far.



CHRISTIAN JOHNSON

The Farmstead Floral stand in the Uptown Coffee breezeway has created a stir on social media.

"Sometimes I do the math and divide the total in increments and realize that the total is off and people aren't being honest with the policy, but for the most part it has been perceived well," Sharp said.

While the company hasn't advertised its social media on its stand yet, people have posted pictures of the stand often tagging its location on their posts to raise awareness of it. The Farmstead Floral Instagram account has posted only one photo of the stand since its creation.

"I'm a terrible millennial," Sharp said.

She said she hopes to draw in more people in the future by using social media increasingly.

Lauren Lawson, junior biochemistry major, visited the flower stand last week and posted a photo on her personal Instagram account, peeking out behind a bouquet of sunflowers.

"I saw a friend's post on Instagram about the stand and thought it was beautiful," Lawson said. "I wanted to get the word out because I think it's hard for small businesses like that to get the word out."



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FARM TO FORK

In this corner of Mississippi, the hands of Parisian-influenced chefs dig into the harvest of “it’s-in-my-blood” farmers. This culinary crossroads is a product of the people who plant, produce and prepare the foods that come from farm to fork every day in Oxford.

DEVNA BOSE

DMMANAGING@GMAIL.COM



THE FARM

A few miles in the deep green of Taylor, down a long gravel driveway, a house stands that serves as the home of a number of cows, peacocks, guineas, ducks, dogs, cats, chickens and a lady by the name of Libby Callicoat.

Callicoat is the mother of this dysfunctional family, dozens of chickens following her around the yard as she performs her daily chores and haphazardly calls their names, which are a combination of John Wayne characters and obscenities.

The owner of Pea Ridge Farms, Callicoat commercially sells eggs from her home, but she maintains she isn’t an organic farmer.

“I just farm the same way I’ve done my whole life,” she said. “It’s all natural, and it’s better for you. You can control what goes into the cow or tomato or chicken, and it’s just better.”

Local farms like Pea Ridge provide fresh produce to restaurants and citizens through farmers markets, and most can agree that the end result is healthier, tastier food, all while reinvesting in the local economy.

“A lot of the time after I sell eggs at Chicory Market or Canteen, I go straight to Dash for Cash and buy feed for the chickens,” she said.

But Callicoat’s main attraction to chicken farming is her love of the animals and “God’s nature.”

“I enjoy anything that I can be outside,” she said. “I don’t like to be in the house unless I absolutely have to.”

You can tell that Callicoat is telling the truth. Her arms are marbled with spots of darkly pigmented skin, and her light hair is tucked under a weathered baseball cap. Devotedly done, it’s clear that the work Callicoat does isn’t work at all, because she loves it. Her eyes shine when she talks about her chickens that trail after her.

“Chickens are just so interesting and funny to watch. They’ll just talk to you,” she said, as she begins clucking, mimicking them. “You’ve got to give these chickens a lot of attention if you want good product. I could spend several hours a day just tending to them.”

According to Callicoat, the work she puts into them becomes clear with the end product. Apparently, a pan of cornbread made with her eggs will make “make you want to slap somebody,” and that’s enough reward for her.

THE MARKET

Executive chef of SnackBar and repeat James Beard award finalist Vishwesh Bhatt, known to most as Vish, is a regular patron of local farmers markets, including the one that crops up every Tuesday afternoon under the canopy of the Old Armory right off University Avenue. As he steps into the scene, his presence is somehow silently announced.

His hands are immediately clasped and shaken by other local chefs who have worked and collaborated alongside Bhatt, and he is embraced and acknowledged by Oxonians who have enjoyed his carefully-crafted food over the years. He scans the colorful tables before settling on some tomatoes he deems worthwhile, turning them over in his hands.

Bhatt fell into cooking as a means to buy beer in college, and after a while, he realized how much he enjoyed it. He’s been with SnackBar since its opening nearly ten years ago, and much of his locally-focused cooking style at the restaurant draws from his childhood in western India.

“It’s how I grew up eating.



Libby Callicoat explains her farming process.

DEVNA BOSE



THE MARKET



DEVNA BOSE

Executive chef of Snackbar Vishwesh Bhatt smells a fresh sprig of greens at the Community Farmer's Market.

There were no big supermarkets - we didn't get food wrapped up in plastic," he said. "The produce guy would come where we lived, and what was growing in season was what was available. It's how I grew up."

Bhatt quickly realized the bittersweet joys of waiting for certain times of the year so that specific produce would be available.

"I learned very early, that it was fun to wait for things to be in season," he said. "It's not so exciting if you have it year round. To me, that's important, so we do that here as much as we can."

However, he explained that it's not always easy to get what he's looking for locally, especially working with a large menu. Bhatt starts the process by searching for produce in Oxford and then expanding into the rest of the state and region.

"That's how I go about looking for what I want to put on the menu," he said. "But I always look at local

farms first."

Though this culinary movement of sorts towards locally-sourced food has been successful in recent years, it hasn't always been.

"For a long time, people would come to restaurants and wouldn't want tomatoes and zucchinis because they could find that in their own garden," he said. "We've worked hard to change that mentality. These foods that are a part of our culture and growing up are important. We need to pay attention to them."

Bhatt picks up a sprig of greens, presses them to his nose and inhales deeply. He leaves the market, bags stuffed with spoils clenched in both of his hands.

THE PLATE

Chef and co-owner of Oxford Canteen Corbin Evans grabs an egg from a carton in the cooler Callicoot dropped off earlier that morning and cracks it swiftly over a hot, oiled pan. He sprinkles coarse salt and pepper on it while it sizzles in Canteen's kitchen.

Evans has been doing this for a long time.

After a sports injury in college caused his mouth to be wired shut, he realized how much people took food for granted. He started working in restaurants, and after a while, someone suggested he go to culinary school. Ever since, he's cooked all over the globe in cities like New Orleans, New York City and Paris, before settling in Oxford.

“These foods that are a part of our culture and growing up are important. We need to pay attention to them.

VISHWESH BHATT
EXECUTIVE CHEF AT SNACKBAR

"[Culinary school] opened a lot of doors working with great chefs," he said. "In the process, I worked with chefs who were proponents of 'save the farm' and all that, who emphasized how important local and seasonal produce is."

Evans opened Canteen "at the window" in the alley next to the Lyric Oxford in April 2014 in hopes of using more local produce to create interesting dishes. The restaurant moved to North Lamar and opened its brick and mortar Canteen location in August of last year.

Melissa Booth Hall, managing director of the Southern Foodways Alliance, has noticed a boom in agricultural production focused specifically on food and claims it's due in part to a rise in restaurants that value and promote a culture of using local food.

"I think in Oxford, it works because you have the right sort of mix," she said. "I think it starts with having a restaurant culture, and knowing that in restaurants like Snackbar, Canteen, St. Leo, knowing you have customers you can depend on. What those restaurants tend



FOOD

continued from page 9

to create is a group of consumers."

Local and fresh isn't a new style for Evans - it's how he has always cooked.

"People say I have farmers market cuisine style," he said. "The chefs I worked for really emphasized it. Generally, it's cheaper, and the ripeness and shelf life is much better when you buy local."

Evans said much of his local emphasis has to do with trust and having a good relationship with the farmers on the other end of the process.

"When you buy something from down the street, you know the farmer and you trust them," he said. "They're going to have you their best product. They're trying to support your business, too. I just feel like it's the easiest way to cook."

Hall agreed that a healthy relationship between markets and chefs is integral to the the dining experience.

"Once markets establish themselves, they start paying attention to what people want," she said. "It's not that [the movement] is new, but we've reached, I wouldn't say a saturation point, but it's a point where you couldn't say it's not happening anymore."

By eating and buying local, everyone involved is investing in Oxford.

"With your fork, you can really make changes if you think about it," Evans said. "If more people took it seriously, we'd all be healthier and we'd all be happier."

Evans finishes up the eggs within minutes, places them on the counter, and Callicoaat digs into the eggs from some of her very own John Wayne chickens.

"You can cook a damn good egg," Callicoaat hollers from the sun-soaked table in the middle of Canteen, before swooping in for another bite. Evans smiles.



Canteen co-owner and chef Corbin Evans serves up fried eggs.

PHOTOS COURTESY CAROL ROARK



Delta scenery inspires local painter's artwork

MEGAN SWARTZFAGER

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Nature has inspired some of the world's most beloved artists of all stylistic backgrounds, from Van Gogh's "Starry Night" to Winslow's "Sunlight on the Coast." Some of the best-known paintings - even if they are not always known by name - attempt to capture the beauty and power of nature. Carol Roark, a painter based in the Mississippi Delta, does the same every time she picks up a brush.

Roark began painting at age 13 under private instruction. She continued painting and sketching throughout her youth, focusing on equine portraiture. Then, when she began studying for a BFA at Mississippi State University, she fell in love with plein air painting - the art of capturing outdoor scenes in natural lighting - under the instruction of Sammy Britt. Roark's affinity for plein air painting bolstered and was bolstered by her love of the landscapes around her.

"The landscapes are vast, with a strong sense of atmosphere," Roark said. "There is no place like the South, especially the Mississippi Delta. The Southern culture is so tied to the land. Sadly, I think most people never realize the beauty here, so I try to bring awareness to it through my work."

Roark paints a variety of subjects en plein air but

her most frequent subjects are horses, her family and the Mississippi landscape. It is the nature of plein air art to capture an honest and powerful representation of a place's atmosphere. Because of this, Roark does not shy away from any aspects of the Mississippi Delta's topography, including agriculture.

"You can't appreciate the Delta and avoid agriculture," Roark said. "I actually enjoy painting the way fields look during different stages of farming. I also like the challenge of painting the equipment and the structures found in the southern landscape. I think they are an important part of the Southern story."

Roark believes sunlight is the most important aspect on which to focus when attempting to capture the feeling of a landscape. She especially loves the light of the Delta and how it changes seasonally and throughout the day, and said capturing this light helps her to bring out the "extraordinary in the ordinary," such as the beauty of a dirty cotton gin or a weathered barn.

"The way light plays on and object and how it affects the colors around it, fascinates me," Roark said. "It's something that is very difficult to capture in photography, especially the light

and colors that are seen in shadows. I find this a challenge time and time again and I am always striving to get better at capturing it."

She has been able to hone her skill partially thanks to the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, who awarded her a Community Supported Arts grant for 2018. This program allows members of the community to support local artists by purchasing "shares" of local projects. For her project, Roark completed "200 Days/200 Paintings," the title of which speaks for itself.

"The confidence and experience I gained was immeasurable. All of these paintings were from life and on location - in the heat, in the cold, in the rain and in many different locations," she said. "I was able to paint the changing of the seasons from day to day which deepened my love for the landscape even more."

Shares of Roark's project were purchased by community members through the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council's CSA and were distributed to buyers at the Oxford Art Crawl on June 26. More information about Roark and her work can be found at her website, on Instagram @roarkstudios and on Facebook at Roark Studios.

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1

MARLEE CRAWFORD



2

DEVNA BOSE



3

CHRISTIAN JOHNSON



7

DEVNA BOSE



4

CHRISTIAN JOHNSON



5

DEVNA BOSE



6

JOHN SCOTT

1. Fields of soy beans and cotton surround a closed cotton gin in Taylor, Miss. 2. Matt Britt, owner of Clear Creek Produce, holds a ripe cantaloupe from his fields. 3. Yokna Bottoms Farm field manager Daniel Zimmanck harvests watermelons for a farmer's market. 4. Two shoppers go through crates of local tomatoes at the Midtown Farmer's Market. Many farms in North Mississippi offer organic and farm fresh produce to the area. 5. Chef Vishwesh Bhatt eyes a fresh eggplant at the Community Farmer's Market. 6. Two women perform yoga poses on Bailey's Woods Trail between Rowan Oak and the UM Museum. 7. A farmers market patron holds a creamy peach popsicle from Oxscicles.



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FARMERS MARKET-FRIENDLY RECIPES

MARY LIZ KING
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With all of the fresh ingredients found at farmers markets and food stands during the summer, the monthlong break from school can be the perfect time to cook in the kitchen. Cooking with seasonal ingredients comes along with many benefits - it's healthier, safer and it often tastes better than frozen food or other alternatives. Pick up some local produce at a farmers' market, and try out these recipes.



Grilled Eggplant Parmesan

- Olive oil cooking spray
- Olive oil
- Kosher salt
- 6 large or 12 small Japanese eggplants
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1/4 cup dry breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 8 medium sized Roma tomatoes, sliced into 1/4 inch slices
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh basil leaves

Directions:

Note: The eggplant can be cooked on an outdoor grill, grill pan or an indoor electric grilling machine.

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
2. Spray a ceramic or glass casserole dish with cooking spray.
3. Cut the stem off of each eggplant and a small slice off of the other end. Cut the eggplants in half crosswise. Slice each half lengthwise into 1/4 inch slices. Layer eggplant slices in a colander, sprinkling with a little kosher salt on each layer. Let sit for 15 minutes. Rinse off salt and pat dry.
4. Spray a grill pan or an electric grilling machine with cooking spray and brush the eggplant slices on each side with a little olive oil. Grill eggplant until very tender, about 4-5 minutes per side. Drain eggplant slices on paper towels or on paper bags.
5. In a small bowl mix the breadcrumbs, garlic, and the parmesan. Layer in the casserole dish in the following order: eggplant slices, breadcrumb mixture, tomato slices, bread crumb mixture, basil, and repeat until all ingredients are used up, ending with the breadcrumb mixture on top of the tomatoes.
6. Bake for about 35-40 minutes, or until the top of the casserole is well browned.

Organic and Vegan Banana Almond Bread

- 2 cups coconut flour
- 3/4 cup agave syrup
- 1/2 cup organic dark brown sugar, packed
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup organic almond milk or organic unsweetened coconut milk
- 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- 2 cups mashed banana, from very ripe bananas
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon organic vanilla extract
- Almonds (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly oil a 9x5" loaf pan and set it aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, sift together the coconut flour, organic sugars, baking soda, sea salt and cinnamon.
3. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the almond or coconut milk and cider vinegar. Mix in the mashed banana, canola oil, maple syrup, and organic vanilla extract, until they are well combined. Add the dry ingredients to the wet, mixing until combined do NOT over mix. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan. Bake for about 1 hour, or until a toothpick inserted into the center emerges clean. Allow the bread to cool on a wire cooling rack for 20 minutes before serving. Serve warm or at room temperature.

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