

Submitted photo

Left: North Fork 53, a new agritourism destination in Nehalem, will host its Grand Opening at 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 10. The event will feature a local food farm-to-table feast, live music, a ribbon cutting, tours, local artist showcase and more.



Photo by Dan Haag

Ginger Edwards prepares to hang the new sign for North Fork 53, a new local food and agritourism destination in Nehalem.

It was a deeper interest level in skills and techniques that many in modern society either never learned or simply forgot, such as canning and pickling. “People want to have more of those skills themselves, they want to have their own gardens and teach that to their kids,” she says.

North Fork 53 will offer the chance for people to learn those skills and better hone their ability to make healthy choices. Visitors will be able to interact with the people who grow and sell their food.

Edwards, who teaches young farmers, also sees the property as a place where other small farmers can “plug in to” and collectively pack, store, cool and sell food.

She adds that it took years to make her connections and build infrastructure. Her hope with North Fork 53 is to not only pass on her knowledge to prospective farmers, but to provide a central place.

“It wasn’t just about our farm anymore,” she says. “We started thinking of it as a local food hub.”

Edwards is joined in her passion for building a local food visitor’s circuit by Nehalem grass-fed beef and pastured pork and poultry producers Jared Gardner and Hilary Foote of

Nehalem River Ranch and Jeff Wong of Community Supported Fishery in Garibaldi.

North Fork 53’s grand opening will serve as a showcase for that notion: a farm-to-table feast featuring North Coast organic vegetables, seafood, beef and artisan foods, along with Oregon beer and wine and a local art show.

One hundred tickets are for sale, and they are going fast.

As North Fork 53 comes together, Edwards is glad that the interest in farming and healthy eating is more than a trend, but part of a larger community-supported vision.

“All of this was community-funded,” she says of the farm’s renovations, which were funded by a community fundraising campaign. “None of it came out of my pocket. This wouldn’t have happened without community support.”

Overall, Edwards wants visitors to feel relaxed and become part of the community. She wants them to walk the fields, harvest the food and share in the joy the land has given her.

“I read this quote on the Internet the other day,” she says. “It said, ‘If you have more than you need, build a table not a wall.’ That’s a really great metaphor for this project.”



North Fork 53: A place where good things meet

The Nehalem Valley’s first farmer-owned agritourism food hub celebrates its grand opening

They say good things come to those who wait. For those who live in and visit the Nehalem Valley, the wait is over. North Fork 53, a small organic farmstead that offers lodging, hands-on workshops, and farm-

to-table products and experiences, will swing its big red barn doors open for a Grand Opening Celebration from 4 to 9 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 10.

Travel just a short way up Oregon Highway 53 outside of Nehalem, and the hustle and bustle of beach tourism fades into the quiet distance. The scenery is straight from the musings of John Muir, when he urged people to “keep close to nature’s heart and break clear away, once in a while, spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean.”

It is here, in the heart of the Nehalem Valley that the dream that is now North Fork 53 was born.

Ginger Edwards, founder and executive director of North Fork 53, has called the Nehalem Valley home for 14 years and farmed it full-time for the past seven. Her passion for knowing

where her food comes from is evidenced by her involvement in other local ventures; she is head organic farmer and founder of R-evolution Gardens, also on Highway 53, and one of the original organizers of the Manzanita Farmers Market.

When the property across the road from R-evolution Gardens came up for sale, the timing couldn’t have been better.

“It’s a beautiful property, but it had never really been on our radar,” Edwards says. “When it came up for sale, we started dreaming about the possibilities.”

The property was an original homestead from the 1930s and offered a wealth of potential: a large red barn perfect for big events and classes, and a four-bedroom farm house overlooking the north fork of the Nehalem River.

Now, the house is undergoing a rapid transformation. Edwards sees the large, modern kitchen space as a showcase for the property’s mission.

“Every bit of food they (visitors) eat will be from this farm or a neighboring farm,” she says.

North Fork 53 also provides visitors with tours to see how the farm’s

More info

North Fork 53 is located at 77282 Oregon Highway 53 in Nehalem. To inquire about tickets (\$80 to \$100) for the grand opening, or for general information, call 503-368-3044 or email northforkginger@gmail.com. Learn more about the farm at www.northfork53.com

food is grown, harvested and prepared.

Edwards adds that the interest in sustainable and renewable living is not a trend, but something people have taken to heart. “They will feel more connected to this place and want to support local farms as they travel and eat,” she says.

At R-evolution Gardens, Edwards had begun to see that people were seeking a well-rounded food experience. “We wanted to tap interest we’ve been experiencing — of people just pulling in our driveway and asking questions, wanting tours,” she says.

It was notable that visitors were not all from the local area; people pulled off the road going to and from Portland, Salem and beyond. Edwards says all are curious about the farming lifestyle and seeking answers on how to grow and prepare their own food.