

North Coast Food Web to move to Astoria Food Hub

Operating larger commercial kitchen space

BY PETER KORCHNAK

The North Coast Food Web may only be 10 years old but it has already outgrown its space in the cheerfully painted building in Astoria.

The nonprofit, which runs a small weekly farmers market, conducts educational programs, operates a commercial kitchen, and will in March be moving downtown, to Astoria Food Hub.

At the new location, the food web's programs will continue to expand. Its weekly farmers market now brings together produce, eggs, meat, and other goods from some 35 vendors located within a 100 mile radius of Astoria. Many of the vendors are first-time retailers, so the nonprofit, said executive director Jess Tantisook, "is their entry point to the local food system." Vendors can launch their businesses or test new products at a much smaller price than a traditional grocery store would charge.

In addition to a larger office space, the food web will be operating an expanded commercial kitchen at Astoria Food Hub. Virus precautions permitting, its state-of-the-art kitchen will help grow its educational programming. While the current kitchen accommodates up to nine concurrent cooks, the new kitchen will be available to fit up to 25. Clients will also have the hub's cold storage and palette spaces available to them for rent.

"We'll share resources in the space," said Tantisook, which will make for greater efficiencies for clients.

The food web is running a capital campaign, "Dough for the Decade," with the goal of raising \$500,000 to support improvements in the new space. Donations can be made online at NorthCoastFoodWeb.org.

The organization's move will coincide

with the opening of the Astoria Food Hub. Located in the old Sears building on Marine Drive, the hub will lease spaces to businesses, including a flower shop and a cafe with its own roastery, both located in the main hall, and a cured meats purveyor in the basement. The front, street-level area will host a retail market offering local prepared and frozen foods. The hub will also offer commercial kitchens, cold storage as well as an array of business support services, such as marketing, packaging, and distribution. In the next phase, the basement will also house a restaurant and a speakeasy.

In that sense, the food hub "aspires to be a platform for food businesses on the North Coast," said co-founder, Jared Gardner, who also owns the Nehalem River Ranch. "It's very much about pooling resources and creating efficiencies in food production and distribution."

If the food web is a "baby incubator," as Tantisook calls it, which aims to support the culture of local food production, the food hub will be

a bigger commercial operation for businesses that wish to scale up past the nascent stage.

One such business is Cascadia Cured, the brainchild of Jeff Graham, former executive chef at Fort George Brewery. The basement tenant will cure meats and make packaged products, like salami or prosciutto, using inputs from area ranches.

Graham will also help with educational programming in the commercial kitchen, teaching, let's say, "someone who makes chimichurri at home but wants to make it into a business."

In its early days in the mid-1930s, the John E. Wicks-designed building was home to the wholesale produce distributor Mason, Ehrman & Co. whose lettering is still visible on the riverfront facade. "It's fun to get back to the roots," Gardner said.

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Delivery driver Daniel Brew and market coordinator Lila Barrett load a van for home deliveries at the current Food Web location.



Jeff Graham, left, and Jared Gardner, right, at the Astoria Food Hub building.



The North Coast Food Web is moving to a new location at the Astoria Food Hub.