

Spannocchia Foundation

For Immediate Release

For more information contact:

Erin Cinelli

(207) 730-1154

erin@spannocchia.org

Spannocchia Symposium II Brings Italians to New England Oct. 25 – 31, 2010

Portland, Maine (October 26, 2010) – In February 2009, the Spannocchia Foundation fulfilled its mission and a long-held vision of providing a cross-cultural exchange by hosting the Spannocchia Symposium on Food, Landscape and Community in Tuscany and New England. The inaugural symposium gathering focused on the issue of sustainable local food systems and how they play an integral role in maintaining rural culture and landscape in both Tuscany and New England. Thirty farmers, chefs, agricultural educators, food writers, food policy experts and young leaders from New England traveled to the Tenuta di Spannocchia to join their Tuscan counterparts for four dynamic days of presentations, conversation, farm and market tours, and group meals featuring local and seasonal products. Participant feedback on the Symposium was overwhelmingly positive, with many ideas generated to sustain the connection between the stakeholders of both regions. (visit: www.spannocchia.org/symposium)

Spannocchia Symposium II is a reciprocal symposium taking place October 25 – 31, 2010 in Vermont, Maine, and Massachusetts. The overarching theme is “connecting people to farming” and a more focused agenda features the key issues raised at the 2009 gathering: access to land, farm viability, community and youth engagement, the roles of women and immigrants in sustainable agriculture, agricultural/culinary tourism, innovations in marketing and branding of farm products/activities, and the supports and limitations provided by state and regional agricultural policy. Eighteen Italian participants are traveling to New England to see first-hand the farms, educational programs, and community outreach efforts of their US counterparts.

Shelburne Farms, a nonprofit environmental education center, 1,400-acre working farm, and National Historic Landmark on the shores of Lake Champlain in Shelburne, Vermont, is the host site for the core of the symposium discussions facilitated by John Elder, Professor of English and Environmental Studies at Middlebury College. Open dialogue with simultaneous translation by Luisa de Luca of the Institute of International Studies in Portland, ME are interspersed with tours of local farms and markets, and a public event: “The Orchards of Home – Apples of the Past; Apples of the Future” featuring presentations by Isabella Dalla Ragione and Nick Cowles of Shelburne Orchards and their experience with orchard work in Italy and New England. Field trips include a tour of Shelburne Farms, a visit to the Intervale Center and a

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visit to City Market in Burlington. The Italians and several members of the New England contingent depart for the Northeast Kingdom region of Vermont, for site visits to Pete's Greens in Craftsbury, VT and Jasper Hill Cellars, in Greensboro, VT. Hosts Pete Johnson and Mateo Kehler are part of an innovative collective of local entrepreneurs who work collaboratively to support each others' projects with an eye towards stimulating the local economy in the Hardwick/Craftsbury/Greensboro area. See an article about the group in the NY Times here: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/08/dining/08verm.html>.

Following a full day in the Northeast Kingdom, the group travels to Portland, ME where the Italian and youth participants meet their home stay hosts, and spend the evening getting settled. The next day starts out at Farmers' Gate Market (owned by Erin Cinelli and Ben Slayton), a full service butcher shop and retail outlet in Wales, ME that features pasture-raised beef, pork, poultry, and lamb sourced from a network of small-scale, local farms and livestock producers. The next stop is in Lewiston, ME, to visit St. Mary's Nutrition Center, a program of St. Mary's Health System that seeks to improve knowledge of and access to nutritious food for Maine residents. A key area of the Nutrition Center is the Lots to Gardens program, an urban community garden initiative that promotes youth engagement and learning about sustainable agriculture in the urban environment. Other programs include a food pantry and a teaching kitchen. Then, it's off to Turner, ME for lunch and a visit at Nezinscot Farm, owned and operated by 2009 Symposium participant Gloria Varney and her husband, Gregg. Nezinscot Farm is a diversified organic farm and dairy with an on-site farm store and café/bakery. The site visits end in Durham, ME, at New Leaf Farm, where 2009 participant Chris Colson and her husband Dave show off their ten acre operation of vegetable, herb and fruit production.

The study tour continues with Cultivating Community's day of learning about urban farming in Portland, ME. The day begins with a visit to the Portland Farmers' market, so that the Italian participants can see a New England farmers' market in action, followed by a tour of the Boyd St. gardens. The remaining activities take place at Cultivating Community's site at Turkey Hill Farm in Cape Elizabeth and include a home grown cooking demo and lunch courtesy of the youth from the Community Culinary Crew and a tour of partner school gardens hosted by student gardeners. The evening culminates in the Maine Harvest Dinner hosted by Spannocchia Foundation at Fiddlehead Art and Science Center in Gray, ME. This event features a program designed by the youth participants from both Italy and New England and a menu created by Aurora Provisions with contributions from many local provisioners and wine from Spannocchia. On October 31, the Italians leave Portland and make one last site visit to Appleton Farms, a Trustees of Reservations property located in Ipswich, MA. As one of the longest continuously operated farms in the USA, Appleton provides the Italian participants with a sense of the evolution of farming in New England, and how farm activities have changed over the years. The 2010 chapter ends

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in Boston on Halloween but the long range vision for the symposia series has the cross-cultural dialogue resuming in 2010 with a new range of topics likely related to forestry practices, energy and climate change in Tuscany and New England.

Background

Although the two regions have similarities and symposium participants share common goals, it is as much their differences that allow them to learn from one another. Tuscany's world-renowned traditional cuisine that is tied to its landscape and culture is in danger of disappearing. In New England, on the other hand, only bits and pieces of its traditional landscape and food culture have endured—but it has a vibrant young movement dedicated to reviving those elements, adding to them, and building a new regional cuisine and farmscape. A visit from the Tuscans will help the New Englanders continue to pull their innovations together into a cohesive vision of sustainable farming that makes sense in their region. The Tuscans, on the other hand, can learn from the New Englander's success at attracting energetic young people into farming, and at educating a wide range of consumers and parents about the value of local food, markets and farms. The New Englanders have a movement that needs to be shaped, and the Tuscans have an ancient shape that needs life and movement.