

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 26, 2021

Note to media: please feel free to use parts of our intro video at <https://www.raleighconvention.com/aseatforall> or any of the still photos attached to this email. Please contact Chrissy (cdeal@cleaninc.com) if you need higher resolution files.

Raleigh Convention Centers Introduces New Menu Featuring Ingredients Grown and Raised by Female and BIPOC Farmers in NC

Raleigh, NC — The Raleigh Convention Center and its in-house caterer, Centerplate, today introduced “A Seat at the Table: Southern Cuisine Featuring North Carolina’s Women and BIPOC Farmers and Food Producers,” a new menu featuring products grown and raised by small-scale farmers in North Carolina. Phil Evans, executive chef at Centerplate, spent a portion of the last year sourcing ingredients from farms across the state, selecting foods that not only enhance the menu, but also help tell the story of farmers historically underrepresented — those who are female and belong to BIPOC communities (Black, Indigenous and People of Color). This marks the first time every menu offering features something produced at one of those farms.

No other convention center menu in the U.S. is known to have prioritized female and BIPOC producers in this way.

As he put the finishing touches on the new menus, Chef Phil spent three weeks personally visiting the farms represented. They include:

- America’s Best Nut Co, which offers gourmet peanuts roasted in Rocky Mount;
- Hines Family Farms, growing fresh vegetables in Jacksonville;
- Fogwood Farms in Reidsville, producing mushrooms and other produce;
- Pine Knot Farms, a certified organic farm in Hurdle Mills;
- New Ground Farms, growing heirloom and hybrid vegetables in Pembroke;
- Paradox Farms, a creamery making cheese outside of Carthage;
- Peggy Rose Pepper Jelly from Wake Forest;
- Grass Grazed Farms, livestock raised in Northern Durham using ethical practices and regenerative grazing;
- Sweet Pea Urban Garden, growing microgreens and vegetable shoots near downtown Raleigh; and
- MG3 Farms, a hydroponic farm in Prospect.

“This isn’t simply delicious food – it’s food with a story,” said Kerry Painter, executive director of Raleigh Convention + Performing Arts Complex. “As visitors continue to return to downtown Raleigh, we’re excited to offer a first-class menu that sets us apart from other venues, of course. But we’re especially proud to be able to introduce those visitors to the people behind the flavors. Chef Phil chose products from small, family farms where quality is more important than quantity. The love and care they put into their products comes through with every bite.”

“I grew up working in the dirt, gardening with my mother,” Chef Phil said. “The vegetables we grew in our backyard were infinitely more delicious than anything we could have purchased from a large-scale store. And during my time in the restaurant industry, I’ve seen too often how smaller farmers – especially women and BIPOC farmers – are repeatedly overlooked. I’ve met some incredible people across North Carolina who are producing amazing foods. They deserve to be showcased, and our guests deserve to taste the best of the best.”

The “A Seat at the Table: Southern Cuisine Featuring North Carolina’s Women and BIPOC Farmers and Food Producers” menu is the latest in the Convention Center’s efforts to bring more sustainable and socially conscious practices to its operations. The Center is home to gardens that are irrigation- and pesticide-free, and feature beehives and native grasses and perennials. Honey produced by the bees is already incorporated in drink and food offerings. By composting with Raleigh-based CompostNow, the Center has a 40 percent average landfill diversion rate, keeping more than 150,000 lbs of food out of the landfill since 2017. That compost is then donated to the Camden Street Learning Garden which is operated by the Inter-faith Food Shuttle.

About the Raleigh Convention Center

The LEED Silver-certified Raleigh Convention Center is a bustling hub for the culture, commerce, and technologies that make the Triangle one of the most admired and sought-after regions in the United States. Its modern 500,000-square-foot facility includes a stunning granite lobby with dramatic windows and downtown views, an elegant 32,000-square-foot ballroom, and a massive 150,000-square-foot exhibit hall, all with outstanding tech amenities and award-winning culinary delights. The center has welcomed over 4.5 million visitors since its opening in September 2008. www.raleighconvention.com