

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 3, 2009

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**LOCAL & HERITAGE FOODS DIRECTORY NOW AVAILABLE**

*Makes buying local food easier by connecting consumers, businesses to local food producers*

TUCSON, AZ – As part of its goal to promote local and place-based foods, the Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance has published a guide to the local food producers and vendors in the Santa Cruz Valley and southeastern Arizona. The guide, titled *Local & Heritage Foods Directory: A guide to producers, grocers, restaurants and farmers' markets throughout the Santa Cruz Valley and southeastern Arizona*, is now available.

The directory is the first of its kind for southern Arizona and will connect all levels of the local food supply chain, from farmers to restaurants to food enthusiasts, making it easier to buy and sell diverse, fresh foods. Also included in the directory is background information about local heritage foods, such as mesquite meal, prickly pear and tepary beans; locations and schedules of regional farmers markets and a seasonal availability chart for the Santa Cruz Valley.

“Demand for local foods has increased dramatically because of health, environmental and economic reasons,” explains Vanessa Bechtol, Executive Director of the Heritage Alliance. “Consumers are becoming more aware that buying local foods reduces the environmental impacts of food transportation, encourages healthy eating habits, preserves cultural food traditions and stimulates heritage-based economic development. This directory makes buying local simple and easy.”

For the purpose of the directory, *local food* is food produced in the Santa Cruz River Valley (Pima and Santa Cruz counties), and Cochise and Graham counties. *Heritage food* is locally produced food tied to the region's history and cultural identity, including traditionally grown Native American crops, culturally traditional foods unique to this region and plants that grow in the wild unique to the Sonoran Desert.

“The heritage foodways, farming and ranching practices of the Santa Cruz Valley are eclectic, building on many cultural influences and many improvisations pioneered by innovators here in our midst,” says Gary Paul Nabhan, Ph.D., co-founder of Tucson-based Native Seeds/SEARCH and Research Social Scientist with the Southwest Center at the University of Arizona. “The goal of the Heritage Alliance is not to freeze them in time, label and license them, but to let them live, breathe and mutate through time in response to human needs and ecological necessities.”

The directory is available for free online at <http://www.SantaCruzHeritage.org/Directory>, or may be purchased for \$5 through the Heritage Alliance. Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance members will receive a free directory. Membership information is also available on the Heritage Alliance website.

The directory was made possible by a generous grant from the Tohono O’odham Nation, and is a project of the proposed Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area.

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*The Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization whose mission is to connect people to the cultural, historic, and natural treasures of the Santa Cruz Valley through education, preservation and promotion of its unique resources and living traditions. For more information visit [www.santacruzheritage.org](http://www.santacruzheritage.org).*