



2019

ANNUAL REPORT



A Note From Our Executive Director

With 2019 behind us, I'm struck by the ways in which FoodChain has had the good fortune to innovate and educate with fresh food at its center throughout the years. When I founded FoodChain in the fall of 2011, I never could have imagined the people who would come into my life, the folks who would join in making this vision a reality, and the supporters who would lighten the load with helping hands and needed resources. As I explain to visitors, part of what makes our organization unique is our scale. FoodChain is intentionally designed to work around interpersonal interactions; people sharing a meal made from scratch with fresh ingredients, one-on-one instruction on how to hold a knife, and groups learning how food can be grown in a way that stewards our resources and allows organisms to mutually benefit from one another.

Through this lens, the past year has been particularly rewarding. We've welcomed more people than ever into our space, of all ages, and have continued to find ways to provide relevant and needed value for their lives. We hosted more meals than any year previously, for youth and seniors, and transformed local ingredients into a myriad of creative, healthy and tasty dishes. We've also multiplied our impact by sending food beyond our walls through our Butternut Squash partnership with Feeding Kentucky, allowing food pantry staff in the region to engage directly with their clients through the exchange of wholesome, locally-farmed product.

2019 also saw FoodChain staff grow exponentially, and it was particularly joyful to look around a table set for 11 at our Holiday Staff lunch. With this expanding team, we have a widening breadth of expertise and personal experiences, not to mention food preferences! And while growth adds complexities, it also allows for progress and improvements. It feels like FoodChain is now firmly in its adolescence, learning to make the most of our skills, opening our eyes to identify and question injustices and inequalities, and to intentionally partner with organizations who complement our work, so that our strengths are used to add value to the community as a whole.

With this mindset, I can't wait to see where this next decade will take us. Thank YOU for joining us in this journey, for linking arms with us in this work, and believing that fresh, local food can and should be redemptive and nourishing for all.

In Gratitude & Joy,

Becca Self

Becca Self



The Need is Real and Immediate

People are going hungry in Kentucky.

48,330 Kentuckians
are food insecure



1 out of 4
of those are children



Meanwhile, resources are unevenly allocated.



80%

of U.S. water consumption is
used for industrial scaled
agriculture



1,500

miles is the average distance food
travels before ending up at your
local grocery



13.5

million Americans are
estimated to live in food
deserts

Poor diets lead to poor health.



Clinical diabetes rates
are approximately **50%**
higher among adults living
in food-insecure
households



Food insecure adults are
30% more likely to be
obese than food secure
households



Kentucky, with a **34.3 %**
obesity rate, has the 7th
highest obesity rate in
the nation

And food is wasted.

The USDA estimates that **30-40 percent** of our food supply goes to waste



That translates to an estimated
30.63 million tons of food annually
being sent to landfills*



*according to the EPA

Our 2019 Impact in Numbers

Kitchen



\$5,258
to Local
Farmers

3,034
Fresh Meals
Served

21,264
Pounds of
Food Rescued

Farm



1,135
People Toured
the Farm

1,266
Pounds of Greens
Harvested

1
Brand New Shrimp
System

Outreach



282
Youth Participated
in Cooking Classes

12,796
Individuals
Reached

567
\$2 Farmers Market
Vouchers Distributed

In the words of our friends...



"The small but mighty team at FoodChain are transforming how the community relates to food and how food nourishes the community."

-Lisa Haneberg,
Author &
Volunteer



"FoodChain is an exciting place to be with their indoor farm, their educational cooking classes for children and adults, and the amazing way they turn excess produce into wonderful food!"

-Scott Winkler,
Volunteer



"Because of FoodChain and getting to be part of FSJTP, I now know how to work with fresh veggies and eat more of them than I did ever before!"

-Latiphia Brewer,
FSJTP Grad &
Food Processing
Manager



"Fayette Co. Public Schools Child Nutrition Dept. is proud to partner with FoodChain for F2S. We're thankful for the help in educating students on the importance of local food systems."

-Wendy Young,
FCPS's Nutrition
Coordinator

Our Impact in Action

2019 on the Farm

451
students engaged
with the farm



25 miles
farthest distance
produce traveled



13,867
meals grown
and served from
our farm



The FoodChain indoor aquaponics farm is thriving under our newest farm manager, Kaitlyn! With her leadership the farm is producing new varieties of microgreens and herbs and yielding more produce than ever before. Plus, we now have a brand new marine shrimp system at FoodChain!

Because shrimp is new to us, we were fortunate to have the experts at Kentucky State University as our partners on this project. Together, we're aiming to create a demonstrational system to teach farmers and consumers that we can eat local marine shrimp right here in Kentucky without contributing to overseas shrimp farms, which often lead to the downfall of local communities and ecosystems.

The shrimp system is separate from the main aquaponics system because it uses salt water and is currently only an aquaculture system (no plants... yet!). Over time we hope to transform the shrimp system into an aquaponics system by adding salt-tolerant greens.

Currently we're developing our marketing processes for the shrimp, with plans to both sell them to restaurants and use them in our own kitchen for events like Chat n Chow.

We are proud to be demonstrating innovative farming techniques in the heart of an urban area; creating solutions for connecting more people to fresh, local food. Our small indoor farm is an entry point for food systems education and has allowed many schools, organizations, and individuals to engage with food production in a way that is sustainable and healthy for all!



2019 in the Kitchen

7,516 lbs
of fresh, local food
distributed to the
community



29
farms have donated
or sold produce to
FoodChain



27,995
dollars earned by
Food Sector
participants



Food Sector Job Training Program

Our Food Sector Job Training Program (FSJTP) recruits under or unemployed residents of Lexington who face barriers to finding employment. This program has been one of our most successful and we're exceedingly proud of our graduates, 61% of whom have gained employment after completing the program! We were thrilled to have graduated sixteen participants in 2019, and to have then had the opportunity to hire seven of them to work in FoodChain's kitchen!

One highlight of this program from 2019 involved a mash up between FSJTP participants and our biggest annual fundraising event, FEAST. Each student researched and prepared an appetizer of their choosing to showcase at the February Chat n Chow Community Meal.

Attendees that night voted for their favorite dish and the top two ranked dishes were then made and served at the VIP portion of the FEAST evening by the winners. Additionally, all FSJTP participants were invited to join in the kitchen preparations for the big event, providing them with first-hand experience catering and working in the local food economy, as well as the chance to work with locally and nationally renowned chefs!

We are very grateful for the support of this program that we continue to receive from the Blue Grass Community Foundation, the Marksburry Foundation, PNC Bank, and BB&T.



Summer Food Service Program

2019 marked FoodChain's first time partnering with the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This USDA-funded, state-administered program feeds students who are on break from school throughout the summer months. With this partnership, we were able to host and serve free healthy meals to anyone, aged 1-18, right from our kitchen. Over 11 weeks, we served 1,184 freshly cooked meals. Each meal was made from scratch and included a total of 1,013 lbs of local fruits and veggies purchased directly from local farmers!

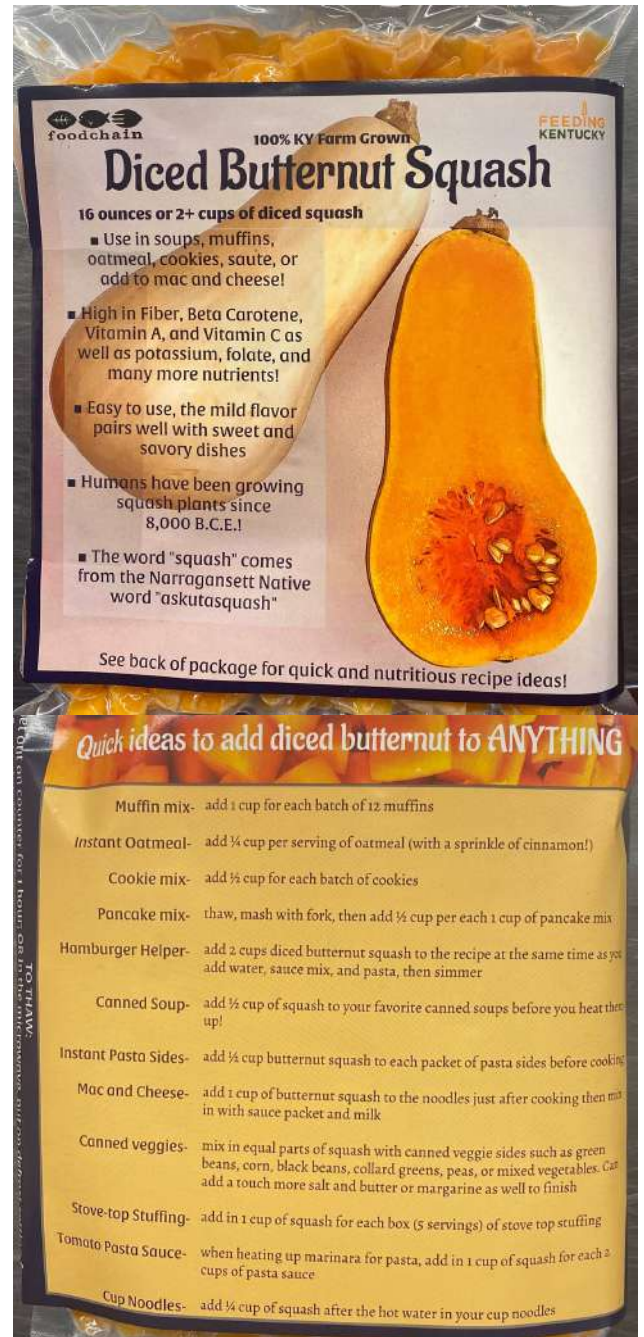
Additionally, FoodChain was able to employ four FSJTP graduates through this program, working a total of 408 hours while making fair wages, and gaining more work experience preparing meals each day!!

Produce Processing and Butternut Benchmarks



Since we first opened our Kitchen, FoodChain has been a part of the local food system working to minimize waste while also trying to ensure that food insecure families have access to wholesome, local produce. While much of that work can be done by redistributing surplus fruits and veggies, the agricultural excess often exceeds the volume that food pantries can absorb, which is where the processing comes in. By washing, chopping, freezing or drying local produce, FoodChain's kitchen can make food last longer while being more convenient to use by consumers. We've been doing this work with a variety of crops to create a wide range of products but this fall we had a special opportunity to tackle this on a much bigger scale!

In partnership with Feeding Kentucky, a Feeding America Affiliate and their program, Kentucky Farms to Food Banks, we focused our efforts specifically on butternut squash in the fall. Feeding Kentucky used special funding to purchase locally grown seconds squash directly from Kentucky farmers that was then sent to FoodChain to be peeled, seeded, diced, steamed, frozen, and packaged. From there packages were sent out to food pantries across the state, providing year round access to super nutrient dense and tasty veggies!



We sampled new recipes with the butternut squash and were able to employ four Food Sector graduates to help with the process of rescuing almost 10,000 pounds of local butternut from the landfill!

Feedback from pantries in Northern Kentucky included: "The bright wrapper with recipe ideas right on it is a huge hit! Many of the clients have no idea how to incorporate some of these vegetables into their menus, but this presentation makes it easy and attractive."

2019 Educational Outreach

6,285
educational
stove top hours



949
youth engaged
with local food



973 lbs
local produce
used in education



Farm To School

In 2017, FoodChain took on a major role in the Farm to School program by coordinating the efforts of the Farm to School council. Kristin, our Community Education and Outreach Director, currently serves as the Farm to School Chair and during this past October, the Council made a huge effort to feature locally raised food on school menus throughout Farm to School month!

Some of the most popular meals were nachos with Kentucky raised beef and salsa made from local ingredients, as well as Cheesy Chicken Etouffee, made with Kentucky grown sweet potatoes, onions, and green peppers!



Power of Produce

Fayette County Farm to School also partners closely with Lexington Farmer's Market to offer a local summer option as part of the national Power of Produce Club (POP), providing free youth engagement and education activities over the summer months. Additionally, this program gives participating youth a \$2 voucher to be used on locally grown produce, putting the purchasing power in the hands of kids while putting dollars in the pockets of farmers.

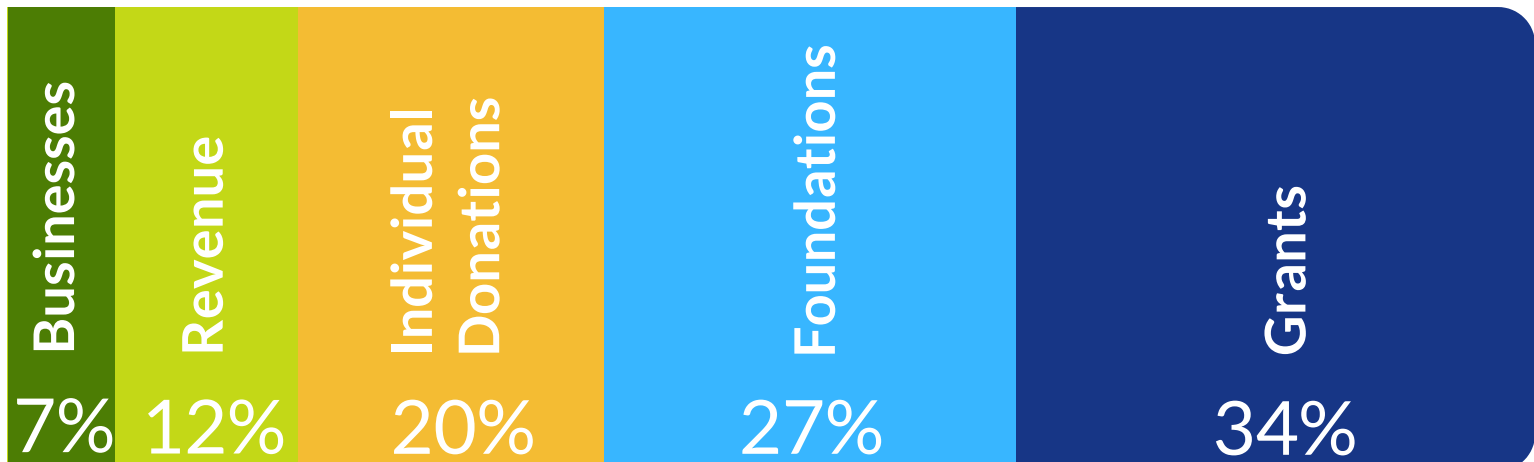
In 2019 we started offering POP at the Sunday farmers market on Southland Drive-- allowing us to bring programming to an entirely new community! Since starting the program, we have seen so much growth in youth participation including repeat visitors.

Partnerships

The Year of Meeting Others Where They Are

2019 was a huge year for us in collaborating with other community driven organizations. As we continued our work to connect more people to fresh food, we realized we couldn't get everyone who needs access to food education through our doors, leading us to curate partnerships with existing groups who have similar goals and values. Through these partnerships we saw the exponential impact that teamwork creates. For example, by partnering with Community Action Council, we created the Community Nutrition series. This program provided nutrition education with a Registered Dietitian and cooking lessons with FoodChain's seasonal produce for a group of low income seniors. Similarly, we got to work with the West End Community Empowerment Project to provide their summer youth campers with healthy locally sourced meals twice a week along with weekly cooking classes that incorporated local fruits and veggies. By forging these collaborations, we were able to supplement groups who are already thriving at engaging under-served populations through our own educational programming and ultimately, connect even MORE people to healthy food!

How We're Funded



Thanks for fueling our work!

Join the FoodChain Family

Donate!

Please consider us when making your charitable donations. We promise it will be money well spent!

Lend a Hand!

There are so many different opportunities to volunteer. Check 'em out on our website or email us at volunteer@foodchainlex.org

Follow, Like, Share.

Be our friend on social media! Find us @foodchainlex Be sure to sign up for our monthly newsletter as well!

Partner with us!

Your business can help sponsor and support the community in a variety of ways! Email us at info@foodchainlex.org for more details.

Come Take a Tour!

We offer public tours of our farm and kitchen on Saturdays at 1:00pm. Bring friends and spread the word! We also do private tours - find more information on our website.

More info at foodchainlex.org