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est Virginia Products

Margaret Miltenberger
Extension Agent, Mineral County

Program Purpose

The purpose is to learn the:

- ◆ heritage of West Virginia products,
- ◆ types of West Virginia products,
- ◆ West Virginia products in your community,
- ◆ basics for marketing your own products,
- ◆ benefits of buying local products, and
- ◆ availability of resources.

Teaching Outline for the Leader

1. All participants introduce themselves and describe or show a handcraft or food item they or someone they know has made and sold or given as a gift.
2. Describe the heritage of West Virginia products and ask for information and experiences from the group.
3. Describe West Virginia's arts, handcrafts, and agriculture products.
4. *Activity 1.* The group lists local West Virginia producers and their products.
5. Describe the basics of learning how to market one's own products. If someone in the group has marketed his/her own product, ask the person to share the experience.
6. *Activity 2.* The group lists the benefits of purchasing locally handcrafted and grown products.
7. Describe resources that can be used in locating West Virginia products. Contact the West Virginia Department of Agriculture for free copies of materials to share with the group. Allow two weeks for delivery.

Heritage of West Virginia Products

During the period of early settlement in West Virginia, the arts were a matter of survival; most native handcrafts related to necessary homemaking and farming activities. This life was filled with the creativity that produced what we now consider the luxury arts and crafts. Some of the crafts we today call Heritage Crafts differ from the true Mountain Arts.

Mountain Arts are one of the most important art forms of the mountains of West Virginia. Examples of the Mountain Arts include log cabins and cabin furnishings, spinning and weaving, coverlets and counterpanes, quilting and patchwork, native dyes and herbs, furniture and other woodwork, mountain baskets and chair bottoms, whittling and wood carving, dolls and toys, mountain music and hand-made instruments, pottery and clay items, rug and candle making, needlework and tatting, and metal and leather work. One very rare and nearly lost mountain art form is the making of wooden barrels, buckets, tubs, and measures.

Ingenious primitive crafts have become works of art in today's craft revival. The public wants crafts produced for generations by West Virginians. The challenge is to increase the income potential for people producing these crafts while maintaining the heritage of the Mountain Arts. The Mountain Arts and new handcrafts are an important economic and cultural resource for communities.

In the past, each person became an inventor and skilled worker as a matter of survival. Although there is a distinction between yesterday's Mountain Arts and today's West Virginia products, both represent a desire to create. West Virginia's best crafts reflect the pride of the people who create them.

We all are connected to West Virginia products. Many of us have jobs that result in the creation of these products. Most of us have either grown and preserved our own food or handcrafted items that historically originated from necessity. The continued desire to create and the resultant satisfaction are an inherent part of our culture.

Types of Products

The term *West Virginia product* has a very broad meaning and applies to almost anything manufactured and produced in West Virginia. This program topic focuses on West Virginia products that are either arts and handcrafts or agriculture products. These products typically are sold locally and regionally without mass marketing. Purchasing these products directly benefits the local community.

West Virginia arts and handcrafts may be found in local gift shops, community craft shows, county festivals, large craft fairs, local markets, speciality markets, and state park gift shops. The specific types of products vary from magnificently carved carousel horses to intricately tatted snowflakes.

Special centers such as Tamarack (located near Beckley) sell juried art and handcrafts as well as agriculture products. Tamarack is an excellent example of a collective marketing and promotion center for West Virginia products.

Some craft shows and centers like Tamarack require a jury process for art and handcrafts. The item produced by the craftsperson must meet the group's quality requirements and guidelines in order to be sold during an event or in a facility. Crafters must contact each group to learn about its guidelines and review process.

Tamarack juries in several areas: crafts, fine arts, souvenirs, books, publications, recordings, and video. For more information and to request a specific application, contact the West Virginia Parkways Authority. Agriculture products sold in Tamarack are approved through the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA).

Agriculture products range from fresh produce and dried flowers to canned jellies and speciality vin-

egars. Canned and packaged food items may be found in local grocery stores, gifts shops, speciality shops, craft fairs, farmers' markets, county fairs, and festivals. Fresh, locally grown produce may be found at farmers' markets, at roadside stands, in grocery stores, at the orchard, or on the farm.

One of the best places to purchase locally grown produce is the community farmers' market where a variety of items can be found. Farmers' markets have been on the rise in communities and are expected to continue to flourish, offering even wider varieties of seasonal produce. Fruits and vegetables commonly found at a farmers' market are tomatoes, corn, green beans, strawberries, peaches, and apples.

Identifying Local Products

Activity 1

Locally grown and processed West Virginia products can be found everywhere. Using a large piece of white paper and markers, ask your group to list local producers and products. This builds a local component into your program and allows participants to exchange information on local product availability. If your group is larger than 12, you may want to break into groups of six. The groups create their own lists and one person reports back to the entire group. This allows everyone a greater opportunity to participate.

Marketing Your Own West Virginia Products

When first marketing art or handcrafted products, contact local and statewide arts and crafts guilds and associations. These organizations will help identify appropriate local, regional, and state market outlets. They also will be aware of events and stores requiring a jury process.

The WVDA has requirements for marketing processed food products. Each processed food item has a different guideline, which makes it necessary to contact the WVDA's Marketing and Development Division. Its staff is more than happy to help you learn the requirements and meet the standards as well as guide you in marketing your product.

Often, the difficult part of the criteria is meeting the kitchen standard; however, it is possible to locate and use a kitchen approved for preparing food for retail sales. The following requirements must be met to market West Virginia food products:

Criteria for West Virginia Products

1. Food products must be of the highest quality.
2. Food products must be made, processed, or produced in West Virginia OR have a value added of 50 percent or greater in West Virginia.*
3. Food products must be labeled properly and meet the labeling requirements of the WVDA, West Virginia Division of Labor—Weights and Measures Section, and the Food and Drug Administration.
4. Foods must be manufactured or processed in an approved kitchen facility. Approval for these facilities is granted by the West Virginia Bureau of Public Health, Office of Environmental Services.
5. Meats and meat products must be processed and packaged in a facility approved and inspected by the Meat Inspection Division of the WVDA. Labels for meat and meat products also must be approved by that division.
6. Foods must be safely, attractively, and appropriately packaged.

West Virginia Grown Program

The *West Virginia Grown* Program promotes West Virginia producers by helping make their quality goods available to consumers. The products have a special blue-and-gold sticker with the state outline and *West Virginia Grown* logo. These products are not mass marketed. When you purchase products with the label, you are helping to preserve West Virginia heritage and support small business.

For a guide to *West Virginia Grown* products, contact the WVDA. The *Food & Things West Virginia Grown* guide includes the following product areas: aquaculture, bakery, bath and body, beverages, candles, confections, “cool eats,” dairy,

* *Value added means that a product is modified in West Virginia in such a way that the modification accounts for at least one-half of the final cost.*

flours and meals, herbs and spices, honey and honey products, jams, jellies, butters, maple syrup, meats, orchards, pasta, rice, legumes, snack foods, special-ity condiments, and wines. Call or write to place an order for any of these *West Virginia Grown* products.

Benefits of Buying Local Products

Activity 2

The sale of locally grown and handcrafted West Virginia products directly benefits a community's economy. Ask the group to list the benefits of purchasing locally grown and produced food and arts and handcrafts.

Giving West Virginia products as gifts has many benefits. West Virginia products allow you to share the local culture with others. When consumers purchase from locally owned and operated businesses, they help support the local economy. Dollars spent to purchase local products are more likely to stay in the local community as direct purchases or investments. This helps build the local economy and ultimately create jobs.

Product Availability—Guides to West Virginia Products

The following are free resources available through the

West Virginia Department of Agriculture
Marketing and Development Division
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0178
Phone: 304/558-2210

- ◆ *A Taste of West Virginia “Recipes from the Mountain State”*
- ◆ *A Taste of West Virginia*, a catalog of outstanding products from West Virginia's farm families
- ◆ *Old Fashioned Cookbook*
- ◆ *Foods and Things Grown in West Virginia*, a guide to West Virginia products and producers
- ◆ *West Virginia Wineries*, an address and location guide to wineries

For a list of fairs and festivals, phone West Virginia Tourism at 1-800-CallWVA and request a calendar of events.

Other Suggested Activities

- ◆ Invite a local craftsperson to demonstrate a craft and discuss how he/she markets the product.
- ◆ Visit a craft show or local speciality shop as a group. Look for the *West Virginia Grown* label.

References

West Virginia Department of Agriculture, Marketing, and Development Division (Revised 10/15/97)
Criteria for West Virginia Food Products,
Charleston, WV.

Maurer, B.B. (1975) *Mountain Heritage*, Mountain State Art and Craft Fair, Cedar Lakes, Ripley, WV. Morgantown Printing and Binding Company, Morgantown, WV.

Eaton, Allen H. (1937) *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, NY.

Resource Persons

Rebecca Stelling, *Manager of Creative Services*
West Virginia Parkways Economic
Development and Tourism Authority
P.O. Box 1469
Charleston, WV 25325-1469
Phone: 304-926-1900

Jean Smith, *Assistant Director of Marketing*
West Virginia Department of Agriculture
Marketing and Development Division
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0178
Phone: 304-558-2210

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