



# Highlights from 2019

## A Strong Member Network

The Vermont Fresh Network is celebrating its 24th anniversary in 2020 and our network is growing. We had **43 new Partner Members** join in 2019 and steady renewals throughout the year. Our **280 Partner Members** include 127 producers, 153 culinary establishments, and 3 distributors. This year, we added a new member level for food trucks! Our diverse membership builds relationships and shares a commitment to a vibrant, **transparent local food economy**.

**We look forward to working with everyone and continuing to grow and evolve in 2020!**



## DigInVT.com

The DigInVT partnership enables us to work with 10 statewide producer organizations and over **555** of their members. DigInVT continues to be one of the largest **collaborative food and farm tourism** platforms in the country. This year, site visits **grew by 83%**. We featured over **1,044 events**, **Fresh Feed** subscribers increased to **5,500**, and we partnered on exciting new culinary trails. Through DigInVT, we pair marketing with professional development for agritourism businesses. **In Dec 2019, VFN was awarded a three year federal grant to build on our successful efforts with DigInVT and strengthen Vermont agritourism.**



## 23rd Annual Forum Dinner

We welcomed over **650** delighted participants to the **VFN Annual Forum Dinner** at Shelburne Farms, which featured **57 chefs and food producers**. This year's meal highlighted our members, including grassfed producers and many specialty beverage makers. Visit our website for the winners of the evening's friendly competition, **Best Bite & Best Sip**. Our popular **silent auction** included generous gift packages with products and culinary experiences from 52 local businesses.

**Save the date of August 2nd, 2020 for the best meal of the summer!**





## Celebrating 5 years of Vermont Open Farm Week

**Open Farm Week 2019** brought curious visitors to over **70** events on **41** farms around the state. VFN manages this collaborative project through our DigInVT platform. Visitor attendance was high at **wide range of on-farm events**. From hop yard tours to film screenings to burger nights, and even a 5k run through a lavender farm, some were so successful that farmers scheduled additional events in the fall. Farms report this event is a good way to strengthen connections with consumers, educate visitors, and explore agritourism as an income source.



## Vermont Wine Project

It's an exciting time for Vermont wine! VFN is working to help promote Vermont as a wine region and its pioneering winegrowers. This year, we've coordinated educational wine **workshops, tastings**, a Fall Vermont **Wine Dinner Series** with member restaurants, written **articles**, and have been working to place the state's wineries on **agritourism culinary trails**. Many of the workshops were industry-only, aimed at creating Vermont wine ambassadors and offering professional development opportunities for restaurant and bar staff. Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with a call for regular Vermont wine themed workshops.



## International Tasting Trail

In 2019, VFN received a grant from the Champlain Valley Heritage Basin Program to further develop and promote **The Lake Champlain Tasting Trail**. This project allowed us to explore the story of sustainable agriculture in the Lake Champlain Basin through print and digital content. We continue to work with the International Trail Partnership including UVM Extension, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, the Vermont Department of Tourism, and representatives from Quebec, New York, and Ontario to build a first-of-its-kind International Tasting Trail.



## Conference Scholarship Program

The **VFN Conference Program** helps members of our local food system to attend nationally significant conferences (and other gatherings outside our region), then share what they learned with the larger VFN network. In 2019, we saw another new product launched as a result of this program. Scholarship recipient Jacob Powsner of Baird Farm **produced a locally foraged mint infused maple syrup** for the cocktail market as a result of his attendance at the Food Loves Tech conference in NYC.

## Professional Development Resources & Member Benefits

Our member benefits focus on **marketing, networking, and professional development** resources. In 2019, VFN partnered with #RootedinVermont on a social media and promotion webinar for Vermont Open Farm Week participants, and we worked with the Working Lands Enterprise Program on a webinar discussing current food and farm trends. Our webinars are part of our effort to reach all regions of the state with learning opportunities. We actively look to collaborate with regional organizations, businesses, and public sector agencies to further develop partnerships that will benefit our members and support our mission.

**Thank You to our Sponsors:** In 2019 - 2020, the Vermont Fresh Network Affiliate Partners are **Black River Produce, Burlington Free Press, Farrell Distributing, Foley Services, Hotel Vermont, and Vermont First**. We also have sponsors and funders for each of our individual projects and major events; see our 2019 Annual Financial Report for the full list.