

# Chefs Collaborative Renews America's Food Traditions

*Food Experts Unite to Realize, Restore and Revitalize Authentically American Foods and Traditions*

**(Boston, Mass...October 6, 2005)** Chefs Collaborative, a national organization of chefs, individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing a more sustainable food supply, has become an influential partner in the new Renewing America's Food Traditions (RAFT) project. RAFT was launched in the spring of 2005 by seven of the most prominent food, agriculture, education and conservation organizations in the United States as the first nationwide eco-gastronomic campaign. Uniting the culinary community's emphasis on food quality and artisanal traditions with conservationists' and food producers' knowledge of and commitment to agricultural biodiversity, RAFT is the first collaborative effort ever assembled to:

- Make a comprehensive catalog of America's indigenous and authentic foods and their cultural significance;
- Document which foods have fallen into disuse and are at risk of extinction;
- Determine which are capable of being restored and revitalized in ways that benefit their stewards; and
- Begin revitalization projects in partnership with food producers, retailers, consumers and chefs.

Chefs Collaborative brings its incredibly strong national chef network to the RAFT partnership. "Chefs Collaborative members are inspired to use their menus and purchasing decisions as powerful vehicles toward the use and recovery of local flavors and traditions," says Jennifer Hall, executive director of Chefs Collaborative. "RAFT presents an inspiring opportunity for our members to celebrate the regional diversity of our country."

Chefs Collaborative's contribution to the RAFT project is perhaps best highlighted by envisioning the final outcome, a nationwide series of heritage food picnics in 2007. The menus will be developed by Collaborative members and will reflect the culinary heritage of the United States by featuring the cuisines of diverse American cultures and native roots. Picnic ingredients will come from a breed or seed on the RAFT Redlist of America's Endangered Foods, one of RAFT's earliest successes that identifies the status, location, and historical and cultural links of over 700 endangered plant and animal foods.

Chefs Collaborative is fervently involved in the following RAFT initiatives:

- Gathering member recipes to be featured in a multi-authored book on America's most endangered traditional foods;
- Working with its members to develop recipes and promote the use of native foods on their restaurant menus in conjunction with the 2006 Native Foods "Ark Summit;"
- Strengthening the connection between consumers and local growers within the Heirloom Seed Adoption Program by holding annual heirloom produce events at Chefs Collaborative restaurants; and
- Ensuring American heritage chicken breeds are selected with thought to taste and usability in restaurants and developing and promoting recipes using these heritage breeds.

“We are excited to work with such committed partners,” says Gary Nabhan, RAFT founder and co-facilitator. “Each brings different strengths, connections and passions to achieve RAFT’s various objectives. Together, we can get these foods back on our farms and ranches, in our rivers and forests and, most importantly, on our tables.”

For further RAFT information, contact Project Manager Makalé Faber at 718-260-8000/makale@slowfoodusa.org, Gary Nabhan at 928.523.6726/gary.nabhan@nau.edu or Jennifer Hall at 206.849.2704/jennifer@chefscollaborative.org. For interview opportunities and photos, journalists can contact Civetta Comunicazioni at 617.577.8098/nancy@civettacom.com. Visit [www.chefscollaborative.org](http://www.chefscollaborative.org) or call 617.236.5200 for more information on Chefs Collaborative.

#### **About Chefs Collaborative**

Chefs Collaborative is a national network of more than 1,000 members of the food community who promote sustainable cuisine by celebrating the joys of local, seasonal, and artisanal cooking. While celebrating the pleasures of food, Collaborative members recognize the impact of food on our lives, on the well-being of our communities, and on the integrity of the global environment. Founded in 1993, Chefs Collaborative is the only culinary organization that provides its members with tools for running economically healthy, sustainable food service businesses and making environmentally sound purchasing decisions.

#### **About the RAFT project**

The RAFT project aims to advance eco-gastronomic conservation and respect cultural values by linking a sense of taste to a sense of place. It will attempt to safeguard and restore the biodiversity of cultures, plants, animals and their shared habitats. The RAFT project encourages a broader approach, focusing on holistic conservation through fostering appropriate cultural uses in addition to traditional technical tools of genetic conservation and archival documentation. Such a steward-oriented approach makes this work infinitely more complex, but ultimately more rewarding, as RAFT will foster the continuation of cultural foodways, not just single genes or isolated gastronomic practices. In order to preserve America’s endangered foods, RAFT will work to return them to America’s fields, fishing grounds, and tables. RAFT partners are developing and implementing initiatives to realize this goal with the generous support of Cedar Tree Foundation ([www.cedartreefound.org](http://www.cedartreefound.org)), CS Fund ([www.csfund.org](http://www.csfund.org)), and Lillian Goldman Charitable Trust.

Chefs Collaborative joins other RAFT founding partners—American Livestock Breeds Conservancy ([www.albc-usa.org](http://www.albc-usa.org)) Center for Sustainable Environments at Northern Arizona University ([www.environment.nau.edu](http://www.environment.nau.edu)), Cultural Conservancy ([www.nativeland.org](http://www.nativeland.org)), Native Seed/SEARCH ([www.nativeseeds.org](http://www.nativeseeds.org)), Seed Savers Exchange ([www.seedsavers.org](http://www.seedsavers.org)) and Slow Food USA ([www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org))—in several initiatives to be implemented over the remaining two years. Each of these groups has already worked steadfastly as part of their missions to advance the conservation and enjoyment of distinctively American seeds, breeds, wild game, fish and food plants. Visit [www.slowfoodusa.org/raft/index.html](http://www.slowfoodusa.org/raft/index.html) for more information.