

Project Title Restaurant Recognition Program

Project Impact and Findings

The Alaska Division of Agriculture's intent with the program was to encourage and recognize the efforts of restaurants purchasing Alaska Grown specialty crops to serve in their restaurants. We developed a specialty marketing campaign and designed a logo featuring local produce which we then advertised across the state and developed an app for all users to locate restaurants near them serving local produce. We worked with restaurants to either promote their efforts or connect them with producers in their area they could buy from or distributors who worked with local producers well. Throughout all of this we had participants sign up and indicate particular measurement outcomes such as how much they were purchasing, serving, what crops, as well as who they were purchasing from. This created our baseline data which we then followed up on with a mid-program survey and an end of program survey reporting on all those indicators. We were able to determine that purchasing slightly increased from the beginning and people offered local produce in more of their dishes as the program went on. What was a surprising indicator to us was that we discovered restaurants who were growing their own produce to serve. The app was downloaded by 530 users and 44 restaurants participated across four regions in the state: Southcentral, Kenai Peninsula, Southeast, and Fairbanks Northern region.

Beneficiaries

An estimation of 100 people benefited from the Restaurant Recognition program.

Activities Performed

Objectives:

#	Objective	Completed?	
		Yes	No*
1	Increase awareness among consumers of which restaurants are using local specialty crops and to what extent.	X	
2	Increase demand for these local products through restaurant participation and consumer awareness.	X	
3	Increase long term sales between Alaska Grown specialty crop products and restaurant buyers.	X	

Accomplishments:

Accomplishment	Relevance to Objective, Outcome, and/or Indicator
Engaged over 100 restaurants with 44 signing up for the program.	Our original goal for participation in the program was 30 restaurants, through our efforts we were able to sign up 44. The program was promoted and made aware to many more restaurants who have later expressed more interest in joining the program.
Promoted participants through media releases, social media posts, restaurant visits, and mobile app development.	At the start of the program we made a state media release that was published on the State of Alaska webpage. We also made our first posts on Facebook announcing our program and logo. For a total of 8 (2 per month) posts we had over 21,600 people engaged. The app was launched in May as well with all complete profiles of each restaurant added. An advertisement was taken out at the Anchorage international airport for 3 months on the arriving baggage carousel to encourage tourists as well as locals. Over 530 people downloaded the app in that time period. Three TV specials were filmed with each of the major news channels in the state and featured on their nightly news cast as well as linked on their webpages.
Developed a specialty logo for use in the program as well as access to for every participant	The logo was developed and voted on by a staff panel that felt the logo expressed Alaska Grown specialty crop produce as the main focus as well as the farmers in the state. Each participant was given digital copies to use on their webpage as well as print on their menus. They were also given one window cling, two large posters, a roll of logo stickers, and table tents and side walk signs as an optional addition.
Encouraged the use of specialty crops by restaurants with this promotion and connecting producers with restaurants.	Very specific directions were sent out multiple times throughout the promotion about what crops were eligible for the program. This information was also stated on the survey and I the contract that they were required to sign. We provided them with resources to source local produce and made sure to have them report on who they were buying from and what they were buying to ensure that it was all specialty crops. As a state agency running the state agricultural marketing campaign, we have excellent relationships with producers and distributors across the state and were able to offer a lot of connections for restaurants.
Encouraged consumers to choose participating restaurants when they go out to eat.	Through the social media posts, mobile app, advertisements, logo promotion, and news channel promotions, we were able to encourage consumers and increase recognition for restaurants using local produce. The app had a mapping feature which provided the locations of the closest restaurant to the user at the time and also would allow for users to post photos of meals. There was a total of 10 photos shared on the app.

Challenges and Developments:

Challenge	Corrective Actions
Restaurant participant feedback	Repeated email reminders and phone calls as well as in person visits when locations matched up to drop off supplies as well as have contracts signed. Getting them at a non-busy time and trying to get them to call us back was a challenge in the feedback part of the program. We really tried to be persistent and make it very clear the time it would take to complete each survey in the emails we sent out and encouraged people to contact and share with us.
Timeline of events and encouraging individual restaurants to promote the program	We made sure to send out guidelines and a suggested script on how their employees should respond when asked about the program and what it was about. We also offered the sidewalk sign for them to display the logo posters in prominent areas. We tried to encourage them to send us promotional pictures which we would share on our social media posts or if they posted about the program to let us know so that we could share it. We had some take advantage of that with some great shots on Facebook but less use of the logo on Instagram. Making all of that line up with the produce availability was a little slower than anticipated this year, produce came out a little late and some restaurants expressed frustration that they wanted to use the logo but didn't feel quite right about it with only a few items available on their menu being Alaska Grown.

Lessons Learned:

We learned in our progress with this project that even offering free marketing materials or promotional campaigns is not enough to ensure participation. We had our best successes and constructive conversations when we were able to conduct face to face visits and meetings, we were able to learn more about what they are already doing. Consistent contact as well as responsiveness to questions and offering our assistance was key in developing relationships and increasing feedback on the program. One thing that did come up in the mobile application that we developed was that patrons wanted to know exactly what was local on the menus and exactly who it came from, which we felt was the restaurants responsibility to promote. This was something that we included in our agreement with each restaurant. So, finding a way to share this with consumers would have made it clearer to them. Other important lessons we learned revolved around promoting the event and offering an easy interpretation of the program that was

accessible to consumers. This was done through posting to our social media links about the program and including informational summaries with example pictures of participating restaurants. This allowed for more engagement and exposure of the program across multiple channels.

Continuation and Dissemination of Results (if applicable)

We will be offering summary results of the survey responses we collected to our restaurant participants and sharing these results through our newsletter. The app will continue to exist with updated information in the profiles.

Outcomes and Indicators/ Sub-indicators

Outcome Measures

- Outcome 3:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access

Outcome Indicators

Outcome 3: indicator 2b: Of the 50 restaurants we reach out to, 60% will report an intention to prepare Alaska Grown specialty crops in their restaurant and join the restaurant recognition program.

Data Collection

We conducted three surveys, an initial sign up, a mid-program check-in, and an end of program survey. Through out this we kept the questions the same, so we could measure change. The summary results are included in the graphs attached at the end of this report. All our data collection was done through survey monkey. We requested proof of purchase receipts during the mid-program and end of program surveys. We were interested in what they were purchasing, from who, how much money they spent in a week on local produce, how many menu items featured local produce, and what marketing materials were useful to them. We wanted to keep it short and simple to increase the participation and ensure responses. Most questions were quantitative data measurements and appear in the attached graphs. We were able to create the baseline data with the first survey and measure change over the course of the four months that it was an active program.

Based on the responses we received from the surveys we were able to determine change in who participants purchased their Alaska Grown produce from. The change over the surveys indicated that they were purchasing more from local specialty Alaska Grown only distributors (Arctic Harvest Deliveries) versus supermarkets and larger distributors. We also noticed more were making the effort to purchase directly from the nearby farmers which is shown in the graphs below. What was surprising to note was that many indicated that they grow their own produce or herbs. We will follow up with these restaurants and as a bonus hope to sign them up for the Alaska Grown agricultural program. All restaurants initially reported that they purchased Alaska Grown produce. During the middle of the program we had one report that they were not

purchasing at the moment. Our response at this point was to contact that person over the phone (as they were in a different part of the state) and offer some technical assistance and direct them to those who could supply their produce needs. They were able to start purchasing again and provide us with receipts of their purchases by the end of the program. The amount purchased every week during the program varied slightly but generally the majority stayed around \$100-\$500 in range. This was slightly difficult to measure over time because we received less responses from our surveys toward the end of the program, 38 initially completed versus just 31 at the end. Some of the responses were for chain or multiple restaurants owned by the same person/company.

Additional Information:

Q3 How do you purchase your Alaska Grown produce? (check all that apply)

Answered: 38 Skipped: 0

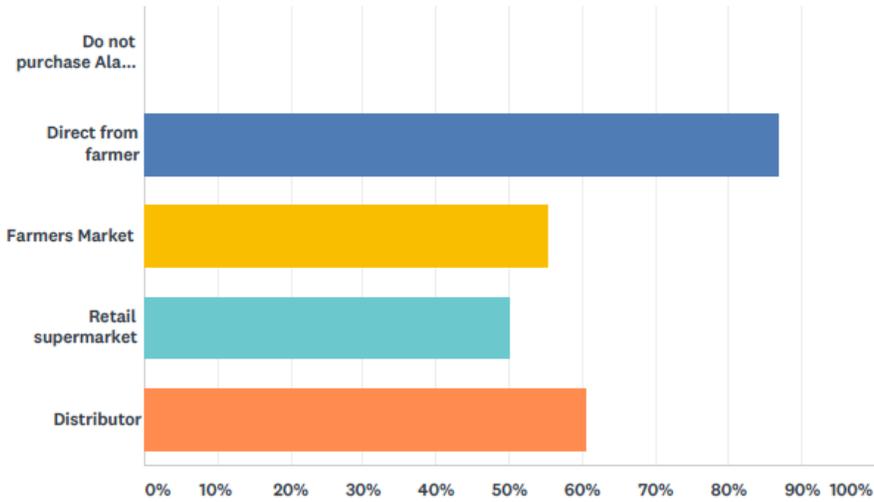


Fig. 1. Summary data of how restaurants procure AK Grown produce collected at the beginning of the program.

Q3 How do you purchase your Alaska Grown produce? (check all that apply)

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0

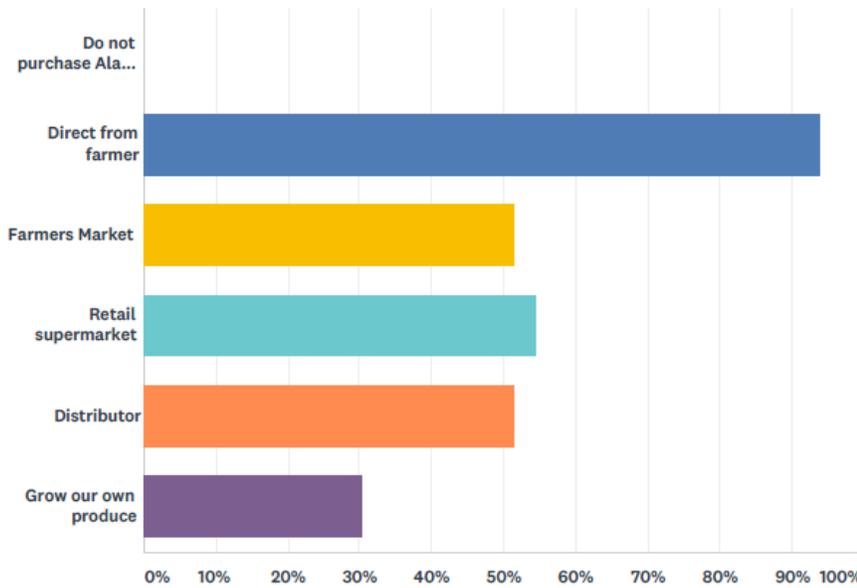


Fig. 2. Summary data of how restaurants procure AK Grown produce collected in the middle of the program.

Q3 How do you purchase your Alaska Grown produce? (check all that apply)

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0

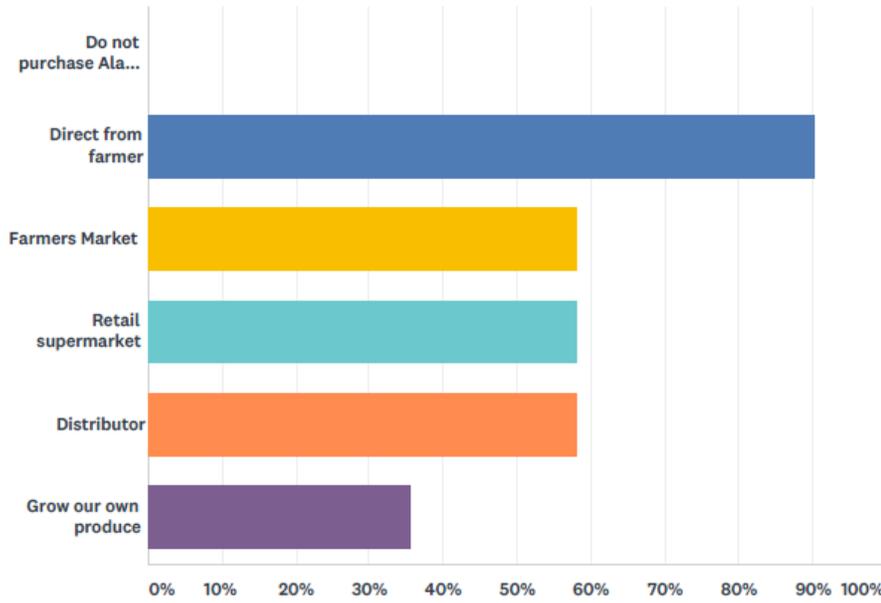


Fig. 3. Summary data of how restaurants procure AK Grown produce collected at the end of the program.

Q7 If you do purchase Alaska Grown produce, how much do you estimate you currently spend on Alaska Grown produce in a week?

Answered: 38 Skipped: 0

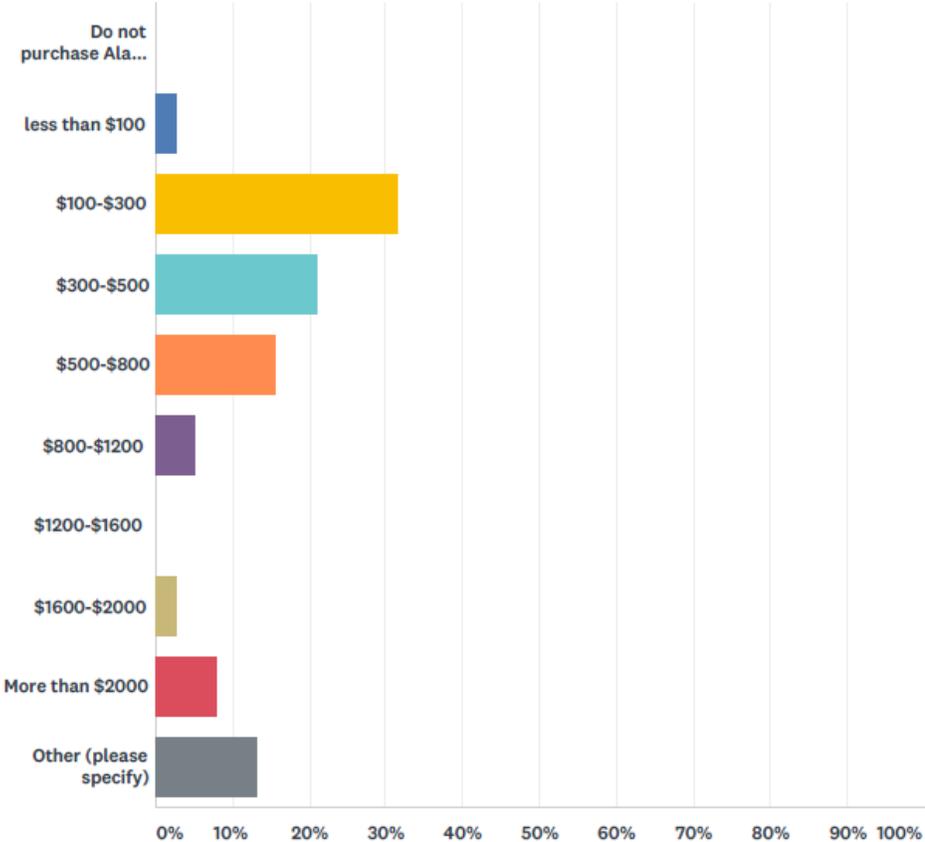


Fig. 4. Summary data of how much was spent on AK Grown produce a week. Collected at the beginning of the program.

Q7 How much do you estimate you currently spend on Alaska Grown produce in a week? Please choose a number range.

Answered: 33 Skipped: 0

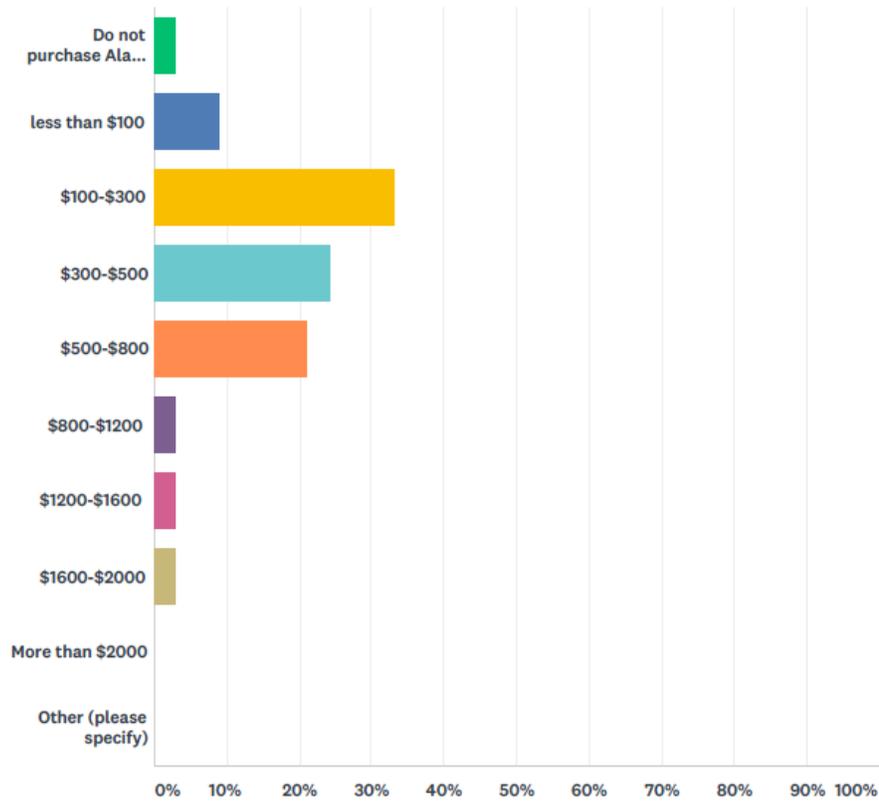


Fig. 5. Summary data of how much was spent on AK Grown produce a week. Collected during the middle of the program.

Q7 How much do you estimate you currently spend on Alaska Grown produce in a week? Please choose a number range.

Answered: 31 Skipped: 0

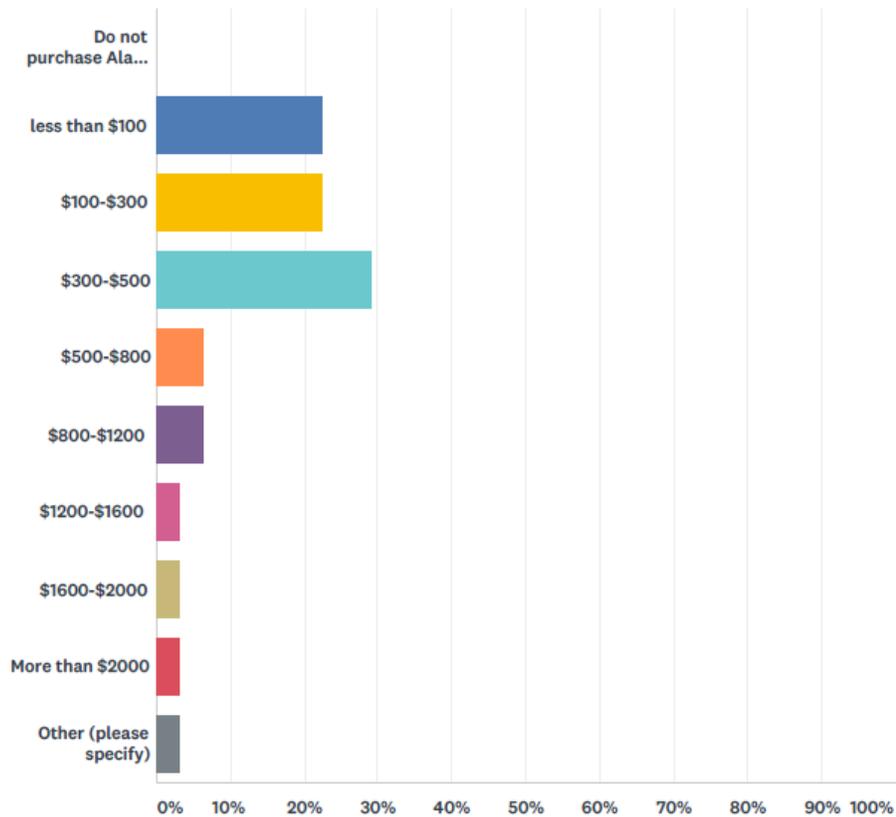


Fig. 6. Summary of how much was spent on AK Grown produce in a week. Collected at the end of the program.