

Action, Please - Minnesota "Farm-to-Table" Style

As a “city girl turned farm wife,” there is nothing I love more than connecting consumers to agriculture. And it could not be more important than it is now. Consumers thirst for information about where the food comes from. One great way I have found to connect consumers and farmers is through "*Action, please - Minnesota farm-to-table style.*"

Perhaps one of the most satisfying events I have been involved in is the farm-to-table influencer events. I had the extraordinary privilege of being involved with two of these events this past year – one near Minneapolis ("Field-to-Fork") and the other in my county ("From the Ground Up").

What is a farm-to-table influencer event?

Farm-to-table influencer events allow non-agriculture community leaders to experience together an exquisite meal on a modern working farm. These events are invitation only and include a meal served outdoors on a farm. In the case of our “From the Ground Up” county influencer event, a hog farm. Yes, a hog barn was our backdrop to the event. Real. live. farming. These events differ from Breakfasts on the Farm as the attendees are chosen specifically and the conversation is intentionally based around agriculture.

Farm-to-table events are unique and effective due to the *conversations* between influencers (most have little to no agriculture background) and farmers. Many have never been on a farm even though they live in a rural area. A local caterer prepares the meal using locally important food ingredients. For example, the county I live in produces nearly 2 million pigs a year. We are #1 county in Minnesota and #6 nationally in pork production. Needless to say, pork was on our menu. Local FFA members were also in attendance helping with the event.

Who are our influencers?

Influencers are people from the community who are leaders such as local government, community, business owners, media, medical personnel and education leaders.

What makes farm-to-table influencer events successful?

By far the success is measured by the *conversations* that take place. And there were many. When it comes to animal agriculture, relationships and communication are very important and these type of events help facilitate them. With the average person 2-4 generations removed from agriculture, people don't have a connection to farmers. These events allow a close-up and personal connection to farmers where they can share their passion for what they do on their farms and why

they do it.



How did we facilitate conversation?

I created conversation starters that were placed on each dinner table. They were a huge success!

People loved them! Strategically we placed farmers at each dinner table. The conversation starters enabled farmers and influencers to easily talk about issues relating to food. I also created commodity table displays which outlined interesting facts about each of the commodities we grow in our county.

Was it a success?

Absolutely! People still talk about the event! And, yes, we plan on having more farm-to-table events this year. We will be making a few changes but the ultimate goal is the same . . .

Farmers engaging consumers through conversation.

Enjoy the video!