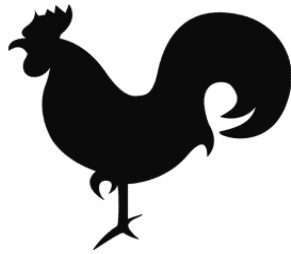


# GUILD-RAISING

*Your quick and easy guide to  
starting a Farmers Guild*

# THE FARMERS



# GUILD

empowered by **farmsReach**

**[www.farmersguild.org](http://www.farmersguild.org)**

*Beginning in 2011, a small group of farmers and ranchers came together over dinner. Out of those evenings arose new opportunities, partnerships and friendships. Within a year that group grew to well over a hundred members. Dinner around a farmhouse table transformed into fresh-harvested feasts fitted with educational presentations, community outreach and visiting neighbors who wanted to start new Guilds in their own communities. Are you next?*

**Get in touch! If you want to find out more,  
please contact:**

**Evan Wiig, Community Manager  
[evan@farmersguild.org](mailto:evan@farmersguild.org)**

**or**

**Tiffany Nurrenbern, Program Manager  
[tiffany@farmersguild.org](mailto:tiffany@farmersguild.org)**

# What is a Farmers Guild?

A Guild is a casual, yet powerful, alliance of local farmers and the community that supports them. It aims to amplify the growing excitement about a new wave of agriculture that demands creativity, intelligence and above all collaboration. We come together monthly to share food, drink a beer, and trade skills and resources all while building our local food community. A Guild is:

- An **inclusive space** to meet fellow farmers, ranchers and food system advocates
- An opportunity for organizations and businesses to **share resources** with the farming community
- A state-wide **Farmers Guild Network** to exchange information, ideas, advice and perspective
- An **online platform** to stay connected in between gatherings without having to leave your farm
- An easy way to **find what you're looking for**. Whether it's land, tools, work, workers, livestock, or a loan, a Guild can help provide connections to buy, sell, borrow or barter for what you need

Being a part of the Farmers Guild Network supports and magnifies the work that you're already doing. Whether you're starting a new Guild or linking your group into the Network, you deepen connections locally, while at the same time tapping into a statewide network of resources, information, and grassroots knowledge.

Collectively we're building economic viability, farm awareness, and the social networks necessary to attract, cultivate and sustain a new generation ready to work the land. Farmers never stop learning, and a Guild provides the venue for farmers of **all experience** levels to share what they know. Seasoned veterans can share their wisdom and in turn stay in touch with the newest tricks of the trade.



# The Farmers Guild Values

Founded by farmers for farmers, our community helps to support every scale of healthy food production by collectively striving toward the economic viability of agriculture as well as the social networks necessary to attract, cultivate and sustain a new generation ready to work the land. We value:

## *Sustainability*

We promote practices that sustain the environment, people, and animals on which our livelihoods depend.

## *Inclusivity*

A resilient farming community thrives through diversity and connection. We support communication between all those involved— farm owners and farm interns, policy-makers and farm-to-table chefs, bee-keepers and cattle ranchers, new and experienced, those working one acre and those working a thousand.

## *Cooperation*

The growth of a robust, diverse and fair local food economy benefits all. We all have our own business and organizations to mind, but we believe collaboration between farmers (and the wider community) makes heavy work lighter.

## *Self-Governance*

Each community possesses the wisdom to make its own decisions, and each member of that community should be able to be a part of the decision making process.

# Being part of a network...

With great power comes great responsibility. Being part of the Farmers Guild Network means that you have a group of folks around the state supporting your local food community. When we speak, our voices are louder and carry more weight. This is made possible by sharing information and respecting our fellow Guild members. To that end, we ask that all Farmers Guilds:

- 1) Welcome all Guild members, supporters, and partner organizations into their mix. **Guild activities should be open to all**, and monthly meetings should be free of charge to participants. We want The Farmers Guilds to be fun and safe spaces, if something is disrupting that, please get in touch.
- 2) Tap into the broader community with FarmsReach. FarmsReach.com empowers our Network communications, and allows us to **communicate between meetings and between regions**. More farmers equals more experience, more diversity and more wisdom. Each Guild is responsible for connecting its members to this Network by sharing email addresses. We'll make sure that everyone who wishes to gets set up on FarmsReach and receives Network newsletters.
- 3) Allow **all members to influence decision making** for their Guild. We value transparency and opportunities for participation in determining content of meetings, collaborative projects, etc. for all Guild members.
- 4) Don't speak for the whole. Please **refrain from signing on to letters, policy positions, candidate endorsements on behalf of The Farmers Guild**. Though we share a common sense of purpose and values, a Guild in Yolo County may not feel the same way as a Guild in San Diego.

# Guild Raising 101

It takes a community to raise a Guild. Just as each and every community has its own identities and challenges, every Guild has its own character and purpose. Your Guild can be as simple or as involved as you want it to be. Starting a new group can seem overwhelming, so we've boiled down our process for raising a new Farmers Guild into 10 easy steps.

1

## CONNECT TO THE FARMERS GUILD NETWORK

Join FarmReach, and become a member of the [Guid Raisers group](http://www.farmsreach.com/welcome/guild-raisers) [www.farmsreach.com/welcome/guild-raisers]. Here you'll be connected to Guild staff, resources and people just like you who are building Farmers Guilds in their own communities. Send us an email, and we'll help you get started.

2

## ASSEMBLE A CORE TEAM

Your core team members are the local champions who have the passion, commitment and connections needed to keep a Guild alive and thriving. The key to starting an enduring Guild is identifying enthusiastic community-minded farmers and supporters from local non-profits, food businesses, schools, etc. that are willing to help keep a guild running smoothly. Don't worry, you won't be signing your life away, after you're up and running it should only take 1-2 hours a month. We highly recommend selecting one person with a little bit of tech savvy to take the lead on all things email and web.

3

## BUILD A GUILD FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

Each Guild starts with the basics: food, fun, learning and sharing. Beyond that- what do you want out of your Farmers Guild? We suggest getting your core group to think about the big picture. Most of the farmers we know aren't big on meetings, and their supporters usually attend too many. Try starting with a casual dinner at someone's home or farm.

- What's going great for your region's farmers and ranchers? What isn't going so well?
- What resources does your region have and what do you still need?
- Who are your region's go-to mentors and organizations?
- Where do farmers already get together? Who is making that happen?
- What do you wish you knew, but don't have the time or resources to make it happen?

4

## FIND YOUR GUILD A HOME

You'll need a central location with tables, chairs, a kitchen, and plenty of room for a growing group to expand. Most Guilds pick a consistent location and stick with it- often they meet in the local Grange hall (For a map of CA locations visit [http://www.californiagrango.org/find\\_grange.php](http://www.californiagrango.org/find_grange.php)).

5

## SET THE DATE AND TIME

Guilds work best with a consistent date and time. For example, the Sebastopol Guild meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 6pm. What evening works best for your farmers and partners? Keep in mind other regular events in your community to avoid cross-scheduling.

6

## FIND CONTENT FOR YOUR KICK-OFF

One of the best parts of each Farmers Guild meet-ups are the short, yet practical speakers at each event. Everyone may come for the beer and banter, but people stay because they actually learn something. What tools, skills or information would be valuable for your local farmers? We suggest aiming for two -three 10 minute presentations per month in these general areas:

- On Farm Production: farming methods, techniques, tools, etc.
- Sales and Marketing: product distribution, marketing tips, pricing, farm promotion, etc.
- Miscellaneous: agricultural policy, history, community events, etc.

# 7

## PROMOTE YOUR FIRST GUILD MEET-UP

Now that you've got all of the details worked out, it's time to get people to come out to the Guild. Work with your core team to build a list of local farmers, ranchers, interns, potential allies, support-ing non-profits, etc. The Guild Raisers group hosts tools to help you design and email out an invita-tion to your list. A personal touch really helps get people to come out. We recommend dividing up the list among the core group, and sending out personal email invites to follow up with key people that you want to be a part of your Guild.

- Spread the word on FarmsReach, tap into facebook, post on local listservs
- Publicize where farmers already are: markets, grange, supply stores
- Word of mouth (This one works best!)
- Where else? Local radio show, town meetings

# 8

## HOST YOUR FIRST GUILD MEET-UP

After hosting dozens of gatherings in various regions, we've noticed what works best in order to host a smooth, fun and effective meet-up. Each Guild will be as varied as the people who form them, but we encourage you to take advantage of the proven format outlined on the next page.

# 9

## KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Getting together for Guild meetings supports the socializing, networking, and trust building that can only happen in person. But the connections don't stop when the evening ends... You have an all the time support community on FarmsReach. After each meet-up, you can post links to information mentioned at the meet-up, seek out advice on challenges that your farmers are experiencing, make connections through the virtual "I Have"/"I Need Boards."

# 10

## STAY IN TOUCH

The purpose of a united Guild Network is to extend our reach and multiply our individual efforts. We ask that you give back to the wider community by offering feedback, ideas, and resources for other Guilds. Keep us up to date on your group and we'll promote your events, find new presenters and share opportunities. Use the resources and connections in the [Guild Raisers group](#) to help make your Guild something you and your community will be proud of!



Twitter Facebook Email Welcome Tiffany Nurrenbern

Home Community Toolkits Services About Join

Community > Groups > Guild Raisers

### Guild Raisers

You are the moderator of this group.

[Edit Group Overview](#)

Overview | Members (2) | Events | Toolkits | I Have / I Need

**Group Conversations**

Create a Post

Type your post here...

Most Recent | Topics

Filter by All Topics

**About this Group**

A group for all of the people who are organizing Farmers Guilds in their community-- or those who want to find out how!

Number of members: 2

Group Moderator: Tiffany Nurrenbern

**Events**

No upcoming events found. [Click here to add an event.](#)

**Tiffany Nurrenbern** | The Farmers Guild | San Francisco, CA

Hi all! Thinking about starting a Farmers Guild in your area? Check out [Guild Raising: Your Quick and Easy Guide to Starting a Farmers Guild](#). It's a great overview of what's involved and how to get started. Let us know

# Hosting a Guild

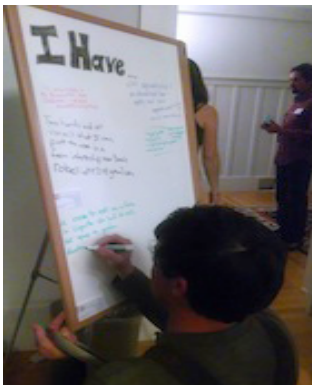
Each Guild will take on its own identity, style, and agenda, but we encourage you to follow this proven format in order to host the most smooth, fun and effective gathering possible.

## 5-6 pm

Arrive and set-up the space. Put out a welcome table where folks can sign in, get a name tag, and share fliers, seeds, magazines.

Put out "I Have," "I Need" Boards so that members can share. "I have extra compost", "I need an internship for the season." Butcher paper works just fine too.

Set-up more tables and chairs than you think you'll need.



## 7:30 pm

Kick off the night with a brief overview of The Farmers Guild- including yours and the Guild Network- in other communities and online at FarmsReach.

Introduce your core team. Depending on the amount of time and the size of your group consider having everyone share their name, farm or affiliation, favorite farm animal? If the group is too big, they can just share with a neighbor.



Start the presentations. (See Step 6)

Invite the group to share announcements. Any thing important people should know about?

## By 8:30 pm

Show your appreciation! Be sure to thank core group, visitors, presenters, host venue, etc.

Clean-up. Many hands make light work, so ask for volunteers while

## 6 pm

Doors Open! We strongly recommend keeping the first half of the evening casual, giving an opportunity for folks to arrive, meet and greet, and find a good seat.



## 7 pm

Ring the dinner bell. At it's most basic level, a Guild meeting is a Farmers' potluck: this is a real deal farmer-to-table opportunity, so encourage folks to show off their harvest.

# Checklist

## BEFORE THE GUILD...

- One month- two weeks before- Decide on the plan for the meet-up, and invite speakers or special guests.
- Two weeks before- Quick core group check-in to make sure everything is on track, see if anybody needs support, brainstorm new ideas, and share news about local and not-so-local things that could affect Guild members.
- One-week before- Forward invite to your people with a personal invitation or reminder to join us.

## AT THE GUILD...

- Arrive 30-60 minutes early to help set-up and greet folks.
- Have a sign in sheet at the front entrance, so that you know who's coming and how to reach them (we have a template for you to use).
- Bring name-tags so that everyone knows who is there.
- Set up a table at entrance for materials (event fliers, informational brochures, etc). that your members want to share, and the "I Have" "I Need" boards.
- Help keep an eye out for newcomers. If you don't know somebody, say hello, and introduce them to somebody else. We want everyone to feel welcome right from the start.
- Check in with other Guild members. Are they having fun? What do they want to learn about? Etc.
- Think about what you HAVE and what you NEED. Seed the board!
- Work together to organize clean-up. It goes a lot faster with many hands, so remind everyone to wash their dishes, and help recruit volunteers to break down tables and chairs, wash dishes, sweep, etc.

## AFTER THE GUILD...

- Follow-up on any promises or connections made at the Guild.
- Share any feedback that you're getting from Guild members and the community at large.
- Post pictures, conversations, "I Have" "I Need," requests for support on FarmsReach to keep the conversation going between meetings.
- Connect your members to the Farmers Guild Network- FarmsReach by emailing a copy or photo of your sign in sheet to [tiffany@farmers-guild.org](mailto:tiffany@farmers-guild.org).

# *Guild Raising 201*

After your Guild is up and running, there are an infinite number of ways that you can take it to the next level. Take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Farmers Guild Network, or pilot new initiatives of your own. Here are just a few ideas:

## *The Farmers Guild Scholarship Fund*

Because the education of those new to farming is key to our future, we have joined the Grange to establish a scholarship fund for Guild members seeking financial assistance for training programs, conferences and farm schools. ([www.farmersguild.org/scholarships](http://www.farmersguild.org/scholarships))

## *Guild Raising Community Celebration*

Once a year we hold a combined Guild-Raising celebration, inviting Guilds from all over the state to convene for a celebration of our interconnected Network of community-minded farmers. (TBD February 2015)

## *Hands-on Workshops*

Partner with a local organization (like CAFF, FarmLink, CRAFT) to host educational workshops on the topics important to you and your Guild.

## *Joint Purchasing*

Facilitate an easy method for fellow Guild members to join together in their purchase of materials, seed, livestock feed, etc., taking advantage of less expensive bulk rates.

## *Aggregate Product*

Encourage Guild members to collaborate by selling one another's products at market, diversifying their CSA's, or creating multi-ingredient value-added products.

## *Collaborative Research*

Crowd-source the collective experience and knowledge in the room or online at FarmReach for any ag research projects you or your community are undertaking.

## *Public Awareness*

Use the Guild to promote yourself and your farm by joining together to put on farm-centric events and outreach.

## *Impacting Public Policy*

So long as you don't use the Guild Network without consensus (see Being Part of a Network), use the power of numbers to speak out for programs and policies that will support farms and farmers in your community.

## *Negotiating Discounts with Local Suppliers*

Promote the local importance of your work and of your Guild and then solicit local businesses to support local agriculture by offering discounts to members: farm supply, feed store, even your local watering hole or farm-to-table restaurant.

## *Form Focus Groups*

Whether to share rotational-grazing tips between stockmen or to explore the possibility of collaborative farm models, you can invite members of the Farmers Guild Network to form discussion or working groups on specific topics on FarmReach.