



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

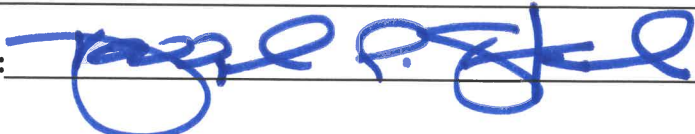
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Prince Edward County
Program Title: Prince Edward Cannery Partnership: Our Recipe for Success
Program Category: Community & Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Douglas P. Stanley, AICP, ICMA-CM
Title: County Administrator
Signature: 



2023 VACo Achievement Award Nomination

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### Prince Edward Cannery Partnership *“Our Recipe for Success”*



#### Executive Summary

The success of the Prince Edward County Cannery has largely been due to the collaboration between the County government and the non-profit entity, Virginia Food Works, which operates a commercial contract packing service out of the cannery for farmers and food businesses creating products for retail sale. This partnership was formed in 2010, and has allowed for a unique and creative solution for preserving local produce, and for serving both home canners and local farmers and entrepreneurs, creating additional value to support the County’s Cannery.

The partnership between the County of Prince Edward and Virginia Food Works has reaped a decade of benefits and economic impact for Prince Edward County residents, farmers and food entrepreneurs by: (1) facilitating access to the VDACS-certified commercial kitchen at the Prince Edward Cannery; (2) creating a program whereby VFW’s staff provides hands-on assistance to take food product ideas from “recipe to retail;” and (3) VFW staff recruit and work individually with each commercial client and help navigate both food production and food laws.

With Virginia’s favorable climate and ability to grow diverse crops, combined with a strong demand for purchasing local foods, Virginia Food Works helps “connect the dots” in our food system. The venture is a public/private partnership where the processing facility and equipment are owned and maintained by the government of Prince Edward County with the staff and expertise shared by VFW. The facility is located in the “heartland” of Virginia, allowing easy access for farmers and food entrepreneurs from across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

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## **Introduction**

The current Prince Edward County Cannery has been in use for community canning since 1975 for area residents to make shelf-stable, food products for personal consumption (not for retail sale). The roots of the current cannery date back to 1943 when the County established canneries in several locations as places where residents could efficiently preserve their Victory Garden harvests. In the 1940's nearly every locality in Virginia had at least one cannery. Despite this once thriving culture of community canning, public canneries began to disappear in the later part of the 20th century due to lack of government funding and support. Today, there are far fewer, and at last count, somewhere around eleven community canneries remain operating, most of which are located in the rural central and southwest Virginia.

Over the last decade, many canneries that are still operating struggle from one season to the next. However, they have become an increasingly valuable service to the citizens that utilize them. In part due to the economic situation across the nation, accelerated by COVID and escalating food costs, as well as an upswing in health conscious citizens that are riding the surge of the local food movements, Virginia is now facing an increasing interest in our remaining canneries. As many Virginians desire to become more self-sufficient and search for ways to save, the popularity of the canneries is on the rise, pressuring county budgets to find ways to keep the doors of the canneries open while they continually operate in the red.

Despite the difficulties plaguing Community Canneries across Virginia, the Prince Edward County Cannery has continued to thrive due to the County's commitment to innovation. The success of the Prince Edward County Cannery has largely been due to the collaboration between local government and the non-profit entity Virginia Food Works, which operates a commercial contract packing service out of the cannery for food businesses creating products for retail sale. This partnership was formed in 2010, and has allowed for a unique and creative solution for preserving local produce by serving both home canners and local farmers and entrepreneurs, creating additional value to support the Community Cannery.

## The Challenge/Problem/Situation

The Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors has always thought of the cannery as an important part of the fabric of this County both for local residents who enjoy canning (“home canners”) and in support of the community’s agricultural heritage. In an effort to protect the cannery for existing home canners, expand the user base of the cannery to reach more citizens, and create opportunities for local farmers to grow their income potential through local food entrepreneurship, Prince Edward County decided to pursue a new approach to utilizing the facility.

Using funds from the Virginia Tobacco Commission in 2010, the County upgraded the Cannery to make it a Commercial Kitchen. This enabled farmers and food entrepreneurs to have a place to make foods for resale, and create a resource for small-scale, value-added manufacturing businesses.

After the first year, however, few commercial clients were using the Commercial Kitchen. The reason was that state and federal food laws for making packaged food are onerous and complex. Each “kitchen user” would have to independently do the following:

- learn the applicable food laws,
- obtain a personal inspection,
- determine food safe packaging,
- get certified in food safety courses,
- hire a food scientist to review each recipe, and
- learn proper record keeping for food safety and traceability, etc.

The County learned the hard way that these steps (and many more) were too much for the typical small business owner to tackle, and to do so in a timely manner. In search of a solution, the County found Virginia Food Works (VFW), which was new on the food scene, and developed as part of the local food movement. VFW is a non-profit whose mission is to help farmers and food entrepreneurs effectively and efficiently get their food product into the retail market. It was a perfect fit in 2012 to create a partnership between the County and VFW that would have the County continue to manage the home canning program and have VFW

manage the commercial/retail food side and become the liaison between the Cannery and the farmers. In 2012, the County executed an agreement with VFW for the management of the commercial operations of the Prince Edward County Cannery.

### **The Program**

The Prince Edward County - Virginia Food Works partnership provides farmers and food businesses access to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) certified commercial kitchen at the Prince Edward Cannery. VFW's staff provides hands-on assistance to take food product ideas from "recipe to retail". VFW staff recruit and work individually with each commercial client and help navigate both food production and food laws. They provide:

- Knowledge and experience for making large batches using the food processing equipment at the Cannery, including chopping and filling machines;
- "In-house", pre-approved and tested recipes that any farmer can use, highlighting local produce;
- Food-safe containers on site that are sold at cost;
- Pre-inspected kitchen, certified staff, capable of handling all record keeping and food testing; and
- Endless sharing of knowledge regarding food laws, scaling recipes, label requirements, tips and tricks.

The Cannery functions as a shared use facility during the months of June-December, or the busy harvest season, where home canners utilize the facility 3 days a week, and commercial productions take place 2-3 days a week. During the "off season" of January-May, Virginia Food Works has exclusive use of the facility for production. Many VFW clients will produce during this off season with frozen "seconds" produce from the prior year.

In addition to the clients who have actually processed food at the Cannery, VFW has helped an endless number of businesses get to the next step of their learning process. They may help a peach flavored BBQ sauce food entrepreneur farmer by connecting him with a buyer of #2 grade peaches, help a prospective dried fruit client find a different kitchen with machinery more applicable to their needs, or connect a cheese maker with the correct inspector. VFW is a much needed resource in the local food arena.

There is not another place in Virginia where a small farmer can walk in with 400 pounds of berries and walk out that afternoon with over 1,000 jars of fresh fruit jam.

### **How Program Fulfills Awards Criteria -- Innovation/Partnering/Model for Other Communities**

At the time the partnership was established, Prince Edward County was surprised to find that there was not a place where small farmers/food entrepreneurs could take their fresh, local produce to be preserved for resale and be provided assistance with food laws, etc. In this environment of incredible local food demand, combined with the need for farmers to increase produce sales and retain or expand their farms, the Prince Edward Cannery has become the perfect, small-scale food processing facility and an essential link in a truly local food system.

With Virginia's favorable climate and ability to grow diverse crops, combined with a strong demand for purchasing local foods, Virginia Food Works helps "connect the dots" in our food system. The venture is a public/private partnership where the processing facility and equipment are owned and maintained by the government of Prince Edward County with the staff and expertise shared by VFW. The facility is located in the "heartland" of Virginia, allowing easy access for farmers and food entrepreneurs from across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Since inception, Prince Edward County canneries served as models for other canning institutions. In the early days, they functioned as a collaboration between the government, school board, teachers, agricultural extension agents and local citizens, all working to support the war production efforts. The county continued to serve as a model for canning innovation, when in the 1970s the current cannery was built. Between 1973 and 1975, six "school canneries" closed in Prince Edward and the surrounding counties. The *Farmville Herald* was quick to report that despite the closures, "*the amount of food processed in Virginia school canneries has nearly doubled in the same period,*" indicating a sustained interest in canning, and perhaps, simply a need for new, more modern facilities.

25, 1943 NO. 40

## Canning Unit Here Inspected As Model for Other State Plants

**Plant Operates Two Shifts Five Days Weekly**

Parsonville's community canning unit, located in the basement of the Parsonville High School, and which has been in operation the past two weeks, during which time home economic teachers and agricultural teachers from various parts of the state have attended instruction courses, has become the model by which other units to be established throughout the state will be designed.

**Experts View It**

On Tuesday a group of experts, consisting of John Gunn, of the architect department of the State Board of Education; Edward Bass, assistant to the Director of Rural War Production in Virginia; Tom Dowdson, president; Harlan and Gilbert, superintendent of agricultural education in Tidewater; D. J. Howard, State superintendent of agricultural education; E. Y. Hinkle, teacher training at VPI, Blacksburg; P. B. Cain, W. B. Leger and J. C. Grooms, district superintendents of agricultural education, visited the Parsonville plant for the purpose of studying the design for further, the way the plant is placed as to provide systematic production, with the view of designing other canneries to be located throughout the state. They made up a list of suggestions and recommendations for ready reference.

**Via and Turner Pleased**

M. G. Via, vocational agricultural instructor, who worked out the details for having a unit placed in Parsonville, as well as at Providence, Dismal Station, Roanoke, Rice, Wardsboro and Green Bay, and Hoyt Turner, coming representative from the University of Georgia, who is advising the Federal Government in locating canning units, were pleased by the interest in the splendid arrangement of the

Preparation of products for canning in the first procedure at the community canning unit located in the basement of Parsonville High School. Top picture shows Mrs. Betty Hammond and Miss Evelyn Shannon, instructors; Mrs. Wiley Pulney, Mrs. T. W. Brooks, Jr. and Mrs. T. A. McCubbin preparing ketchup.

Mrs. Wiley Pulney and Mrs. T. W. Brooks, Jr. (lower left) are giving one of the three reports a checking over.

Leonard Baldwin shows the 30-horsepower boiler, which is located just outside the entrance to the basement. (Fluor Photo)

### The Farmville Herald

The true success of the current partnership between VFW and PEC at the Prince Edward County Cannery has been the decade-long marriage of innovation and tradition that has helped sustain our community's canning center, and the County's continued commitment to approaching challenges at the Cannery in unique ways. The partnership has stimulated year-round use of the facility, created additional streams of revenue out of the facility, and has also enabled the County to successfully secure hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant funding to continue to provide the broader community with an updated facility and equipment.

This is evidenced by the recent replacement of the boiler and cannery piping over the past two springs through funding from two VDACS AFID Grants. Ultimately, the same spirit of collaboration that allowed the first canneries to thrive in the County in the 1940s is what continues to propel our cannery today. The collaborative efforts between the county, local producers, VDACS specialists, and food scientists specifically at schools like Virginia Tech and their food innovation program who work closely with us every day to guide our customers, allows VFW to function as a non-profit in a way that no other co-packing institution can.

Localities interested in establishing a similar, successful partnership could use this submission as a starting

point. The County of Prince Edward and Virginia Food Works are also happy to meet with anyone interested in visiting or discussing the partnership and the lessons-learned.

### **Financing and Staffing**

The total annual budget for the Prince Edward Cannery (FY 23) is \$115,852. This includes \$40,000 for the two “home canning,” part-time county employees (Cannery Manager and Assistant Cannery Manager) and \$35,000 for “professional services”, which is the annual contract price for Virginia Food Works. Revenue generated by the cannery is returned to the County General Fund. Other expenses include electricity, maintenance, cleaning and office supplies, a subsidy on the cost of the metal cans used for home canning, and fuel used for the boiler. In FY 23, home canning \$6,817 from the sale of cans, and a per day use fee. The commercial operation contributed \$10,117 back to the County, based on hourly use rate for each client.

Virginia Food Works provides staffing that runs the co-packing branch, which are paid out of the additional revenue generated from commercial productions in addition to the monthly stipend from the County. VFW staff is comprised of one part-full time Director who primarily handles administrative tasks, a part-time Production Manager who directs the commercial productions, and additional part-time Production Assistants who staff productions throughout the week.

### **Tangible Results or Measurable Outcomes of the Program**

From January 2017 to date in 2023, Virginia Food Works processed 222,835 units of product, with a retail value of \$1,951,711. During this time, VFW served over 70 unique clients, 85% of which are Virginia-based clients. In 2022 alone, Virginia Food Works served 29 clients, 6 of which were new clients, and 25 were Virginia-based. Over 50% of these clients were either local farmers or are purchasing produce from Virginia growers. They produced 40,974 units, and 65 unique types of products including jams, bbq sauces, marinara sauces and more! Altogether, the retail value of these products is \$400,333.05. Of note, Virginia Food Works also helps clients get their products into various retailers, from local farmer’s markets and small local businesses, to national chains like Whole Foods, Food Lion and Amazon.



## Media Coverage



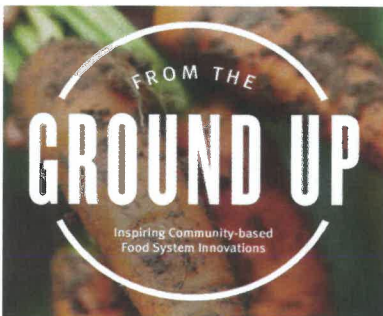
Link:  
NPR, All Things Considered  
<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/12/26/571740909/in-a-new-deal-era-cannery-old-meets-new>



Link:  
Va Foodie Podcast  
<https://thevirginiafoodie.com/blogs/episodes/guiding-food-producers-from-recipe-to-retail-with-virginia-food-works>



Link:  
PBS' Virginia Homegrown  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHsnzxGkea4>

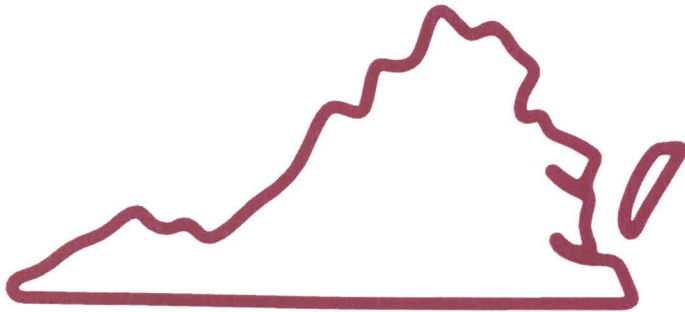


Link:  
From the Ground Up, Pg 123  
[https://virginiafoodworksorg.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/w.k.\\_kellogg\\_foundation\\_33319.pdf](https://virginiafoodworksorg.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/w.k._kellogg_foundation_33319.pdf)

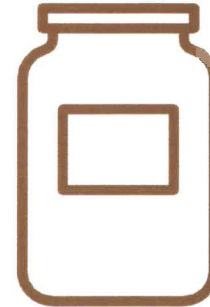


Link:  
From The Daily Yonder, August 10, 2022  
<https://dailyyonder.com/yes-we-can-the-rise-fall-and-potential-rebirth-of-municipal-canning/2022/08/10/>

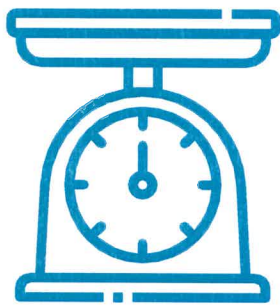
# VIRGINIA FOOD WORKS



**86% VIRGINIA BASED CLIENTS**



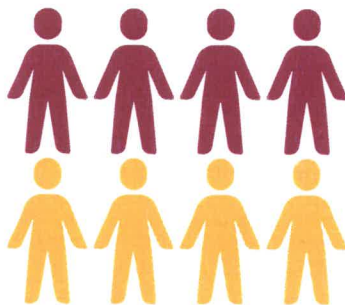
**40,974 UNITS PROCESSED  
65 UNIQUE PRODUCTS**



**18,757 LBS LOCAL PRODUCE**



**121 PROCESSING DAYS**



**29 CLIENTS  
6 NEW CLIENTS**



**\$400,333.05 RETAIL PRODUCT VALUE**

## 2022 CLIENTS & LOCATIONS

| Client                    | City            | State |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Alonzo Taylor             | Staunton        | VA    |
| Bellair Farms             | Charlottesville | VA    |
| Black Eyed Susan*         | Falls Church    | VA    |
| Bo's Honey Brown Hot      | Concord         | VA    |
| Browntown Farms           | Dinwiddie       | VA    |
| Bubba T's                 | Midlothian      | VA    |
| Bunmi Barnes              | Sterling        | VA    |
| Caris CBD*                | Henrico         | VA    |
| Dayum Jam                 | Richmond        | VA    |
| Double Squash Farm*       | Hague           | VA    |
| Eastern Shore Fig Company | Cape Charles    | VA    |
| Horner Solutions*         | Burke           | VA    |
| Hungry Harvest*           | Landover        | VA    |
| Indulge Catering          | Durham          | NC    |
| Jonno Alcaro              | Crozet          | VA    |

| Client                       | City            | State |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Lady and Leaf                | Purcellville    | VA    |
| Manakintowne                 | Midlothian      | VA    |
| MBOTF                        | Coleman Falls   | VA    |
| Nona's Italian Cusina        | Charlottesville | VA    |
| Oak Spring Garden Foundation | Upperville      | VA    |
| Pamplin Poultry              | Pamplin         | VA    |
| Rupen Rao's                  | Washington      | DC    |
| Scratch Pasta                | Lynchburg       | VA    |
| Shalom Farms                 | Midlothian      | VA    |
| Sophia Farms                 | Dinwiddie       | VA    |
| ThomsCare                    | Brandywine      | MD    |
| Tiana B's/ Colonial Canaries | Mechancisville  | VA    |
| Well Crafted*                | Baltimore       | MD    |
| Wenger's Grapes              | Farifax Station | VA    |
| *New Clients                 |                 |       |