



Jason Kampwerth

Foster-Caviness



One of the Local Food Champions of 2019 by the NC Local Food Council.

Jason Kampwerth interacts with the food system on a local, regional, and national scale in his role at Foster-Caviness, a food distribution company based in Greensboro, North Carolina. His work as a local food champion has a broader positive impact on the national food system.

Kampwerth is currently the Product Sourcing and Sustainability Manager at Foster-Caviness. He has held many roles in the company since joining as a delivery driver in 2004, which has provided him with insight into the entire business, as well as the food industry as a whole—from small farms to large corporations.

In work and life, Kampwerth values balance. He learned to cook from his mother at a young age. Even while struggling to raise two children, she made meals from scratch.

“She would spend almost her last dollar on ingredients to cook something good,” Kampwerth recalls, “it was her release and it became mine too.”

Kampwerth started cooking in restaurants when he was 14 years old. While he was encouraged by others to become a chef, he observed the demanding nature of the job. He wanted to work with food, but also to balance his working life with family, which led him to Foster-Caviness.

In his current role, Kampwerth builds relationships with individual farmers. Rather than pay freight costs to transport a product across the country, he prefers to buy from a local farmer at two or three dollars more per case.

“Produce has become so complicated in the last 15 years,” Kampwerth says. He has seen single decisions made by large food-service corporations cause havoc for farmers and distributors.

Many farmers take out operational loans for the up-front expenses of a season, he explains. If a wholesale buyer gives a small or medium-sized farm a commitment and does not follow through, it can be devastating. Working on a local and regional level allows Kampwerth to make balanced decisions.

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“I like to give farmers consistent and fair pricing throughout the whole season versus playing the market and having the ups and downs,” Kampwerth says. He tells farmers, “I’m there for you for the lows; you’re there for me for the highs. We’re there for each other.”

In 2018, Foster-Caviness distributed 131,000 cases of local product, with an approximate value of \$2 million. In addition to produce, the company carries local sauces, honey, bread, meats and cheeses.

Kampwerth represents Foster-Caviness on the Piedmont Triad Food Council and served on the steering committee, which was formed in 2017. The council received a \$200,000 grant to conduct a local food assessment, which will guide the selection of strategies to improve the local food system.

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At Foster-Caviness, Kampwerth is working with Compass Group, a multinational foodservice company, to pilot a program of 20 percent local purchasing by 2020. If the pilot is successful, this initiative could become a nationwide, year-round program.

Foster-Caviness is an important supplier to many schools. While Kampwerth's institutional work has a broad reaching impact over time, school events are immediately gratifying. He finds that many children think of food as originating at a grocery store, rather than a farm. He takes joy in introducing children to vegetables they have never tasted, such a sweet red pepper.

At home, Kampwerth is passing on the lessons his mother taught him about valuing good food to his two daughters. His four-year-old loves picking tomatoes in the garden and his 10-year-old likes to lend a hand in the kitchen, scrambling eggs for breakfast.

Learn more about NC Local Food Councils' champions and their work at nclocalfoodcouncil.org.

Fudge Nut Bars

Ingredients:

- 1 c. butter
- 2 c. brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 ½ c. flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3 c. oats

Chocolate mixture:

- 1 ½ squares semi-sweet baking chocolate
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 tbsp. butter
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 c. nuts
- 1 tsp. vanilla



This recipe is from Jason Kampwerth's grandmother, Bonnie Chase.

Mix butter and sugar until smooth. Add vanilla and eggs – mix. Stir in flour, salt and baking soda. Add oats and mix well. Press $\frac{3}{4}$ of mixture into well-greased cookie sheet.

Chocolate mixture:

In double broiler, melt chocolate and butter. Add condensed milk, vanilla, salt and nuts. Pour over batter. Dot remaining cookie mixture on top of chocolate mixture. Bake at 325 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes or until golden brown.