

Doug Paine, VFN Board President - 2023 Annual Meeting

- Welcome on behalf of the Board of Directors - (have Board members in the room stand) Some of our board members will be stepping down after completing their two terms, including myself. -Thank exiting board members, Ryan Chaffin, Lyndon Virkler, Annie Rowell, and Joe Buley
- I want to start off by thanking our sponsors -
 - Affiliate Partners: **Farrell Distributing, Foley Services, and Sodexo, Vermont First**
 - Every year we try to bring the Annual Meeting to a different part of the state. **We're happy to be back in Burlington.** Thank you to our host this year - ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain. And our event business sponsors Flavor Plate and Gravel & Shea
 - Thank you also to the businesses that provided our food and drink today: Sugar Snap Catering, Black Flannel Brewing & Distilling Company, Blakehill Preserves, Burlington Beer Co., Cabot Creamery Cooperative, Four Town Lowlines, Grateful Greens, Honey Road Restaurant, Kestrel Coffee Roasters, Misty Knoll, Prohibition Pig, Shelburne Farms • Jules on the Green, Jericho Settlers Farm, and 14th Star Brewing Co.
- VFN continues to be a busy organization. We've done a lot. There's a 2022 highlights sheet in your packet that touches on our work for the past year.
- In 2022,
 - We saw some long time members retire, some bigger places like Kitchen Table and Sweetwaters, but we look forward to a bright future with renewed energy. There were around 39 new members who joined last year. There are exciting new ventures recently opened or opening soon. Grey Jay, Hen of the Wood-Waterbury, Pascolo
 - **After being away since 2019, our 2022 Annual Forum Dinner** came back strong. This dinner is a major fundraiser for our organization and it certainly has been missed - Between the number of VFN Partner Members showcasing their food, and by the number of attendees from the public, we had a solid crowd of like minded people devoted to VFN's mission. Our silent auction continues to be

popular and with a ticket price increase, the funds we raised go straight to programs and work that benefits our members. We are looking forward to our 25th Forum Dinner at Shelburne Farms coming up this year on August 6th.

- **Events like today are directly connected to our mission of strengthening partnerships.** This year we hosted two networking events bringing together over 100 farmers, chefs and producers, in St. Albans and Middlebury. There will be more networking events in 2023 around the state.
- **In 2022 we continued to focus on partnerships to amplify our outreach efforts and promote VFN members as well as our projects.** This includes working with the Vermont Department of Tourism. In your packets, you'll see a DigInVT booklet that we designed and is distributed by VDTM to people out of state who request information about Vermont Local Food and Drink.

In 2023, we will be looking to the future with major strategic planning. Tackling questions like, How will VFN/Dig-In co-operate and continue to be financially viable in the future? How can VFN best assist members in a continually challenging environment?

If you are a VFN Partner Member, please remember to fill out your ballot for our new 2023 Board Members.

-Welcome new board member nominees, Christian Kruse (Executive Chef- Black Flannel, James Beard Nominee last year, former VT Chef of the year) and Irene Hamburger (Recently she was Managing Director at Philo Ridge Farm before that she was with Blue Hill and Stone Barns-Hudson Valley NY). Also we nominated Cara Chigazola-Tobin (Honey Road/ Grey Jay/ Also James Beard Nominated) as President of VFN