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For Immediate Release

Fermentation Fest Returns this Fall in a New Iteration as a Two-Day Festival Celebrating Live Culture and Regenerative Agriculture

Tickets are now on sale for Fermentation Fest: Grassland Edition—a polycultural, rural revival on Sep 25-26 presented by Wormfarm Institute and Grassland 2.0



REEDSBURG, WI, AUG 18, 2021—Wormfarm Institute, in collaboration with Grassland 2.0, announced today that tickets are now on sale for its popular Fermentation Fest, which will return this fall in a new, two-day format. **Fermentation Fest: Grassland Edition** will be a weekend jam-packed with events in a beautiful rural setting celebrating live culture and regenerative agriculture—including a number of fermented foods to try, live “Grassical” music, delicious local foods, tastings, dance performances, cow calling, zine-making, educational activities, and more.

This polycultural, rural revival will highlight the intersection of culture and agriculture, bringing together an expansive list of agri/cultural partners from across Sauk and Dane Counties. Through Wormfarm’s partnership with the producers, researchers, and public and private sector folks at Grassland 2.0, Fermentation Fest: Grassland Edition will focus on the power of regenerative, grassland-based agriculture to support healthy communities, ecosystems, and people as well as the rich cultural history of integrating dance, music and art into farming traditions.

The festival will take place outdoors at the historic Witwen Park and Campground located about 12 miles west of Sauk City, Wisconsin on **September 25-26**, from **11am to 6pm**. While there will be plenty of things for Fest attendees to do for free, some special programs will require tickets. Visit fermentationfest.com for full event details and to purchase tickets.

Wormfarm Executive Director, Donna Neuwirth states, “At its core, fermentation is about abundance and transformation, and the end result of that process is often something more durable, pleasurable, and complex. In part, Fermentation Fest is an occasion to gather with our neighbors across the rural-urban continuum and cultivate a similar type of positive transformation for our communities.” Neuwirth continues, “The partnership with Grassland 2.0 allows us to explore the many layers of health benefits associated with regenerative farming practices.”

“Fermentation Fest will be a great opportunity to bridge the missions of both organizations and share the benefits and promise of managed grazing and perennial agricultural with a diverse group of folks,” adds **Michael Bell**, leader of the education work for **Grassland 2.0** as well as a professor and chair in the **Department of Community and Environmental Sociology at UW-Madison**.

Program Overview

For over a decade, Wormfarm Institute has attracted thousands of visitors to Sauk County with its multi-day Fermentation Fest. Billed as “a live culture convergence,” Fermentation Fest is typically anchored by the Farm/Art DTour, which brings attendees through the working landscape of the Driftless region to view temporary art installations and performances. While this year’s festival will not include the Farm Art/Dtour component (now a biennial, the next Farm/Art DTour will be held in the fall of 2022), Fermentation Fest: Grassland Edition will still give audiences lots of delicious and delightful ways to celebrate fermentation.

The festival will be held at **Witwen Park and Campground**—a beloved destination for social gatherings for more than a century. It is located at S9855 County Rd E, just west of Sauk City. Among the amenities at Witwen Park is a historic open-air tabernacle that will feature a series of concerts, as well as a gazebo where a variety of musical acts will perform and a gathering space for fermentation tastings and demonstrations.

Some of the program highlights include:

Local Food and Drink

Fest attendees will have the opportunity to taste several different local and specialty foods. For example, health food expert **Laura Poe Mathes** will lead a kombucha demonstration followed by a workshop where participants can make their own water kefir and “ginger bug” to take home. **Lou Bank** from **S.A.C.R.E.D.** and brewer **Dave Dietz** from **Hillsboro Brewing Company** will introduce participants to a new world of chocolate, focusing on how different cacao nibs translate to beer while also exploring cacao seed varieties from the forests of Chiapas and Tabasco, Mexico. **Grassland 2.0** will host a special tasting, in collaboration with **Cedar Grove Cheese & Brix Cider**, to showcase the unique flavors of grass-fed products and introduce



attendees to Wisconsin's best grass-fed cheeses paired with delicious locally produced ciders. Tickets for these tastings and workshops are limited but required; prices range from \$20-\$35.

Fest attendees can also enjoy delicious ready-made food and beverages from several local vendors available for purchase at the Food Chain—an area of the festival serving as a marketplace for food and ideas and featuring several artist-made mobile farm stands where culinary artists from rural and urban Wisconsin will offer fresh and fermented foods. Tickets are not required to visit the Food Chain.



Grazing Events and Demonstrations

In addition to enjoying delicious food, Fest attendees will be able to attend unique workshops and educational activities dedicated to various aspects of grassland agriculture. For example, one workshop led by Wisconsin-Madison Agroecology graduate student Caitlin Vitale-Sullivan will present the practice of **Kulning, a form of cow-calling used in Scandinavia** to bring animals home from the forest or communicate with fellow herders. Participants will learn about the practice in a nearby pasture grazed by

dairy cows and will also have the opportunity to enjoy a related cow-calling performance by Vitale-Sullivan at the tabernacle. Other grazing-inspired activities include events ranging from participatory "Grassroots Theatre" and zine-making workshops, to public talks and pasture walks hosted by Grassland 2.0 and Sauk County Land Resources and Environment.

Live Music

Central to the Fest will be the Grassical Jamboree, showcasing styles of music that bridge grassroots and classical traditions and featuring both nationally and locally known groups. There will be a full schedule of artists performing free of charge throughout the weekend. One such performance will be a collaboration between performers **Kanopy Dance** and musical act **Elm Duo**, a duet with Michael Bell of Grassland 2.0 and his daughter Eleanor Mayerfeld, who will present songs ranging from Klezmer to classic French and English vocals of blues and jazz—truly a unique performance not to be missed.

A set of ticketed concerts will also be held in the open-air setting of Witwen's tabernacle, a large building erected in 1918 that has retained its historic charm with long wooden benches and sawdust floors. Some of the musical acts at the tabernacle include **85% (Katrin Talbot & Parry Karp)** bringing rich, dark chocolate sounds of cello, viola, and poetry; a traditional repertoire and original music by **Taylor Ackley and The Deep Roots Ensemble** reflecting the historical diversity and continuing creativity of folk music practices in the United States; and many more. Tickets are required for the tabernacle concerts. Attendees may purchase tickets for individual concerts at \$10 each, or a day pass for \$25 per day.

Admission

Many events at Fermentation Fest: Grassland Edition are free to attend but some music performances, fermentation workshops, and other special events require tickets. For full event details and to purchase tickets, visit fermentationfest.com.

Health & Safety

Wormfarm Institute and Grassland 2.0 will continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and follow health and safety guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the Sauk County Department of Health. Attendees are encouraged to check fermentationfest.com in the weeks leading up to the event for the latest information and event details.

Organization

Fermentation Fest: Grassland Edition is organized by Wormfarm Institute in collaboration with the Grassland 2.0 team at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. This project was made possible in part through grants from The Educational Foundation of America, The National Endowment for the Arts, The Sauk County Arts and Culture Committee, the Wisconsin Arts Board with Funds from the State of Wisconsin, and anonymous donors.

About Wormfarm Institute

Wormfarm Institute is a nonprofit organization in Sauk County, Wisconsin working to build a sustainable future for agriculture and the arts by fostering links between people and the land. An evolving laboratory of the arts and ecology and fertile ground for creative work, Wormfarm explores the links between rural and urban communities within and beyond the food chain, creating opportunities for cross-sector collaboration. For more information, visit wormfarminstitute.org

About Grassland 2.0

Grassland 2.0 is a collaborative group of producers, researchers, and public and private sector folks working to increase grasslands and grazing lands in Wisconsin and beyond. In the upper Midwest, annual cropping systems such as corn and soy cover more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of agricultural landscapes and cause significant environmental degradation. Economic instability and policies are driving farmers out of business and off the land. Restoring perennial grasslands and grazing lands can be less costly and more profitable, use less machinery, and be less work for farmers while benefiting consumers, the land, and our rural and urban communities. At Grassland 2.0, we are using an integrated approach to develop technical and financial tools for farmers, expand grass-fed markets, cultivate positive institutional policy changes, and empower producers and consumers in the journey to agricultural transformation.

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Photo credits: Page 1: Gathering at Witwen Park. Photo by Katrin Talbot. Page 3: Roadside culture stand. Photo provided by Wormfarm Institute. Page 4: Witwen Park & Campground located near Sauk City WI. Photo provided by Wormfarm Institute.