Connect With Your Food
preserving fading foodways for future generations
Welcome to the
Eastern Shore Food Lab at Washington College

As part of its mission to prepare citizen-leaders to lead lives of purpose and passion, Washington College leverages its environmental, cultural, and historical context to address issues of diet, health, and sustainability in the Eastern Shore Food Lab.

Our research, teaching, and production space combines knowledge of prehistoric nutrient requirements with modern culinary techniques to make nutritious food accessible and affordable.

From hosting student interns, classes, and community events to creating new ways to access food, the Eastern Shore Food Lab supports social justice and ecological resilience, empowering people to reconnect with what it means to be human.

Our hands-on teaching and learning approach places students as participants in the living landscape: they use all of their senses to source wild foods; chop wood for fuel; nurture microbial cultures to ferment breads, vegetables, and cheeses; and share the abundance of their efforts across economic barriers.

The Eastern Shore Food Lab provides a model that institutions within any region can emulate, achieving zero waste by conscientious design and a commitment to revitalize human and ecological communities with every action.
We understand that an equitable food system must organize community. We seek to train and engage a corps of volunteers to radiate our stewardship practices outward, helping people to become agents of systemic change.

Our approach builds the capacity of leaders to support the balanced distribution of healthy food. It also educates students poised to become the next generation of leaders, preparing them with a framework for understanding the complexities of community food access underscored by culinary expertise. By offering an adaptable model of regenerative food production, nutrient-dense food transformation, and a distribution hub in support of regional food access, our team is ready to create space within traditional institutions from which to reshape them, and transform our approach to food.
The Eastern Shore Food Lab promotes ethical methods of food production that have sustained human and ecological health for millennia. Our students learn a set of principles and decision-making techniques to design systems that emulate the tendency toward food abundance in the natural world.

With a focus on creating examples of food access that support ecosystem health, we demonstrate how alternative approaches to conventional agriculture can reshape the food system.

Wild foods take a prominent role in our research, from edible plants to the ethical sourcing of wild animals. We show how people can participate in and enhance the natural world while meeting their own food needs.

With the Center for Environment & Society at Washington College, we are preparing to work with livestock at the College’s River and Field Campus as we conduct research on broad scale sustainable farming.
Our research preserves prehistoric and fading foodways for future generations, and provides context for their continued relevance and importance. Many ancestral food production technologies have been lost, and traditional foodways are rapidly disappearing. Our approach makes this information meaningful and relevant in the modern western world. We share our research through a variety of platforms to reach the largest and most diverse audiences possible: presentations, social media, podcasts, video/television, books, and both peer-reviewed and popular journals. Presentations in the form of professional papers, posters, and lectures/demonstrations are important to the mission of the Eastern Shore Food Lab. We believe that personal, face-to-face contact is one of the best ways in which to share information, carrying with it networking and program-building opportunities.

“Eating wild foods helps form a bridge of intimacy between nature and our dinner plates.”

Doug Kurtz ’21
The Eastern Shore Food Lab demonstrates the power of revitalizing local economies by having access to affordable, nutrient-dense food. The Community-Supported Kitchen (CSK) will provide a local connection to global communities, prizing social equity and personal vitality in concert with a robust local economy.

For Washington College students, the CSK might look like new seasonal food choices in the dining hall. Faculty or staff members might subscribe to weekly staple ingredients like sourdough loaves, stock, yogurt, cheese, and fermented vegetables ready for assembly in meals of the week. Community members might volunteer time to receive a proportionate volume of prepared food in return. In making food affordable, in all of our processes we champion frugality and thrift — conscientious sourcing and root-to-stalk cooking — all while reaching the highest levels of nutrition possible from each ingredient.

We show our support for local food systems, from urban gardens to farms, that provide high-quality fresh foods with minimal environmental impacts. Locally procured wild and fermented foods take a starring role, elevating community health and appreciation of our shared lives in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
The Eastern Shore Food Lab represents the enterprising goodwill of Washington College as we apply liberal inquiry and civic engagement, through our students, to the community in which we live.

To discuss how you could help sustain the work of the Eastern Shore Food Lab, please contact:

Bill Schindler, Ph.D.
Director, Eastern Shore Food Lab
Washington College
300 Washington Ave.
Chestertown, MD 21620
Office 410-778-8993 | Cell 908-627-1568

www.washcoll.edu/esfl