

Swapping food for community engagement

The Durham VOICE
By Tanner Boggs
Staff Writer

Bull City Food Swap, organized by Erin Urquhart, is set to make its debut at Fullsteam Brewery on May 9. This will be the first such event to take place in the Triangle area.

Urquhart first came up with the idea of holding food swap events when living in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Inspired by her time canning and pickling, Urquhart wanted to bring the fun to Durham when she moved to the city earlier this year.

“When I first moved here eight months ago, I started researching the Triangle to see if there had been food swaps,” Urquhart said. “When I didn’t see anything around, I thought, this town is hungry, and I think that Durham is the type of place where anything for the community is taking off right now.”

The food swaps last about an hour and a half and function almost like a silent auction for food.

Attendees spend the first 30 minutes chatting with the other participants and sampling food made available for



Photo courtesy of Seacoast Food Swaps and Erin Urquhart
A co-organizer of Seacoast Food Swaps participates in a swap in New Hampshire in August, 2015.

the swap. Afterwards, a signup sheet with five to 10 slots is made available, allowing interested parties to list what they’re willing to trade for the featured item at each table. A majority of the trade decisions are made within 10 minutes of signing up.

The food swaps are going to be a monthly event, with Fullsteam Brewery in Durham hosting the first in May, then rotating venues from there.

“The idea is to not keep it at Fullsteam every month; it’s to move it around to different businesses that kind of showcase the

idea of it,” Urquhart said. “I think places like Fullsteam forages most of their goods and have a lot of collabo-

rations with their partners. Other places like SEEDS and the Durham Co-Op might be some of the places I’d like to hold it.”

Emily Bolton, a regular attendee at the Seacoast Food Swaps in New Hampshire, believes the monthly nature of the events will help increase participation.

“Regularity in the swap events will help the Bull City Food Swap succeed,” Bolton, a native of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, said. “This will help people plan around them, which will increase attendance and will give everyone a specific date to look forward to each month.”

Urquhart has made an event on Facebook and sent out invites to try and attract people to the event. Melissa Werz, a Durham resident, is excited to get out and experience her first food swap.

“I am looking to meet new people, hopefully get some recipes and inspiration for new foods,” Werz, said. “This event will bring people together and will help make a tighter community through shared interests.”

Urquhart will participate in the food swap and looks forward to creating a community around the event as it expands.

“I am expecting 20 to 30 at our first event and hope to continue to grow it from there,” Urquhart said.

Participants are encouraged to bring herbs, jams, spreads, homegrown vegetables, coffee and other organic items to the event. For updates and more information, visit the Bull City Food Swap Facebook page.



Photo courtesy of Seacoast Food Swaps and Erin Urquhart
Participants can choose whether they want to bid on an item.