

THE FARM RESTAURANT GUILD

A voluntary community of farms, standing behind each other and the intention this represents

The Farm Restaurant Act is the proposed law that gives a farm the legal right to serve the food it grows. The Farm Restaurant Guild is something separate: a voluntary community a farm can choose to join. Guild membership is never required to obtain a Farm Micro-Gathering Permit, a Farm TFE Permit, or a Farm Restaurant Permit — the legal path stays fully open and free to access on its own, at every tier. The Guild exists for farms who want something more than the legal minimum: real peer support, mentorship through the permitting process, and a mark that means something beyond what the law alone can check.

What the Law Checks, and What the Guild Checks

At the heart of the Farm Restaurant Act is one narrow, factual question: does at least 51 percent of what a farm serves actually come from that farm or a nearby one. That's the right question for the government to ask, and it's what government is actually equipped to verify.

The Guild asks a different, deeper question: is this farm genuinely doing what it says it's doing, in the spirit this effort was built around. That's not a question a checklist alone can answer well. It takes a real conversation, with people who understand the work, putting the farm's intention before anything else.

How Membership Works

How to Apply

Reach out through celestefarms.com or directly to booking@celestefarms.com to start the process. From there, we'll set up the initiation conversation with current members.

Initiation

A new farm applies to the Guild and sits down with current members for a conversation, not a form. This is where intention gets looked at honestly: why is this farm doing this? what does it actually look like day to day? and does it reflect the spirit the Guild exists to protect? A one-time initiation fee of \$600 applies, covering the time and coordination this conversation takes.

Annual Dues

Guild members pay yearly dues of \$200 to remain part of the community. This isn't a government fee and never touches the legal permitting process. It supports the Guild's own ongoing work: coordinating verification visits, mentoring new members, and keeping the community functioning. Membership in good standing may be paused if a genuine concern arises and isn't resolved through direct conversation. The goal is always to work it out together, not to remove a member from the community.

What Members Get

- A peer verifier who understands the process and can walk a new farm through it, rather than leaving them to figure out permitting alone
- Support filling out the state paperwork, from people who've already done it
- A reliable, coordinated peer verifier each year, rather than arranging your own, satisfying the same sourcing check every permit holder already has access to
- The right to display the Farm Restaurant Guild mark, alongside the farm's required state signage
- A genuine community of farms doing this work with the same intention. People to lean on when something comes up.

When VDH or a Locality Gives a Member a Hard Time

The Guild exists as a voice of reasonability first. If a member feels VDH, or a local zoning office, is pushing back on something without a real basis — for example, a locality questioning whether a Farm Restaurant's traffic or vehicle trips justify additional local review — the Guild will step in directly. The Guild will help the member understand the code, and if needed, engage ourselves, farmer to regulator.

If that isn't enough, the Guild maintains a relationship with the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund, and can help a member connect with legal counsel when a situation genuinely calls for it, whether the dispute is with VDH or a local government. Most disagreements shouldn't reach that point — but no member should have to face one alone, or wonder where to turn if it does.

Membership Plaque and Signage

A farm's required entrance and point-of-service signage under the Farm Restaurant Act stays exactly as the law requires — a legal notice that doesn't reference the Guild. Separately, upon initiation, each new member receives a printed 8.5 by 11 inch plaque bearing the suggested Guild membership text below, suitable for framing and display where guests will see it. This is referred to elsewhere as the Guild's signage — one physical plaque, not two separate items. It is optional, and it sits alongside the required legal signage, not in place of it. This is a one-time item, covered by the initiation fee.

Each year a member renews their dues, they receive a small dated sticker to affix to their plaque, showing the current year of active membership. This keeps the plaque's claim genuinely current without reprinting or reshipping a new plaque annually.

Suggested plaque text for active Guild members:

“This farm is a Verified and Active Member of the Farm Restaurant Guild, designed to support and empower farms who wish to serve the food that they grow.”

Initiation Conversation — Discussion Guide

For current members meeting with a farm applying to join. This isn't a pass/fail test — it's a conversation to understand who this farm is and why they're doing this.

- ☐ Why did you start growing/raising food, and why do you want to serve it directly?
- ☐ Walk us through what a typical event or service day actually looks like.
- ☐ What does “serving what you grow” mean to you, beyond the legal definition?
- ☐ What are you hoping the Guild adds that you couldn't do alone?
- ☐ Is there anything about your situation you want the Guild to understand before we move forward?

Founded by Ian Newell, Celeste Farms, alongside the proposed Farm Restaurant Act.