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## **What Is Selma Cafe, Anyway?**

Selma Cafe is the name of a weekly local-foods breakfast salon, offering a gathering place for friends and community to meet, imagine and create a new vital and sustainable regional food economy – every Friday morning on the west side of Ann Arbor, MI. A different guest chef comes into the kitchen each week to offer a breakfast menu that is a celebration of the seasonal, local ingredients of the region, with help from a crew of volunteers, to feed guests a delicious and beautifully presented meal with a focus on tasty, healthy, local, sustainable food. Money raised from the weekly breakfast, donated by guests, is offered to local farmers as micro-loans to purchase hoop house kits, built by Selma Cafe volunteers in a one day event similar to a barn raising, to create a year round growing season for farms in SE Michigan. The Selma Cafe breakfast salon happens in the home of Lisa Gottlieb and Jeff McCabe, who together founded Selma Cafe in the winter of 2009.

Lisa Gottlieb is the operations and general manager for the Friday morning breakfasts. Her recipe for *Honey & Fruit Bread Pudding*, *Whole Grain Waffles*, and *Maple Syrup Sweetened Vegan Granola* are available each week on the Selma Cafe menu, in addition to the weekly, changing chef specials. Lisa is the full time school social worker for the Washtenaw County Juvenile Jail, where she started a vegetable and flower garden for the youth in the facility. Utilizing her experience as a pastry and sous chef, combined with her training as a social worker, Lisa strives to promote an environment of inclusiveness, connection, and joy for everyone involved in Selma Cafe, while bringing the community the best breakfast in town.

Seattle native Jeff McCabe is the visionary and creator of the [Selma Cafe Farmer Fund](#), [The Tilian Farm Incubator Development Program](#) and the [Ten Percent Campaign](#). He is also the creative force behind the hoop house construction and builds, which he plans and organizes with his wife Lisa, and a group of dedicated volunteers. Jeff also sat on the board of Ann Arbor's People's Food Coop, the steering committees for both the

[Local Food summit](#) and the [HomeGrown Festival](#), and is a key figure in Ann Arbor's commitment to local food-sourcing and building SE Michigan's local foods economy. Jeff's most recent project is the creation of his own hoop house manufacturing company, [Nifty Hoops](#).

## Who's Your Fiscal Sponsor & What About These Hoops?

[The Food Systems Economic Partnership](#) (FSEP) is the fiscal sponsor for Selma Cafe activities. Proceeds from the Selma Cafe breakfasts have created new local food production in hoop houses, adding over 50,000 sf of four-season production to the area's food-shed. Projects are financed with small loans so that the proceeds of this production feed back to the fund to finance additional hoops for more farmers. The first hoop house went to Greg Willerer of Detroit's Brother Nature Produce on August 1, 2009. Greg is one of a number of urban farmers re-creating farm production in what has become a food desert in inner-city Detroit. Besides taking produce to Eastern Market each Saturday and supplying several restaurants, Greg has established a u-pick food source for his neighbors that he thinks he can now extend to every month of the year with this latest hoop. Greg was recently featured as one of the "Big Eight" in *Time* magazine, as one of the individuals (along with Kym Worthy and L. Brooks Patterson) in "The Committee to Save Detroit". (Check out Lisa's blog about the first hoop build [HERE](#).)

Two weeks later, on August 15<sup>th</sup>, Selma Cafe volunteers were building off Joy Road, just north of Ann Arbor for Tomm and Trilby Becker, who established SunSeed Farm. Their 30 x 96 hoop sits in front of a giant oak tree in the middle of one of their newly plowed fields. Tomm has been the resident farmer for the MSU Student Organic Farm, which has created a 100-member, four-season CSA program. SunSeed may be the first 12-month CSA in the Ann Arbor area. On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010, Selma Cafe volunteers helped Sunseed build its second hoop. See photos and commentary from Lisa [HERE](#). On May 8, 2010, volunteers built a 21 x 48 hoop for Spirit Farm in Detroit, where Kate Devlin and her crew will use this hoop to support Spirit's giving mission. The day of the build proved to be a challenge because of spring's fickle weather delivering one squall after another, and, as volunteers discovered, lots of Detroit housing history just below the surface of this now open space. The strength of the amazing volunteer crew again was up to the task and they improvised their way to completion. (Read the whole story and see the assembly procedure in Lisa's [blog](#).)

Two weeks later, Selma Cafe volunteers were back at Sunseed Farm to build their second hoop. Mud at its most sticky meant they spent as much energy lifting their feet to walk as they did in actual building. Fortunately, there was a huge crew of 50, and all was well in the end, with another hoop in production in Ann Arbor! (Read about this muddy day in Lisa's blog post [HERE](#).)

On June 5th, 2010, Selma Cafe volunteers built another 3,000 sf hoop for Beverly Ruesnik of Needlelane Farm. Though spring was still throwing some showers at the builders and a tornado rolled by during the night as Lisa and Jeff camped out, the site was well drained and did not present the same challenges as the previous two spring builds. This hoop was the first time that Selma Cafe volunteers managed to complete the entire build, including the installation of both roll-up walls in the one build day. But it was a long one! Lisa tells the rest of the story [here](#).)

The Summer 2010 build season started with a monster 30 x 144 (about 4500 sf) hoop for John Adelman and his family on Portage River Farm. The thunderstorms never materialized and the heavy cloud cover made the supposed high-humidity 95-degree day feel much more tolerable. (Lisa blogs about this massive hoop build [here](#).) In October, Selma Cafe volunteers added a fourth hoop at Shannon Brines' farm. [Brines Farm](#), right down the road in Dexter, has been growing greens year-round in three hoop houses since 2005, and his produce is so popular there is a waiting list to get a CSA share. That wait list will likely be shorter next year with the recent build of Shannon's fourth hoop house. All in all it was a really great day. By the time we called it a night, the hoop structure was up and stabilized, both end walls were constructed, and the crew still had energy for the after- hoop build party.

The final build of the season was a big one: two hoops in one day. Stephanie and Joyce Phillips' Family Farm in Belleville. (Read the entire blog entry [HERE](#)).

In the early summer of 2011, Jeff created Selma Cafe's most creative project yet: [20 Hoops in 20 Days](#). Due to supply issues Selma Cafe completed 14 of the 20 hoops, which thrilled everyone involved.

## Got Selma Cafe Specs?

### **Selma Cafe Launched in February 2009**

- Approximately 22,000 breakfasts served over the last 3 years
- Approximately \$250,000 raised in breakfast donations over the last 3 years
- Over 700 volunteers and dozens of key volunteers who fill important weekly roles
- over two dozen hoop-houses built from breakfast proceeds adding over 50,000 sq. ft. of four-season infrastructure (hundreds of volunteers have participated in these one day barn-raising style projects)
- Over \$45k in pledged funds for the "Farmer Fund," our new social investment program to co-lend on our hoop-house construction projects

### **Other Projects in the Works or Completed**

- The creation of a business incubator program focused on starting new sustainable practice farms in and around Washtenaw County. This project was funded by the USDA for its first 2 years of operations and is currently housed at 4400 Pontiac Trail, in Ann Arbor. Participating farmers run their businesses on the program site while transitioning to their own farms.

- Jeff McCabe launched a new hoop-house manufacturing facility, the first in Michigan, that will focus on specific design for our climate and easy to assemble structures.
- Land development projects targeted to dovetail with existing land preservation organizations. The projects will divide and transition lands currently growing commodity crops into 10 to 40 acre farmsteads employing sustainable practices.

With the support of our volunteers and our community, we will continue our mission of building on our local food system as detailed in the Ten Percent Washtenaw campaign, building a \$100 Million food system in our county over the next 10 years.