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Finger Lakes 'F.E.A.S.T.' coming to Geneva

April 24 tasting event organized by local chef to benefit Foodlink

ROCHESTER – There is no shortage of culinary creativity in the Finger Lakes region, and this spring, one renowned chef wants to bring everyone together for a feast.

The inaugural **F.E.A.S.T. (Feeding Everyone at Shared Tables) in the Heart of the Finger Lakes** will be held April 24 at The Cracker Factory in Geneva. Executive Chef Samantha Buyskes of Three Brothers Wineries and H.J. Stead Company is organizing the tasting event in hopes of it becoming an annual affair. Proceeds will benefit Foodlink, the food bank serving the Finger Lakes and Genesee Valley regions of New York.

"I really wanted to create something unique and special for Geneva," Buyskes said. "I'm hoping that celebrating the area's rich culinary offerings and supporting the great work Foodlink does in our community will be an enticing opportunity for many local foodies."

Buyskes, who was born in South Africa, opened her first restaurant in Trumansburg – near Ithaca – in 2002. When her career brought her to Geneva, she wanted to find a way to give back to the community and "everything lined up" when she began discussing ideas with the owners of The Cracker Factory, a stunning event space on Lehigh Street.

"With the proximity of our venue to Geneva's food pantry, we see daily the need for food assistance and the frequency in which Foodlink is providing nourishing food to our community," said Amy Phillips, who co-owns The Cracker Factory with her husband, Brandon. "We believe Foodlink is a wonderful and crucial asset to our area and are delighted to be able to work with Samantha Buyskes and all of the other contributing chefs to raise funds for this important endeavor."

Buyskes plans to invite approximately 20 chefs to the event, and hopes to sell approximately 250 tickets. General admission will be priced at \$35, and VIP tickets – which include a private, pre-event reception – will go for \$55.

“We were pleasantly surprised and so grateful that Samantha chose to partner with Foodlink for this amazing event,” said Heather Newton, Foodlink’s Director of Development and Community Engagement. “Our organization truly understands the power of food, and we hope this event can bring local residents together, and become a highlight for the community for years to come.”

Tickets are on sale now, and can be purchased online through the event’s Facebook page, or at www.foodlinkny.org.

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About Foodlink

Foodlink is a regional food hub and the Feeding America food bank serving Allegany, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties. We alleviate hunger by distributing food to a network of hundreds of human service agencies and target the root causes of food insecurity through dozens of food-related programs and our state-of-the-art commercial kitchen. Last year, Foodlink distributed 17.4 million pounds of food, including 4.9 million pounds of produce, and served more than 1.1 million meals and snacks to children in our community.

Foodlink delivers multiple nutrition education programs aimed to help improve food literacy and empower families to make healthy choices. A suite of food access programs provide new access points to nutritious food in underserved communities. The Foodlink Community Kitchen prepares and delivers more than 4,500 meals daily to Rochester children, and supports our regional agricultural economy by minimally processing locally grown apples for distribution into schools and other institutions. Our innovative approach directly addresses diet-related health disparities related to food insecurity. Learn more about our mission to end hunger and to leverage the power of food to build a healthier community at www.foodlinkny.org.

About Samantha Buyskes

Since 2002, Samantha Buyskes has built an admirable reputation as one of the top chefs in the Finger Lakes region with her focus on time and place, seasonality, community and connection. Buyskes opened her first restaurant in Trumansburg in 2002 with a focus on seasonal, regional cuisine. It was through this business that she was able to establish herself and begin to make strong connections to the region. In 2007, she joined Sheldrake Point Vineyard and brought her restaurant and food philosophy there. She consulted with Red Newt Wine Cellars, spent time as a butcher at The Piggery, and opened Kindred Fare in Geneva before joining the team at Three Brothers Wineries, where she oversees the food program for their cafe and restaurant called HJ Stead Company. A Food Network competitor, author and regional ambassador, this vibrant, South African-born, redheaded, green-eyed chef brings life, vitality and excitement to all she does.