

What's in Season from the Garden State

Biweekly Highlights from Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

September 22, 2008

New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Jersey Fresh & Seafood Availability Report

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| Apples | Peaches |
| Arugula | Peppers |
| Baby Arugula & Baby Spinach | Radishes |
| Basil | Spinach |
| Beets | Squash - yellow and zucchini; but- ternut & acorn |
| Cabbage | Sweet corn |
| Collards | Sweet potatoes |
| Cucumbers/ Pickles | Swiss chard |
| Dill | Tomatoes |
| Eggplant | Turnips |
| Escarole & Endive | White Potatoes |
| Kale | |
| Leeks & Green | |
| Onions | |
| Parsley | |



| | |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| Bluefish | Farm Raised |
| Butterfish | Hard Clams & |
| Flounder | Oysters |
| Ling | Little-necks/Middle- |
| Lobster | necks |
| Sea Scallops | Specials |
| (Day Boat) | Cherrystones, |
| Squid | Chowders, Top- |
| Sword Fish | necks |
| Whiting | Cape May Salt |
| | Half-Shelled Oys- |
| | ters |
| | Delaware Bay |
| | Oysters |



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Serving Local Foods as Company Policy

While many companies develop green policies as part of their business practices, a component that can be an integral part of the package is a policy on serving local foods. Kevin Lyons, Ph.D., Director of Purchasing at Rutgers, explains how aside from green initiatives, buying local food supports the local economy. Lyons explains, "Purchasing is a global concept. When we need to buy equipment or supplies we have the whole globe to go searching but we need to draw the distinction when it comes to food. Although you can get some types of food from far away cheaper, and get it here fast, it doesn't help the local economy. Farms are small businesses. The New Jersey state government has a mandate to include small businesses in its purchases. Considering that 90% of businesses in New Jersey are small businesses (less than 500 employees), there is a lot of economic development opportunity to make small businesses survive."

While Lyons crafted Rutgers Green Purchasing policy, he made sure it aligned with Rutgers mission as a public university – giving back to and working with the community. "This policy is not stand-alone," he emphasizes, "it weaves into the fabric of what we do, for example the work at Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station."

That's the big picture. But when it comes down to the nuts and bolts of developing green or buying local policies, there is often a lot of resistance and many are intimidated by the challenges. This, however, is where Lyons starts to have fun. He advocates, "You don't slam things down people's throats. You bring them into the process, make them take ownership of it and then it doesn't matter if they were the one who came up with the idea – they have fun with it."

Lyons recommends when implementing a serving local food policy to put it out to bid casting the widest net you possibly can within the state of New Jersey. He suggests the contract be an invitation to join your company in its quest to buy local. "The language should be more of a challenge – to work with you to achieve your goal. You don't have to tell them how to do it."

With that type of language Lyons admits that it can seem like people are being excluded. "But what we're trying to do is open up doors to enable people. There is a catchall in the Rutgers policy that lets vendors know that if they feel they can't meet the requests, that they should contact Rutgers for help – our experts are ready to help people approach these new challenges."

Rutgers has just released a request for proposal for green catering with the criteria including *Jersey Fresh* foods, organic foods and serving products using environmentally friendly methods/materials. The green catering component of Rutgers revised green purchasing policy will be available on the Green Purchasing web page in October: <http://purchasing.rutgers.edu/green>.

While Lyons leads the way in New Jersey bringing the State University into the realm of buying local food movement, he is part of a nationwide initiative of universities: *The Real Food Challenge* is a campaign to increase the procurement of real food on college and university campuses by leveraging their purchasing power and catalyzing the transformation of the larger food system. More information on the challenge is available at: <http://realfoodchallenge.org>.

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So, what was on the menu at the 100-mile lunch?

Breast of turkey, Lee's Turkey Farm, East Windsor

Pan-fried chicken, Griggstown Quail Farm, Princeton

Grilled tuna salad, Viking Village, Barnegat Light

Sea scallop ceviche, Cape May Fisheries & Pitspone Farm, South Brunswick

Arugula with roasted beets & aged provolone, Cherry Grove Organic Farm, Lawrenceville

Heirloom tomatoes, Pitspone Farm

Fennel slaw, Farmer Dave, Hopewell Township

Spanish tortilla with potato and aioli, Cherry Grove Farm

Assorted salami, Salameria Biellese, Hackensack

Fresh breads, Village Bakery, Lawrenceville

Peaches and nectarines, Terhune Orchards, Princeton Township

What's on the menu at New Jersey Restaurant Association's 100-mile lunch?

There are a lot of reasons that residents and businesses prefer to buy local foods. For many it is a commitment to their community and a more environmentally sound option than shipping foods that are supposed to be fresh across the country. And for those who attest to the superiority of fresh local foods in the taste department, one need look no further than to some of the staunch advocates of the local food movement: chefs and restaurateurs.

According to Elizabeth Alger, Chairwoman of the New Jersey Restaurant Association (NJRA), "There is has always been a natural connection between agriculture and food service; though for quite some time the connection seems to have been missing in the consciousness of the general public, including many in the foodservice industry. Recent trends, however, have sparked a wonderful return to the *Jersey Fresh* concept. The NJRA, as the professional association of the New Jersey food service community, has made it a priority to provide members with information about utilizing local agricultural products. Also, in keeping with the trend toward going green, the NJRA has pulled together information from many sources to present to members "Best Green Practices for Restaurants." There are many things that individual restaurants can do to conserve resources, including their own financial resources. My own restaurant, *The Frog and The Peach*, has been serving seasonal New Jersey produce since we opened in 1983. In the early days, in order to offer *Jersey Fresh*, the restaurateur needed to travel to the source - the farm or dairy, to procure it. We are now delighted that some of our vendors have sourced and deliver Jersey produce, cheese and seafood. *The Frog and The Peach* was among the first restaurants in the state to install solar panels on the roof. For the past 2 years we have generated enough electricity to see our electric bill remain stable rather than increase 25+%."

Given that, it is no surprise that the New Jersey Restaurant Association practices what it preaches by serving local foods at their events. Their annual Board of Directors Summer Mixer held in August at the scenic *Rutgers Display Gardens* (<http://rutgersgardens.rutgers.edu>) featured a 100-mile lunch served by Jim Weaver, Executive Chef and owner of *Tre Piani Restaurant* in Princeton. Weaver is a familiar face to those in the local food movement. In addition to serving on the board of directors for the NJRA, he is founder and President of *Slow Food Central New Jersey*, part of an international grass roots organization that serves to preserve and promote local food traditions, flavors and artisan producers of food and beverage products.

Weaver notes that there is a recent national awareness leading toward the increasing trend of buying local. "Educating the public and food professionals about what is in season and where the products come from is a trend that seems like it is here to stay. People understand that mass produced foods are usually not good for you or the environment, given a choice, local is usually preferred. Problems like the recent scares regarding tainted produce, spinach, tomatoes, jalapeno peppers can be avoided by purchasing locally. Why? Because if there is a problem with a food making someone sick it can be quickly traced to the source. When you have mega-industrial farms that may not even be from this country flooding the markets with products that are not necessarily labeled, how can anyone know where it is from?"

"New Jersey, like most places these days, is embracing the local food movement more every year. The success of farmers markets and the number of products at the markets also grows every year. *Slow Food*, an international grass roots movement dedicated to preserving, protecting and promoting local food and local food traditions, is a factor contributing to this increased appreciation of food from our backyard. Taste education is the primary tool in the Slow Food arsenal." For more information on Slow Food Central New Jersey, go to: www.slowfoodusa.org.

Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it where you shop or dine or go to: <http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>

To receive these reports by e-mail: njfarmfresh@njaes.rutgers.edu

Web: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu>

For your county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office go to:

<http://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/county>