

What's in Season from the Garden State

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

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New Jersey Local Foods Year Round

In New Jersey we tend to view the end of the summer produce season as the termination of our local food availability. As the last Jersey tomatoes disappear from the vines, it's "so long 'til next summer", right? Actually, New Jersey has a lot of food happening all year round. It may not fit our image of typical Jersey Fresh fare, so Thanksgiving time is a great time to get acquainted with the cornucopia of food that spans into the cool seasons.

Let's start off with the cool season vegetables that replace our summer tomatoes, corn, peaches and blueberries. If you think about it, Mother Nature has designed the ultimate in convenience when it comes to seasonal foods. Summer foods are more perishable and need to be eaten fresh and quickly – no problem as the summer crops replenish throughout the summer. Many of the summer crops can be eaten raw – no need for cooking during the hot weather – how convenient! Now, as we turn to the cool season vegetables, we find that these are not so perishable – squashes, pumpkins, cranberries, onions, sweet potatoes, turnips, cabbage, cauliflower – these can last weeks, some even months in a cool, humid place – what our forefathers and mothers did to preserve/stock their cool season produce throughout the winter. These foods mostly need to be cooked – perfect for heating up the house on long cold fall and winter nights – how convenient!

And our cool season bounty doesn't end in the fall – both fall and spring bring leafy greens galore – Swiss chard, spinach, mustard greens, bok choy, collards and lettuces.

Nature's convenience doesn't end with freshness, durability and preparation – it also applies to nutrition. You know all those colors of fruits and vegetables that we're supposed to be eating in five color groups every day to get all those healthy phytonutrients: orange/yellow; red, white, blue/purple; and green? Well, fall crops cover the rainbow as well. If you're wondering where the blue/purple comes in, check out your local farmstand or supermarket for blue potatoes, red (purple) cabbage or yes, even purple broccoli.

Home Grown Protein

Now that we've covered the fruits and veggies, let's turn to animal protein sources. Down our rural routes and lanes, New Jersey was once home to thousands of dairy and poultry farms. Dairy farms peaked around 15,000 farms in the 1940s and 50s. While New Jersey farms that raise animal products may currently only number a few thousand, the Garden State boasts a unique and vast array of animal products. You name it, we got it: turkey, quail, pheasant, duck, chicken, eggs, bison (buffalo), goat, pork, beef, milk, cheeses from cow and sheep, finfish and shellfish (yes – fishermen are farmer's too).

We can't list all the New Jersey animal product sources here, but will highlight two examples of small local food businesses working to build sustainable industries.

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



Apples
Arugula
Beets
Cabbage
Cilantro
Collards
Cranberries
Dill
Escarol & Endive
Green onions
Kale
Leeks
Lettuces
Parsley
Radishes
Spinach
Squash - winter
Sweet potatoes
Swiss Chard
Turnips
White Potatoes

Bunker (Menhaden)
Fluke
Mahi-Mahi
Makos
Monktail (Day Boat Gill Net)
Sea Scallops (Day Boat)
Skatewings
Swordfish
Tuna
Farm Raised Hard Clams & Oysters
Littlenecks/Middle-necks
Cherrystones, Chowders, Top-necks
Cape May Salt Half-Shelled Oysters
Delaware Bay Oysters



At Viking Village, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County Marine Agent Gef Flimlin, points out the information on how shellfish improve the bay - part of the "Clam Trail" environmental education program throughout Long Beach Island and neighboring areas.

Viking Village, as well as dock management have been intimately involved in the management process. These results have been obtained even as the endangered sea turtle bycatch has been eliminated - due in part to the voluntary addition of turtle chains on Viking Village scallop dredges.

Viking Village's involvement in supporting their industry also engages them in the community participating in educational activities such as the Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Program's ReClam the Bay project, in cooperation with Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County and other environmental and governmental agencies (<http://www.reclamthebay.org>).

Taking their role as "farmers" seriously, four members of the Viking Village organization have participated in Rutgers NJAES New Jersey Agricultural Leadership Development Program (<http://www.njagsociety.org/njaldp/njaldp.htm>).

Viking Village's website is: <http://www.vikingvillage.net>.

The other Red Meat – Goats

While traditionally a specialty item for ethnic markets, Goat World of Pittstown, NJ worked with the Rutgers NJAES Food Innovation Center (FIC) to do taste testing, marketing research and recipe development with chefs so they could expand demand for goat meat outside its traditional ethnic market.

Working with FIC, they are developing new interest in goat meat among food service directors, culinary institutes, and restaurateurs by offering education, custom cutting, and preparation materials, using outreach that target the culinary community. Goat World has been awarded a USDA Value Added Producer's Grant entitled "Evaluation of the Economic Potential and the Development of the Marketing and Production Strategies for a Premium Value-Added Goat Meat Market", providing new opportunities for Goat World and for other farmers in the Northeast. Goat World's website is: <http://www.goatworldnj.com/index.html>.

How to find New Jersey food sources

Fresh produce is easiest to find because of the Jersey Fresh labeling and web support for sources: <http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>. New Jersey seafood is available through select markets and may carry the Jersey Seafood labeling (<http://www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov>).

Other local food listings can be found for New Jersey at Local Harvest (<http://www.localharvest.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

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For your county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office go to:

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