

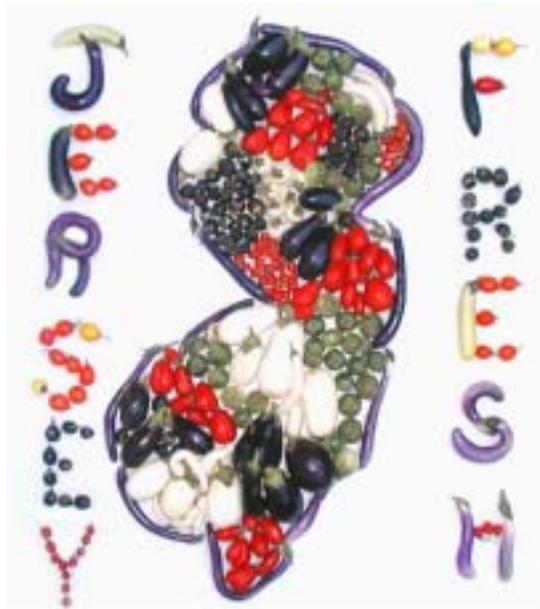
# What's in Season from the Garden State

Bi-weekly Highlights from Rutgers Cooperative Extension

August 28, 2006

## Not Just Your Same Old Eggplant

The Rutgers Ethnic Vegetable Research and Marketing Team is investigating Japanese, Chinese, Indian and Hispanic eggplant varieties versus the standard Italian types. According to Bill Sciarappa, Ph.D., Agricultural Agent of Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) of Monmouth County, "Most people now do not think of the Italian eggplant as an ethnic vegetable, but up until 50 years ago it was a strange specialty crop and was only grown in a few home gardens. Since then, with the expansion of the immigrant population and American food tastes, eggplants have been widely cultivated. There are now 1,000 acres of eggplants in New Jersey, making us 2<sup>nd</sup> in eggplant production in the US. There are many more colors, shapes and sizes than what we normally think of as a standard black, pear-shaped fruit. Some of these "unusual" cultivars may be long and thin, short and round, white, green, purple or red. They have creamier textures and thin, edible skins. Each one of these amazing types can be consumed in different ways such as in shish-kabob, barbecuing, and stuffing and in dips like babaganoush."



In the photo above, Vivian Quinn, Program Assistant, RCE of Monmouth County created the New Jersey map out of eggplants from Rutgers research plots (with each county in a different eggplant). The red eggplant is called the French egg. Quinn suggests, "Try a red eggplant for taste before substituting in a recipe as they tend to be bitter (but are preferred by certain ethnic groups). If you don't like the bitter taste but want to grow them, some varieties make nice ornamental plants."

Try any of the purple eggplants in this recipe for moussaka: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/moussaka.asp>. For gardeners planning to grow exotic eggplants next year, Rutgers Cooperative Extension Factsheet (FS043) *International Eggplants* has tips, varieties and seed sources <http://www.rcr.rutgers.edu/pubs/subcategory.asp?cat=5&sub=42>

Eggplant is not just for parmaganian. It can be prepared by steaming, stewing, sautéing, frying, grilling, pickling, or baking. The only limitation is that it cannot be eaten raw. Whether to peel the skin or not is a personal preference, but when picked fresh from the garden, most varieties will have very tender and nutritious skin. Leaving the skin on actually helps pieces hold their shape. Salting before cooking removes water and will make it less permeable to oil absorption (rinse before cooking to remove excess salt). Once eggplant is cut open, it will brown easily, but browning won't affect flavor. While not suitable for drying or canning, freezing will preserve your garden's bounty of eggplant. When freezing: wash, peel if desired, and slice. Blanch for 4 minutes in boiling water, cool, drain, and pack.

## New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Jersey Fresh Availability Report

### Current:

Arugula and Cilantro  
Baby Arugula & Baby Spinach  
Basil  
Beets  
Cabbage  
Cantalopes  
Dill & Parsley



Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Greens: collards, kale, Kholrabi, mustard, dandelions & Swiss  
Chard  
Leeks & Green Onions  
Nectarines  
Peaches

Peppers  
Squash: yellow, zucchini, acorn & butternut  
Sweet corn  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon  
White Potatoes

### Forecast (start date):

Broccoli - 3rd week of Sept.  
Cranberries - early Oct. (white cranberries - 3rd week of Sept.)  
Escarole/Endive - early Sept.  
Lettuces & Spinach - 3rd week Sept.  
Radishes & Turnips - Sept.  
Sweet Potatoes - mid-Sept.

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@rcr.rutgers.edu](mailto:njfarmfresh@rcr.rutgers.edu)  
Web: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu>  
For your county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office go to:  
<http://www.rcr.rutgers.edu/county>

**Farmer Profile**

Scott Ellis  
 Ellis Farms  
 Yardville, NJ (Mercer County)

Since it began in 1958, Ellis Farms has expanded to 1,000 acres with 100 acres of corn and 900 acres of soybeans. One of the specialties at Ellis Farms is its sweet corn. It is picked at 3 a.m. every morning by Scott Ellis and his crew. Since customers enjoy the great taste and texture of Ellis' sweet corn, Scott sells to roadside markets in central New Jersey. Ellis Farms also has its own farm stand located on the farm. They also buy and sell New Jersey tomatoes and peaches to offer a larger variety to their consumers. Ellis Farms' three trucks deliver fresh corn seven days a week.



*While most of us are snug in our beds, Ellis Farms begins their daily sweet corn harvest at 3:00 a.m. and wraps up by the time we're having our Corn Flakes at 7:00 a.m. Now that's what we call fresh!*



**New Jersey Master Gardeners**

New Jersey Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who assist Rutgers Cooperative Extension in its mission to deliver horticulture programs and information to the general public. Anyone with an interest in gardening and a commitment to volunteer service can become a Master Gardener. No previous education or training in horticulture is required.

New Jersey Master Gardeners receive in-depth, hands-on training in horticulture from Rutgers faculty and professional staff. Some topics include plant biology, propagation, soil science, and disease and pest control. There is a fee to cover material and program costs (scholarships are available). In exchange for the training, Master Gardeners agree to volunteer a certain number of hours, working in their community. Successful graduates of the training become Certified Master Gardeners after they complete their volunteer service.

New Jersey Master Gardeners use their skills in a variety of areas, including:

- Gardening demonstrations
- Telephone Helpline and Plant Clinics
- Community and youth gardening
- Horticultural therapy
- Information booths at county fairs and other public events
- Research assistance at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
- Harvesting and packing food for the hungry

For more information and to find out if there is a Master Gardener program in your county, go to: <http://www.rcrc.rutgers.edu/mastergardeners/>.



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