

What's in Season from the Garden State

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

June 11, 2007

"Pushing a refrigerated green vegetable from one end of the earth to another is, let's face it, a bizarre use of fuel. But there's a simpler reason to pass off-season asparagus: it's inferior. Respecting the dignity of a spectacular food means enjoying it at its best. Europeans celebrate the short season of abundant asparagus as a form of a holiday. In the Netherlands the first cutting coincides with Father's Day, on which restaurants may feature all-asparagus menus and hand out neckties decorated with asparagus spears. The French make a similar party out of the release of each year's Beaujolais; the Italians crawl over their woods like harvester ants in the autumn mushroom season, and go gaga over the summer's first tomato."

Barbara Kingsolver - Animal, Vegetable, Miracle

"Any chef worth their salt wants to capitalize on the love affair between New Jersey residents and their farmers. The quality and taste of product is unbelievable. We even showcase special "farm to fork" dinners whose menus are always centered around the season's freshest produce and fruits."

Head Chef/Owner Mark E. Smith - The Tortilla Press, Collingswood, NJ

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It's that time of the year again! Local food lovers (locavores) have been seeking spring crops of Jersey Fresh asparagus and strawberries, but the list doesn't end there. Check out what's available on page two and see what Jersey's got in the way of spring greens.

Welcome to the second season of *What's in Season from the Garden State*. We will continue to examine the tapestry of Jersey Fresh foods – the players involved in the process of farm to fork. From farmers to Rutgers researchers, state government, professional associations, chefs, consumers and food aficionados, these people each have a role in the growing movement in New Jersey to provide local foods. While this movement is a growing national trend, the foundation has been in place in New Jersey for many years.

A new feature we are including is the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Seafood availability report. Our state's fresh food doesn't just come from our farms, but from our waters as well.

Hail to the Chef

While farmers work from sun up to sun down (and at times, on through the night) and concerned consumers take extra effort to buy food produced locally, there is another group of people driving the local food movement: restaurant chefs. Our local chefs are passionate about using the best tasting ingredients and design their menus around what is available seasonally.



Garden State Seafood Panzanella Salad, Tre Piani, Princeton, NJ

This season we have a new web page dedicated to help you find restaurants serving Jersey Fresh foods. Visit:

<http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/servingjerseyfresh.asp> to find the restaurants in your county that are creating delectable dishes out of local produce, seafood and poultry and serving Jersey wines. This list is seasoned with sample Jersey Fresh dishes from their menus, when they are available, and quotes from the chefs on the significance of creating dishes from foods produced locally.

Note: This web page is new and provides a sampling throughout the state. We will continue to add more restaurants throughout the season.

South Jersey Now Home to America's Newest Wine Region

Move over Napa Valley, South Jersey has just joined the ranks as a federally designated American Viticulture Area (AVA). This region, known as the Outer Coastal Plain, is one of the fastest growing wine areas in the

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

Current:	Peas
Arugula	Radishes
Asparagus - finishing up	Spinach
Baby Arugula & Baby Spinach	Squash - yellow and zucchini
Basil	Strawberries - finishing up
Beets	Swiss Chard
Cilantro	Turnips
Collards	
Cucumbers	Forecast:
Dandelions	Blueberries - Mid to late June
Dill	Cabbage - 3rd week of June
Escarole & Endive	
Kale	
Leeks & Green Onions	
Lettuce	
Mint	
Parsley	



Black Sea Bass	Farm Raised Hard Clams & Oysters
Bluefish	Little-necks/Middle-necks
Butterfish	Specials
Flounder	Top-necks
Fluke	Cape May Salt Oysters
Ling	Delaware Bay Oysters
Lobster	
Mackerel	
Mahi-Mahi	
Monk-tail (Day Boat)	
Scup (Porgies)	
Sea Scallops (Day Boat)	
Skate Wings	
Squid	
Weakfish/Whiting	



country. According to Jack Rabin, Assistant Director for Farm Services at Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, who, along with Congressman Frank LoBiondo worked on the designation, "New Jersey's got the soil, the climate and the know-how to produce fine wines, and it's a part of agriculture that's just going to get bigger each year."



In order for a region to be approved as an AVA, it must be able to prove its identity as a unique physiographic region and as a region that is beneficial to grape growing. Some of the criteria used by the federal government used to determine whether an area meets this standard include climate, soil type, and water table.

The Outer Coastal Plain is New Jersey's largest physiographic area consisting of about 2.25 million acres including all of Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic, and Ocean Counties and parts of Salem, Gloucester, Camden, Burlington, and Monmouth Counties. It is known for its unique, well-drained soils of sandy loam which are amongst the best on the East Coast for producing high quality wine grapes. The region's moderated winter temperatures, influenced by the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay, and later frost dates allow many cold sensitive grape varieties (difficult to grow in other areas) to excel here.

The Outer Coastal Plain has actually been a wine region for a very long time and is home to the oldest continuously operating winery in the United States which was established in 1864. For more information on the Outer Coastal Plain and local wineries, go to: <http://www.outercoastalplain.com/>. For New Jersey wine events visit Garden State Wine Growers Association website at: <http://www.newjerseywines.com/index.html>.

Jersey Fresh Spring Greens

According to William Walker, Agricultural Marketing Specialist from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, "Greens tend to like to grow in sunny and cooler climates, with more than average rainfall. In New Jersey, greens have a "Spring" season, and a "Fall" season.



Some greens, such as lettuces, are eaten raw in salads. In New Jersey, common salad greens would include red and green leaf lettuces, Boston/bibb lettuce, romaine, and iceberg lettuce. Others greens, which can be eaten raw or cooked, are beet greens, Swiss chard, spinach, escarole/endive, broccoli raab, and dandelion greens. Baby greens such as baby arugula and baby spinach are also grown here. These salad greens generally start to become available in early April and last until late June when the higher temperatures finish them off. Harvesting begins again in mid-September and goes until light frost.

Most greens are cooked. These include members of the cabbage family, such as kale, collard greens, turnips and mustard greens. These cooking greens generally start to become available in later April and can last much of the summer until very hot temperatures finish them off. A Fall harvest begins again in mid-September and goes through the late Fall until a hard frost. These greens can withstand, and flourish, under much cooler temperatures than salad greens."

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@rce.rutgers.edu

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

For your county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office go to:

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