

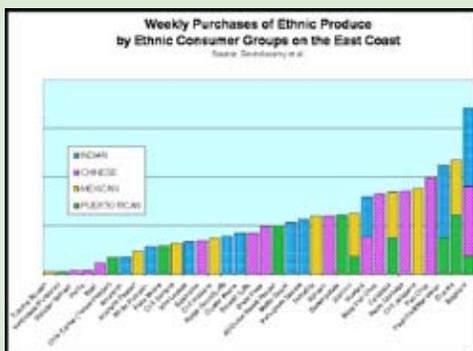
# What's in Season from the Garden State

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

September 4, 2007



*New Jersey has a long history of growing sweetpotatoes, but traditionally just for the roots. Understanding ethnic produce preferences opens several new markets as many Asian and African consumers eat the leaves and tender shoots of sweetpotatoes and several other crop plants.*



*Surveys of ethnic residents of East Coast states revealed the types of crops with the greatest demand.*

**RUTGERS**  
New Jersey Agricultural  
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## Jersey Fresh Aji Dulce, Baby Pak Choy or Cilantro, Anyone?

New Jersey has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the country. This has created great opportunities for Garden State vegetable producers to grow exotic crops for specific ethnic communities. However, this summer, as New Jersey growers have struggled to sell some of their leading specialty vegetables (eggplant, bell peppers, greens, etc.), our ethnic communities have been supplied primarily with imports from South and Central American countries (Asian-type eggplants from Honduras and Guatemala, *aji dulce* peppers from Dominican Republic—Market News Service Weekly Shipping Point and Terminal Market Sales Reports, July-August 2007). High value, niche market, specialty crops are regularly suggested as alternatives to help sustain successful commercial vegetable farms. More recently, proposals have suggested that forming strategic alliances among growers in many East Coast states to maintain year round supplies of fresh, 'locally grown' produce will give them an edge over year-round suppliers from California. Unfortunately, in this competitive world of produce, it takes very little extra production to flood the market with an oversupply that cannot be sold profitably.

In 2005, a group of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) researchers and agricultural agents submitted to USDA's National Research Initiative a multi-state, interdisciplinary proposal to study the factors that have created opportunities for, as well as threats against, successfully marketing ethnic crops to the increasingly diverse populations along the East Coast. Lead by Dr. Ramu Govindasamy, Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, and Richard VanVranken, Atlantic County Agricultural Agent, the group's proposal included comprehensive studies of ethnic consumer produce purchasing habits, production requirements of the vegetables with the highest demand, and case studies of ethnic crop growers (both successful and those that have found challenges in these markets) to help small produce farmers along the East Coast remain viable. The USDA awarded Rutgers \$450,000 to complete the project in three years.

An extensive consumer survey was completed in early 2006 identifying the produce preferences and buying power of the largest or fastest growing ethnic communities along the East Coast (Puerto Rican, Mexican, Chinese and Asian Indian). Based on the consumer study, the vegetables with the highest demand were grown in small plots in several locations in New Jersey, one in Massachusetts, and two in Florida. That information will be coupled to the grower case study summaries to expand the World Crops website ([worldcrops.org](http://worldcrops.org)) which provides production and marketing guidelines for several ethnic vegetables and herbs that are highly profitable and meet the dietary and nutritional needs of the growing ethnic communities. A proactive, strategic marketing plan that promotes grower cooperation up and down the East Coast is being developed as well.

While this project aims to give East Coast vegetable growers a business and marketing plan to remain viable in an increasingly competitive marketplace, a few growers have been successfully growing many types of ethnic vegetables for some time now. Additionally, recent immigrants have begun farming throughout the region (Cubans in FL, Hmong in MA, Chinese in NJ) growing ethnic vegetables specifically for their own communities. Most will also sell to non-ethnic buyers. Producers of ethnic specialty vegetables can be found on the Jersey Produce Guide website ([njfb.org/produce](http://njfb.org/produce)) or identified by your County Agricultural Agent (<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/county>).

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

<b>Current:</b>	Sweet Corn
Baby Arugula &	Tomatoes
Baby Spinach	Turnips
Basil	White Potatoes
Beets	
Cabbage	<b>Forecast:</b>
Cantaloupes	Escarole & Endive
Collards	- 3rd week of Sept.
Cucumbers	Lettuces - 3rd week
Dandelions	of Sept.
Dill	Radishes & Turnips
Eggplant	Spinach - 3rd week
Kale	of Sept.
Leeks &	Sweet Potatoes
Green Onions	- mid-Sept.
Melons	
Mint	
Nectarines	
Parsley	
Peaches	
Peppers	
Squash - yellow and	
zucchini	



Atlantic Croaker	<b>Farm Raised Hard</b>
Fluke	<b>Clams &amp; Oysters</b>
Ling	Little-necks/Middle-
Lobster	necks
Squid	Specials
Weakfish	Cape May Salt
Whiting	Oysters
	Delaware Bay
	Oysters



**More Reasons to Eat your Veggies: Health, Weight Control and ...Wealth?**

People who are concerned about improving their health and controlling their weight may come across a lot of conflicting information in their quest for a balanced diet. Whole grains or no grains? Grass-fed animal products or vegan? Milk products or soy? While consumers can find information both pro and con on whether or not to include these foods in their diet, there is one group of foods that holds up under scrutiny when it comes to a healthy diet: fresh fruits and vegetables. Sure, you'll hear arguments on whether they should be local or organic, juiced or raw, but the bottom line is a balanced diet for health, weight control and longevity includes 7-9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Now if you barely manage 2-3 a day and are constantly clunking yourself in the head and saying "I could have had a V-8", then you need to rethink those green leafy and round juicy things.

If *knowing* about eating healthy isn't enough to motivate you to actually *eat* healthy, then here's another factor to consider: your health affects your financial wealth.

In Small Steps to Health and Wealth, a financial health initiative program by Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension, the financial impacts of improved health behaviors are presented. First, there is the immediate savings of dropping a \$10 a day unhealthy habit such as junk food, for example. That can lead to an annual savings of \$3,650. How about long term savings? The Centers for Disease Control estimates that a 10% weight loss could reduce an overweight person's lifetime medical costs by \$2,200 to \$5,300. Delaying the onset of diabetes can save thousands of dollars annually in increased medical costs. Some might argue that it is expensive to buy healthy foods like fruits and vegetables. For people who prefer to make wise investments with their money, a dollar spent on nutrient rich foods vs. one spent on empty calories is a better value.

A second aspect of the relationship of health and wealth lies in the ties between financial and emotional stress due to ill health. The strain from illness can lead to a downward spiral of financial insecurity - medical problems were found to be associated with about half the cases of bankruptcy filed in 2001.

The third impact presented by the program is the effects on retirement years. While some may end up spending their hard earned pension money on prescription drugs and health care costs, others may not even live long enough to collect their benefits.

So, the next time you're considering eating fruits and veggies, instead of clunking yourself in the head, think "ka-ching!" instead. The best health *insurance* is health *assurance*. Small Steps to Health and Wealth and other financial health information can be accessed from the Rutgers NJAES website at: <http://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/healthfinance>.

**Oh sure, easy for you to say, but my kids won't touch the stuff**

Let's face it, financial security in retirement is not a reason your kids will start scarfing down their veggies. Isn't it a fact that kids are to veggies like cats are to water? While we may never see a swimming cat, there are actually kids who willingly eat broccoli, cabbage and carrots. What do you have to do to get kids to not subsist exclusively on macaroni and cheese? According to the Rutgers NJAES Factsheet "What to do when your child does not want to eat", you should do nothing. Nothing? According to the Factsheet, "Even if the child chooses not to eat the items the first time you offer them, in time the child will try them and slowly develop a taste for them. In fact, most children need to see a food 6-8 times before they will even try it. The trick is to offer the food, allow your child to try it, eat it, or reject it, and then leave him/her alone with the decision. Do not try and substitute the food with something they already like. If you choose to take the carrots away and offer chips instead, this will only communicate to your child that if they reject a new food, something salty, fatty, and tasty will be offered instead. It is important to give your child opportunities to exert his/her independence over what they put in their mouths and to help him/her develop healthful food preferences."

So, to avoid turning into a short order cook at the next dinner table stand-still, check out the Factsheet at: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS1066>.

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](mailto: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>