



CT Department of Agriculture

## Dedication

This issue of the Farm-to-Chef newsletter is dedicated to FTC member **Tony Norris**, founder of **Urban Oaks Farm** in New Britain. Tony lost his battle with brain cancer on November 18, 2007 at the age of 59.

The shortness of Tony's life was overshadowed by his accomplishments. Tony was a cherished member of the New Britain community, which he passionately served with the nutritious food produced at his organic farm, as well as through his work with the East Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, Democratic Town Committee, and promotion of city arts.

Tony and his partner Mike Kandafer founded Urban Oaks farm in the early 1990s on the site of an former florist in a blighted city neighborhood. Tony and Mike used state environmental clean-up funds and grants, along with the help of countless volunteers, to rehabilitate the property and the decrepit greenhouses.

Their tireless efforts and steadfast vision resulted in an vibrant organic farm that produces a breathtaking assortment of heirloom and hard-to-find vegetables of the highest quality. It is now considered one of the largest urban farms in the Northeast.

For over a decade, Urban Oaks has served many of the area's finest restaurants with a year-round supply of fresh, flavorful, nutritious ingredients. Jeff Caputo, Executive Chef at [Scoozzi](#) in New Haven, remembers Tony as "a tremendous asset to the CT agricultural/restaurant community...he was one of my favorite purveyors to deal with because the man had what so many in my industry lack, passion for his job."

Tony's passion was undeterred by his diagnosis of brain cancer two and a half years ago. Despite the enormous challenges posed by such a debilitating illness, Tony cheerfully continued to work at the farm, channeling the love he had for what he did into his product and to his employees and customers.

May Tony's accomplishments, passion, and devotion to his work and community continue to be an inspiration to us all.

**December 2007**

### CT Grown Now in Season

CT Seafood available in December includes hard clams, oysters, sea scallops, squid, lobster, jonah crab, butterfish, cod, summer flounder/fluke, winter flounder, yellowtail flounder, hake, herring, mackerel, monkfish, sea bass, scup, skate, tautog (blackfish), and whiting.

Root crops store well and often are available through the winter. Also look for apples, brussel sprouts, pears, and winter squash.

Lettuce, herbs, and other greens are produced year-round in a number of CT greenhouses.

CT Grown dairy, eggs, meat, honey, and maple syrup also are available year-round.

If you need assistance locating any of these items, please [contact us!](#)



### Contact Us

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## Commentary

### Harvesting a Farmer: How to Develop a Working Relationship

by Chris Prospero, Chef Owner Metro Bis Restaurant, Simsbury, CT

As restaurant patrons have become more interested in local, sustainable, and organic foods, chefs have begun to venture out in search of new food sources. Tracking down a farmer can be a challenge. They tend to rise early and work constantly. Unless the farmer is roaming the land with a cell phone you'll need to make an effort to get in touch.

Here are some tips for working together to meet the needs of your restaurant, the capability of the farm, and your desire to buy local.

Do some homework. It drives you nuts when salespeople try to sell you products you don't serve, so don't call a dairy farmer and ask for blueberries. Ask your friends, neighbors, and other chefs which farms they visit and what they harvest. Visit the farm's website.



Get out of the kitchen. You'll need to visit the farm to determine if it can meet your needs. A farm with 22 acres of pear trees and 4 acres of tomatoes might not be the best match for your menu. Meeting with various farmers will also help you to understand what matters most to them, whether they are organized enough to supply you, how they market their business, and where they make their money. A farm that sells most of its maple syrup at a stand at retail price isn't going to be overly enthusiastic about selling this product to a restaurant at wholesale.

Think about organics. While you're out and about on your farm tour, explore the importance of organics to you and your restaurant guests. Remember that a farm may use organic practices but not be certified organic. Ask how the farm handles diseases, molds, and fertilization and make sure that these treatments are consistent with your philosophy and values.

Consider price. It's going to cost you more to buy local but if you have properly researched a farm and found a good fit then the quality will be higher, the flavors more intense, the diners happier, and the reward worth the price.

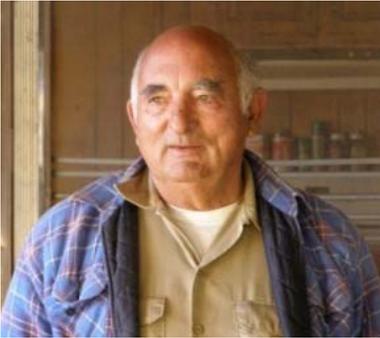
Deal with distribution. Are you willing to load a couple of cases of fresh, muddy veggies in your trunk every day? Do you have a refrigerated truck to properly transport milk and eggs? Make sure you have a system for safely, legally, and efficiently receiving farm products.

Change your menu. If you've decided to go local, then you may need to alter your menu. There won't be any tomatoes in May, asparagus in August, or peas in September. A couple changes will result in a seasonable menu that evolves with the harvest.



## Commentary (continued)

Watch the weather. Chefs know that food grows outside and not in plastic packaging, so keep in mind that the weather will affect when a product is ready or if it is available at all. Floods and draught and bugs are unpleasant surprises that can impact your menu.



Communicate constantly. Unless you have the time to run through the furrows of the farm every morning you will need to talk to your farmer regularly to determine what is ripening. Remind your farmer to not call you at 5:45 a.m. and respect him/her by not phoning after 8:00 p.m.

Promote your farm. It may seem a bit overdone these days but nothing will make your farmer more proud than seeing the name of the farm on your menu. You will also send a clear message to your guests about your commitment to buying local.

Think about quantity. The farm will not have an unlimited supply of broccoli, beef, beans, or bok choy. Ordering 25 pounds of basil or 100 pounds of tenderloin is most likely not going to work out.

Buy more. In order to really take advantage of the farm relationship you'll need to demonstrate your loyalty by making regular purchases. Procuring only one ingredient is a good first step that can quickly turn into a half hearted public relations scam without any follow through. Keep making purchases after the first frost. Many farms cellar thousands of pounds of squash, onions, and potatoes that you can use throughout the winter.



Build trust. Develop long term relationships with farmers by understanding their supply limitations, paying on time, ordering regularly, solving distribution issues, and being sympathetic to the struggles of working with the land. Then you may have the opportunity to sip a cup of coffee together and plot what to plant in the spring.



*Christopher Prosperi is chef and co-owner of [Metro Bis](#) restaurant in Simsbury, which is the highest-ranked restaurant in the state for American food according to the [Zagat Survey](#). He is a weekly recipe columnist for the Hartford Courant, a regular bi-weekly guest on the local NBC affiliate, and has also appeared throughout the country on radio and television programs.*

*Christopher graduated second in his class at the [Culinary Institute of America](#) and has an expanding product line under the "Prosperi" label that currently includes three salad dressings.*

## CT Grown Winter Shopping

Shopping for CT Grown in the winter becomes more challenging, but it is not impossible!

Below is a list of some holiday and winter farmers' markets and farm stores featuring lots of great CT Grown products.

### Holiday Farmers' Market Dates and Locations:

Darien Farmers' Market Wednesdays through 12/19/07 Saturday 12/15/07 (one day only) Mechanic Street, behind the firehouse	11:00 AM to 5:00 PM 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Greenwich Farmers' Market Saturdays through 12/22/07 Commuter Parking Lot at Arch and Horseneck Streets	9:30 AM to 1:00 PM
New Haven Wooster Square Farmers' Market Saturdays through 12/15/07 Russo Park, at corner of Chapel Street and DePalma Court	10:00AM to 1:00 PM
Sandy Hook Organic Farmers' Market Sunday 12/2/07 (one day only) In the undercroft of St. John's church on Washington Avenue	11:00 AM to 3:00 PM
West Hartford Farmers' Market Saturdays through 12/22/07 LaSalle Road public parking lot, across from the post office	10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

### Winter/Early Spring Farmers' Market Dates and Locations:

Westport/Fairfield Indoor Winter Farmers' Market Saturdays 1/13/08 through 4/28/08 Fairfield Theater Company, 70 Sanford Street (downtown and adjacent to the train station),	10:00 AM to 1:00 PM
New Haven Wooster Square Farmers' Market Third Saturday of month (1/19/08, 2/16/08, 3/15/08, and 4/19/08) Russo Park, at corner of Chapel Street and DePalma Court	10:00AM to 1:00 PM

### Year-Round Farm Stands/Stores:

Lyman Orchards Apple Barrel Middlefield, CT	Daily 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM 860-349-1793
Holmberg Orchards Farm Store Gales Ferry, CT	Daily 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM 860-464-7305
Bishop's Orchards Farm Market Guilford, CT	Daily 203 453-2338
Rogers Orchard Southington, CT	Daily Late July through Mid May (860)229-4240

## CT Honey Bee Update

### Colony Collapse Disorder and Honey Bees in Connecticut

By Dr. Kirby C. Stafford III and Dr. Kimberly A. Stoner, The CT Agricultural Experiment Station, Dept. of Entomology

Honey bees pollinate more than 100 commercially grown crops in North America with a value of \$14 billion as well as plants in an uncounted number of backyard gardens. Blueberries, cranberries, apples, pears, plums, strawberries, raspberries, rapeseed, and various cucurbits (i.e., squash, muskmelon, watermelon, and pumpkins) are some of the plants/crops in the northeast pollinated primarily by honey bees or for which these insects play an important role. In Connecticut, for example, there were 2,200 acres of apple orchards with a utilized production value of \$5,670,000 and 1,000 tons of pears produced with a value of \$952,000 in 2005, both pollinated largely by honey bees. Connecticut's beekeepers currently meet the pollination needs of our farmers and many gardeners. Foraging bees can fly a mile or more from the hive. Most beekeepers in Connecticut are hobbyists; roughly 85% have less than 5 hives and only a few have several hundred. At this time, there are 3,542 honey bee colonies belonging to 472 beekeepers registered with the Office of the State Entomologist at The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES). The State bee inspector, Ira Kettle, examines honey bee colonies for disease, and we assist registered beekeepers with questions and concerns facing the industry.

Fortunately, Connecticut's honey bee colonies are relatively healthy this year. Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) became a national issue in late 2006 and 2007 with a serious die-off of honey bees. The cause(s) remains unknown, although there are number of suspects. Most recently, the Israeli Acute Paralysis virus (IAPV) of honey bees has been strongly linked with CCD. However, it is unclear if the virus may cause CCD or simply is one of the risk factors for the occurrence of CCD in susceptible honey bees. While CCD has been reported from at least 24 states, no cases have been confirmed in Connecticut. Heavy losses with CCD were associated mainly with larger migratory commercial beekeepers, some of whom lost 50-90% of their colonies. These beekeepers may place heavy stress on their honey bees and expose them to more pathogens and pesticides – all possible CCD risk factors - because of extensive travel across the country to meet pollination needs. While CCD has become the focus of the public, including our own beekeepers, a number of problems that predate CCD, such as parasitic mites, foulbrood disease, pesticides, and stress, have already severely impacted the industry and are among the suspected factors contributing to CCD. The number of hives nationally has declined by 39% from 1981 to the present. These losses were primarily due to the widely distributed Varroa mite, *Varroa destructor*, which reached Connecticut in 1991, and have occurred despite the industry's heavy reliance on pesticides to control mite populations. The mite feeds on honey bee workers and pupae. Because Varroa mites may transmit viral pathogens and reduce the immunity of honey bees to pathogens, they are strongly suspected as a factor contributing to CCD, although they clearly are not the direct cause. There is also evidence that the miticides used against Varroa mites are accumulating in the wax in the hive, and that these pesticides are affecting bee health.

Drs. Kimberly Stoner and Brian Eitzer at CAES are examining honey bee exposure to pesticides, which remains poorly documented in the United States. Several of the plant systemic neonicotinoid insecticides, including imidacloprid, are highly toxic to honey bees. Some of the pesticides found in bee pollen collected from four monitoring hives in 2007 include coumaphos (used for Varroa mite control), carbaryl, atrazine, chlorpyrifos, myclobutanil, imidacloprid, and fenhexamid at levels ranging from less than 1 part per billion (ppb) to several hundred ppb. The significance of these levels of pesticides remains unclear.

While our honey bees are relatively healthy, our beekeepers must contend with disease, mites, the use of pesticides, and the possibility of CCD, among other issues. New research programs here at CAES, with the cooperation of members of the Connecticut Beekeepers Association, the Backyard Beekeepers Association, and the Eastern Connecticut Beekeepers Association, will help ensure that beekeeping remains an important part of Connecticut agriculture.

For more information, refer to the [CT Agricultural Experiment Station website](#) or call (203) 974-8500 (New Haven) or (877) 855-2237 toll-free (statewide).

## Q+A with Chef Steve Mannino

*Q: I want to substitute locally produced honey and maple syrup for the processed sugar in my baking recipes. How should I compensate for the change in ratio of dry to liquid ingredients?*

A: We get this question all the time from both restaurant and spa guests.

The scale below can be transferred to nearly any recipe. It is based on weight, thus a simple 1:1 ration does no good when making these substitutions.

Moisture is also a concern. Honey and maple syrup will add moisture to any recipe and can ruin the texture of the product. You may need to reevaluate cooking times accordingly. Additionally, honey will brown more quickly, potentially confusing you into thinking your product is done, when perhaps it should go a bit longer. To the opposite, brown sugar attracts moisture, which will keep food moist longer.

Lastly, there is taste. Personal preference is key when making your recipe changes; honey, brown sugar, maple syrup and molasses are all unique when examined closely, with molasses producing the strongest flavor. You'll have to decide which fits your product best.

In spite of their difference in weight, you can substitute **brown sugar for granulated white** on a 1 to 1 basis, and the most significant difference will be taste.

Substitute **white sugar for brown sugar** on a 1 to 1 basis, but add 4 tablespoons of molasses per cup, and decrease the total amount of liquid in the recipe by 3 tablespoons.

To use **honey in place of sugar**, use 7/8 cup for every cup of sugar, and reduce the liquid in the recipe by 3 tablespoons.

To use **sugar in place of honey**, use 1-1/4 cups of sugar plus 1/4 cup more liquid.

To use **maple syrup in place of sugar** in cooking, use 3/4 cup for every 1 cup of sugar.

To use **maple syrup in place of a cup of sugar** in baking, use 3/4 cup, but decrease the total amount of liquid in the recipe by about 3 tablespoons for each cup of syrup you use

To use **sugar in place of a cup of maple syrup**, use 1-1/4 cups of sugar plus 1/4 cup more liquid.

Finally, granulated sugar has 46 calories per tablespoon, brown sugar has 50, maple syrup has 53, and honey tops them all with 64.

*Q: Can you explain the different colors/grades of maple syrup and best uses for each?*

A: Grading of syrup is done by the FDA and individual states simply to denote the various qualities of the syrup and the resulting flavors. Keep in mind that you are the ultimate critic as to what is best and which fits best into your recipe.

**Grade A Light Amber:** a very light and mild syrup with a delicate maple flavor. This grade is generally found earlier in the season when the weather is colder and tends to be the better syrup for making maple cream and candy.

**Grade A Medium Amber:** compared to Light Amber, it is bit darker and has a bit more maple flavor. This is the most common form of table syrup and is usually produced mid-season.

**Grade A Dark Amber:** compared to Medium Amber, it is a bit darker and has a stronger maple flavor.

**Grade B:** this syrup is very dark and has a very strong maple flavor. It is sometimes referred to as cooking syrup because of its strong, almost caramel like flavor which is well suited to cooking, baking and flavoring.



*Executive Chef Steve Mannino draws on his broad experience to bring a mastery of classic techniques and an eye for culinary innovation to the [Mayflower Inn](#) in Washington. Mannino's immediate focus there has been the implementation of local food to an intuitively seasonal menu.*

*Mannino is striving to bring a truly Connecticut experience to diners and Inn guests by focusing on the quality food available from around the corner, including Averill, Waldingfield, and Gray Ledge Farms.*

*Steve has received numerous culinary accolades and recognition throughout his career. He has received critical acclaim from Food & Wine (Best New Restaurant 2000), Gourmet, Food Arts, Washingtonian, The Washington Post, and Bon Appétit, among others.*

**If you have a question for Chef Steve, email it to [Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov](mailto:Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov). Answers will be published as space allows in upcoming issues of the FTC newsletter.**



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**Farm-to-Chef** is a free program that helps connect local culinary professionals with producers and distributors of CT Grown products. Informational newsletters, workshops, networking, promotions and other opportunities are provided to members as part of the program.

The program also helps the public locate restaurants and other dining facilities that serve CT Grown foods.

Farmers, wholesalers, chefs, and other food service professionals are encouraged to join. Please contact Linda at the [CT Department of Agriculture](http://www.CTGrown.gov), [Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov](mailto:Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov) or 860-713-2558, for more information.

## Announcements and Events

*Announcements of 40 words or less are published as a service to Farm-to-Chef Program members. Please email them to [Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov](mailto:Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov). Announcements are NOT intended as endorsements by the CT Department of Agriculture or the Farm-to-Chef Program. We reserve the right to edit or decline any posting for any reason.*



### Green Planet Market For Sale

Large Litchfield County store features commercial kitchen, walk-in cooler and freezer, deli, café, retail areas. Huge kitchen is highest commercial grade and big enough for catering and production baking. See online [listing](#) for complete info/photos.

### Fiddleheads Natural Food Coop

will be holding informational sessions throughout New London County in December: 12/3/07 in East Lyme; 12/6/07 in Waterford, 12/10/07 in Westerly, 12/12/07 in Groton, and 12/17/07 in Mystic. Everyone invited. See [www.FiddleheadsFood.Coop](http://www.FiddleheadsFood.Coop) for more info.

### Meadow Stone Farm in Brooklyn

has a variety of high-quality specialty cheeses available. Included are triple-crème petite bries and some very unusual wood-wrapped cheeses similar to Vacherin d'Or but made from mixed milks. Contact Kris at 860-617-2982 or [info@meadowstonefarm.com](mailto:info@meadowstonefarm.com).

### A "Greens Can Save Your Life"

seminar will be held 12/13/07 at 6:00 PM in Norwalk featuring Valerie and Valya Boutenko of [Raw Family](#), green smoothies, samples, cutting-edge info on raw foods. \$15, preregistration only: Glen Colello 203-521-7648, [catchahealthyhabit@yahoo.com](mailto:catchahealthyhabit@yahoo.com) or [www.catchahealthyhabit.com](http://www.catchahealthyhabit.com)

### White Flower Farm in Litchfield

now offers beef and lamb in nearly all cuts, including ground meat, vacuum-packed and frozen, ground meat in 1-lb packages. Will deliver significant orders within a 50-mile radius. For more info, see [website](#).

### Farm-to-Chef Annual Meeting

The FTC Program is in the process of organizing an annual meeting in February to bring together chefs, farmers, and other members this winter. Date and location will be announced soon.

### FTC 2008 Chefs' Workshop

A very exciting chefs' workshop is being planned for next summer. The 2008 workshop will feature a new location and activities. There is even a rumor that attendees will have an opportunity to go out on a shellfish boat. More info to come.

### Farm-to-Chef Survey

Have you taken the [FTC chefs' survey](#) yet? If not, please take a few minutes to answer the 10 questions. Your input will help make FTC work better for you!

## In the Media

Chef **Claire Criscuolo** of [Claire's Corner Copia](#) in New Haven appeared 12/5/07 on [WTNH 8 TV's News at Noon](#) to discuss the tradition of latkes at Chanukah and to demonstrate how to make them using organic sweet and white potatoes. [Watch the video](#).

**Jason Collin**, Executive Chef at [Firebox](#) in Hartford, appeared on [WVIT 30 TV's News at 11:00 AM](#) 11/8/07 and made Beef Shortribs Braised in Cider, using beef from [Four Mile River Farm](#) in Old Lyme and vegetables from [Holcomb Farm](#) in Granby. Get the [recipe and video](#).

Chef **Tim Cipriano**, Food Service Director for Bloomfield Public Schools and aka [Local Food Dude](#), appeared on [Afternoons with Colin McEnroe](#) on [WTIC 1080 AM](#) 11/29/07. The interview can be heard on the program's [audio page](#) (scroll down on the left side of the page to find it). Chef Tim also was featured recently in [The Hartford Courant](#). [Read the article](#).

Farmer **Nunzio Corsino** of [Four Mile River Farm](#) in Lyme, will be Colin McEnroe's radio guest **TODAY** 12/7/07 at **3:30PM**. It will be broadcast live from the [Salvation Army Store](#) at the Homewood Suites by Hilton, 65 Glastonbury Blvd., Glastonbury, and **all are welcome!** Nunzio also will play "[Win Those Tweezers](#)" while on the show. If you can't come out or [listen live](#), check the [audio page](#) for the podcast afterwards.