



CT Department of Agriculture

Briefs

NOW IN SEASON

It is harvest season! CT Grown **apples, eggplant, melons, pears, peppers, pumpkins,** and **winter squash** abound. See list at right for products currently available and check out our online [CT Grown Crop Availability Calendar](#) for an at-a-glance display of CT Grown produce seasonality.

SUMMER WORKSHOP FOLLOW-UP

If you attended the 8/6/08 Farm-to-Chef Summer Workshop and have not yet taken the follow-up survey, please [take it now](#). For a sampling of attendee feedback, please see Page 4.

FAIR SEASON BEGINS

Agricultural fair season is upon us! For a listing of fairs around the state this fall, please go to www.CTFairs.org.

SBA DISASTER LOANS AVAILABLE

As a result of storms that occurred on June 16, 2008, federal economic injury disaster loans are being offered to small businesses, agricultural cooperatives, and private non-profit organizations in Fairfield and Litchfield Counties. For more information, call 800-659-2955 or visit the [Small Business Administration's website](#).

CT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE GRANTS

November 14, 2008 is the deadline for the next round of annual [Farm Transition Grant](#) and [Farm Viability Grant for Municipalities](#) Programs. For more information, call Ron Olsen at 860-713-2550 or visit the [Agricultural Viability Grants page](#) of the CT Department of Agriculture's [website](#).

CONTRIBUTORS NEEDED

Contributors are always needed for this newsletter. This is your forum! Do you have a story to share? Lessons learned? Specific expertise? Please contact Linda Piotrowicz by [email](#) or at 860-713-2558.

September 2008

CT Grown in Season SEPTEMBER

Apples Beans Beets
Broccoli Cabbage Cantaloupe
Carrots Cauliflower Collards
Corn Cucumbers Dairy
Eggplant Eggs Fin Fish
Garlic Greens Herbs
Honey Kohlrabi Leeks Lettuce
Lobster Meat Melons
Mushrooms Nectarines
Onions Peaches Pears
Peppers Plums Potatoes
Radishes Raspberries
Scallops Shellfish Specialty
Foods Summer Squash
Tomatoes Turnips
Winter Squash

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



Contact Us

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I Have the Perfect Job (The Story of CT Farm Fresh Express)

By Deb Marsden, [CT Farm Fresh Express](#)



For many years I have been searching for some meaning to my life. I guess that's common when you reach the halfway point, the "fifty-somethings." I have worn many hats throughout my life: wife, mother, nana, wall-paper hanger, catering worker, bartender, graphic designer, and now I deliver farm-fresh products to homes and restaurants in Connecticut.

I have always been passionate about fresh organic food, the environment, and the fear of losing our local farms to urban sprawl. Growing up in Connecticut, I've watched vast farmland slowly turn into housing developments. Even as a child, my mom always went to farms to purchase their fresh vegetables throughout the summer. Where will our vegetables come from if the farms keep disappearing? From the other side of our country?

I was a CSA member for several years. It was a great experience - I supported a local farm and got great-tasting food every week. At times it was a bit difficult to get there in time to pick up my share, but I felt it was worth the trouble.

Then one day while listening to a podcast from *Living Green: Effortless Ecology for Everyday People*, hosted by Merideth Medland, I heard a woman from California who started a company called Sprout About. She delivered baskets of fruits and vegetables from local farms in her area, similar to a CSA. I thought that was a great idea, but I decided to take it a step farther by going to many farms, therefore providing a larger variety of food choices.

So began CT Farm Fresh Express (CTFFE).

I really learned as I went along. To start, I called or wrote letters to all the farms on the NOFA website. I was really happy when they responded so positively about what I wanted to do. Most were happy that their products would be getting to people's tables without a lot of effort on the farmers part. Our customers enjoy the variety and convenience of home delivery.

The process is simple: I contact the farms over the weekend, they let me know what will be available for the next week, I put the list together, and then send it out to my contacts via email. Customers respond and I place my order with the farmers. A few days later I pick up the produce and deliver it to my clients' doors.

The media has helped our business become popular by their reporting of the *E. Coli* scare, hormone-injected animals, the health benefits of eating locally, and the impact of long-distance travel on the environment. The only problem that I am seeing is that we don't have enough farms producing enough food for all this popularity. Next year when our farmers plan out their crops, maybe they will plant more to compensate for this new demand we have for locally grown produce.

The Farm-to-Chef Program is a fantastic idea. We all enjoy going out and having someone else cook for us. What better words to hear at the end of a hard day than, "Let's go out to eat!" Until I started CTFFE I was unaware of how many restaurants served local fare.

Jonathan Rapp from the River Tavern introduced me to the Farm-to-Chef Program. My husband and I were having lunch at his restaurant when I first met Jon. He asked me if I would be interested in delivering to the restaurant. Up to that point I was only servicing home delivery, but the idea sounded intriguing. So our relationship started. I am now helping him with the restaurant and his Dinners at the Farm program. We are also involved with Restaurant Du Village, Saybrook Point Inn, and several of the Max Restaurants.

(continued on next page)

Members in the News

The unusual produce of farmer Wayne Hansen from Wayne's Organic Garden in Oneco is profiled by [Hartford Courant](#) writer Steve Grant's in his story on unusual produce varieties and other products available at CT Grown farmers' markets. Read the [online article](#) and view the [photo gallery](#).

Mary Beth Draghi from Littel Acres Farm in Glastonbury appeared on [WTIC 1080 AM's Afternoon Drive](#) show with host Colin McEnroe on 8/22/08 to discuss heirloom tomatoes and play Win Those Tweezers. See [photos](#) from the show.

Members Katherine Dyer, [Ox Hollow Farm](#), [Boxcar Cantina](#), and Westport Aquaculture were featured in a story about Fairfield County farmers' markets in the 8/21/08 issue of the [Westport Minuteman](#). Read the [article](#).

Chefs Jason Collin and Matt Brodeur of [Firebox Restaurant](#) in Hartford were featured in the 08/21/08 issue of the [Hartford Courant](#). Read the [article](#) and watch the [online video](#).

Diane Miller of [Fairvue Farm](#) in Woodstock, member of [The Farmer's Cow](#), was quoted in the [Norwich Bulletin's](#) 8/26/08 story about the town of Woodstock's consideration of tax incentives for farmers. Read the [article](#).

Chef Carlos Cassar and the Terra Mar Grille at the [Saybrook Point Inn and Spa](#) were acclaimed in the August issue of Connecticut Magazine. Look for the review to be posted soon on writer Elise Maclay's [restaurant review page](#).

Patti Popp and her [Sport Hill Farm](#) in Easton are the subjects of a Connecticut Post article and video about community supported agriculture (CSA). [Check it out](#).

Sport Hill Farm and Marble Valley Farm in Kent are included in a New York Times [sidebar](#) to the 8/24/08 story about community supported agriculture. [Read it](#).

Chefs Jonathan Rapp and Drew McLachlan impressed writer/talk show host Colin McEnroe with their [Dinners at the Farm](#) event at [White Gate Farm](#) in East Lyme on 8/16/08. Read Colin's [blog post](#) about the dinner, and see the [photos](#) by Michelle Paulson.

Bryan Woods from [Eagle Wood Farms](#) in Barkhamsted was among those quoted in the [Hartford Courant's](#) 8/17/08 article about the increasing cost of production. Read the [story](#) and watch the [video](#).

I Have the Perfect Job (continued)

It's really a lot of fun and I love my job. The best part for me is going though this beautiful state we live in. I enjoy seeing the farmers, watching a baby goat grow up, or seeing the vegetables sprouting through the rich dark earth. Occasionally a wild turkey with her chicks trailing behind will cross the road in front of me. I get to breathe in the fresh clean air of the seashore as I pick up fish from Stonington. I have met so many wonderful people along the way, like-minded souls who are concerned about what they are eating and feeding their families.

I'm happy to bring farm-fresh products to the restaurants and homes of Connecticut. It's a perfect job for me.

Member Feedback

Below is a sampling of feedback provided by 2008 FTC Summer Workshop attendees through the online survey. Where appropriate, the FTC Program has provided responses.

Some things were repetitious but overall a great experience and education. People were great, food was great, and the information bountiful. I am sure glad the rain cleared up. There was one speaker who only whined, but I can not remember which one.

This is the third seafood workshop I have attended. The content is good, but since I have been through it all before it was pretty repetitive.

We are planning next year's summer workshop around a different CT Grown topic. Survey responses have indicated a strong interest in both produce and meats.

More hands-on would have been interesting, i.e. tasting and sampling product. I understand that the heavy rain caused some delays, but a more punctual start and tighter time line would be appreciated. It seemed that most people left after/during the lunch break to head back to work.

Overall the event was very informative. It is just frustrating that we are unable to easily purchase CT Seafood products.

Would like to double up day like 2007 and go to farm or artisanal producer of some sort after morning session overall program is very interesting and a great learning experience.

Past years have shown that many attendees are unable to devote an entire day to the workshop and need to leave to go back to work after the morning session. Next year's summer workshop will feature a different CT Grown topic and we will incorporate as much information as possible in the time allowed.

I thought the program was very informative and has re-ignited a desire for local stuff to serve at my restaurant. Keep this kind of thing going. Speaking to a lot of my peers at the event, it seems distribution is a huge factor in (not) getting local stuff on our menus, and it seems to be lacking as much in the fish industry as in the produce/farm industry. I would love to see CT DoAG help with distribution... maybe subsidizing something like CT Farm Fresh Express, or helping farms keep up-to-date product availability, on a central data base.... or, or. Lunch was great!

While a database of this type would be a tremendous resource, it would be extremely costly and labor-intensive to build and maintain. Unfortunately the CT Department of Agriculture currently does not have the resources or staff necessary for an undertaking of this sort.

The CT Department of Agriculture works with a variety of independently operated distribution companies to help source CT Grown products. The Department does not subsidize any individual companies or businesses of any type.

FTC Members of Tomorrow

New Milford Hospital's Plow to Plate™ Initiative: Youth in the Kitchen

The New Milford Youth Agency and Plow to Plate's Co-ordinating Chef Anne Gallagher and Medical Advisor Diane D'Isidori, MD, assisted by Chef Carol Byer-Alcorace of New Morning Natural and Organic, are teaching young people about the connection between local foods and health through a special program.

Participating middle and high school students go on field trips to harvest foods at local farms and fishing docks, then go into the kitchen to learn the culinary skills to prepare these foods, and serve them to family and friends.

Funded by The Harcourt Foundation, the Hauser Foundation, Webster Bank, The Long Foundation and the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, with strong support by New Milford Mayor Patricia Murphy, this 10-month program will create a strong "corps" of youth educators and advocates who will then offer "learning experiences" to other community agencies, like schools and senior centers.

Dr. D'Isidori said, "When children learn at an early age to choose and prepare healthy foods, they are more likely to avoid the growing trend of young Americans who are obese and sedentary. Our programming gets children out into the farm environment so they understand food sources and can learn to eat well throughout life."

Photos at right, from top:

- *Chef Anne Gallagher teaching knife skills*
- *Youth group at work in kitchen*
- *Students preparing spring pasta with Dr. D'Isidori*
- *Youth group proudly posing with Mayor Murphy*



Happenings

THE BIG E

The fair runs in West Springfield, MA, September 12 through September 28. Several FTC members will perform culinary demonstration in the Harvest New England Kitchen Theater.

New this year is the Artisan Cheese competition, open to cheese makers from around New England. Winners will be on display in the Harvest New England Kitchen.

The Connecticut Building will feature local agricultural organizations and producers, including a CT Grown farmers' market on the front lawn on Friday, September 26th. Connecticut Day is Wednesday, September 17th, and will include a state-themed parade.

For more info go to www.TheBigE.com.

OXFORD MADE IN CT FAIR

CT Grown and CT Made products and vendors are sought for the second annual "Made In Connecticut" fair Sunday, October 5, 2008. The event will be held on the beautiful grounds of the Colonial Tavern in Oxford.

For an application, questions, or more information, please contact event chairperson Jane Maher at snootyfood2@att.net or 203-231-5109.

From the Farm



A friendly cow says hello at Fish Family Farm in Bolton



Heirloom tomatoes on display at Littel Acres Farm in Glastonbury



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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.CTDepartmentofAgriculture.com), Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov or 860-713-2558, for more information.