

Roots & Sprouts

News and Ideas from the Belmont Farmers' Market

spring 2008

www.belmontfarmersmarket.org



*Opening Thursday,
June 12th!*

**Thursday afternoons
2:00 to 6:30 pm**

**BELMONT CENTER
In the municipal parking lot
behind the Leonard St. stores
off Cross St. & Channing Rd.**

In this issue . . .

**A Down-to-Earth Belmont Eatery
Artisan Bread at the Market
Farmers' Markets - a Growing Trend
Recipe for Ciabatta**

*To everything there is a season. In this first issue of the 2008 season, **Roots & Sprouts**, a publication of the Belmont Farmers' Market Committee, we offer our profound thanks to our founding editor, Gale Pryor, for her two years of skilled and devoted service. She is now turning the reins over to Jane Sherwin, an experienced editor, writer and student of Belmont's history as a town of farms. She shares Gale's interest in writing about the food we eat, how and by whom it is produced, and our mission to support fresh, locally produced food and sustainable agriculture. We also want to thank the Town of Belmont for their continued support and are appreciative of being part of the Belmont Center business community.*

Look Who's in the Kitchen!

Interview with Joh Kokubo, Owner of Kitchen on Common

Joh Kokubo is a chef on a culinary mission. The chef owner of Kitchen on Common, one of Belmont's newest restaurants, opened his innovative restaurant at 442 Common Street in Cushing Square in September 2007. His idea was to create an alternative to luxurious but expensive fine dining and traditional take-out. The resulting restaurant is an exciting place to go to enjoy food farmed locally and prepared skillfully as a full dining experience. He also offers creative dishes that travel well, are made with fresh ingredients, and are a healthy and tasty way to enjoy a quick meal at home.

Joh's motto is "Fresh, local, comforting - good food with heart." "We take pride in offering high quality ingredients, prepared well, and offered at reasonable prices," he explains. To him high quality means as fresh as possible and as local as possible. He has been working with Gretta Anderson, owner of Belmont CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), to buy locally grown produce and has been able to use some produce from the winter CSA. This year Joh is hoping to develop connections with some other local producers, including a meat vendor. Many of his customers ask about the source of his fish and meat, and he feels it is important to be able to track the history and geography of the foods he provides.

One of Joh's strengths is his flexibility and willingness to adapt to his customers' needs. When he found that his customers seemed to wish to enjoy the atmosphere in the shop for longer than the 10-15 minutes they were waiting for their food to be prepared, he asked his mother Connie to help as a server so that he could offer both seating for 16 and take-out dining. He explains, "We want a neighborhood feel and we want people to become 'regulars.' Already there are people who are now more friends than merely customers, and it is these relationships that we want to nurture."

Joh is also flexible in working with his producers. When Gretta Anderson asked if he'd like her to grow something specifically for Kitchen on Common, his response was, "Send me what's best!" He trusts that local farmers will know what grows well in this area and wants to remain flexible enough to modify his menu to incorporate seasonally shifting ingredients.

In October, Joh and Gretta combined forces to offer a fall produce tasting event for Belmont CSA shareholders and their guests. The tasting menu was an opportunity to introduce shareholders to some vegetables they were less familiar with such as escarole, kohlrabi, and celeriac. Joh's creativity

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Beautiful Breads

B & R Artisan Bread – a new vendor at the market

Shoppers will welcome the opening of the Belmont Farmers' Market (BFM) on June 12th with the debut of a new bakery, B & R Artisan Bread, bakers of organic, hand-made breads and pastries. Owner Michael Rhoads was formerly the baker at the Boston-based restaurant, Sel de la Terre, before opening his own small bakery in Framingham two-and-a-half years ago. His breads are made the old-fashioned way, starting fresh cultures every day to create his levain loaves. He says that it takes 36 hours to build the culture. Named for the leavener he uses instead of yeast, levain is a leavener similar to sourdough, a mixture of flour and water that he feeds periodically with whole wheat flour. The bread is made with the best ingredients he can acquire, which means King Arthur flour and Cabot butter, as well as organic specialty grains from Champlain Valley Mills.

The process, from feeding the starter with whole grain flours to the final baking, is "a true labor of love that requires a lot of teamwork," Rhoads says. He and his team produce the levain loaves as well as baguettes, ciabatta, multigrain wheat and dark rye. He feels that the final product reflects the quality of his ingredients, as well as the care and attention to detail that goes into the process. Working in small batches also allows him to craft breads that enhance the flavor of the particular grains.

Rhoads apprenticed with Alan Scott at Ovenscrafters in California and studied at the New England Culinary Institute. He is passionate about the craft of bread making, and enjoys honing his skills by participating in the Bread Bakers Guild of America's triennial contest to represent the US in the Coupe du Monde de la Boulangerie, the Olympics of bread baking, held every three years in France. In 2005 Rhoads was a national finalist.

Rhoads is looking forward to being part of the BFM. Just as he prefers buying his ingredients from small local vendors, he also likes knowing the other vendors at the market and what they are bringing each week. He sees his breads as complementing the products that the farmers are bringing, and likes to suggest breads to go with vegetables or cheeses his customers are buying. He sees the BFM as a vital part of the community, connecting people to the source of their food, and feels that his artisan bread can only enhance the other products available. So fill your basket with the freshest local fruits, vegetables, cheeses and meats, and round out your meal with a memorable loaf of healthy B & R Artisan Bread!

– Suzanne Johannel

The Farmers' Market Needs You!

It's a marketplace; it's a meeting place; it's a happening place – and it's fast becoming a Town tradition.

The Farmers' Market begins its third season on Thursday, June 12th, and the Farmers' Market Committee looks forward to an excellent year. We need you to participate. Shop the market by all means. But also - volunteer to help at the Market on Thursdays and/or behind the scenes at other tasks.

Once again, we seek performers for Market days. Kids of all ages are invited to appear.



In the past two seasons, the music of talented young Belmont students filling the

air has added to the festive atmosphere on Thursdays.

What can you do to help? Get involved. Email belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com, and join the fun.

–Belmont Farmers Market Committee



www.belmontfarmersmarket.org

Belmont Farmers' Market Committee and Volunteers


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2008 Vendors

- **B & R Artisan Bread** handcrafted loaves made with natural ingredients
- **Codman Farm** eggs, pasture-raised meat, corn, and pumpkins
- **Coutts Specialty Foods** jams, jellies, applesauce, relishes
- **Crystal Brook Farm** a variety of fresh goat cheeses
- **Dick's Market Garden Farm** produce
- **The Farm School** certified organic vegetables, fruits, flowers, soap, grass-fed meat
- **Fiore di Nonno Cheese** handcrafted fresh mozzarella
- **Hmong Farms at Flats Mentor Farm** fresh produce featuring Asian vegetables
- **Herb Lyceum** herbs – and herbs in sauces, cookies, cakes, soaps and more
- **Hutchins Farm** certified organic plants, vegetables, herbs, small fruit and apples
- **Kimball Fruit Farm** vegetables, fruit, pies, honey
- **Merrimack Valley Apiary** many varieties of honey
- **Nicewicz Family Farm** apples, peaches, plums, berries, vegetables, flowers
- **NorthStar Farm** perennial plants and cheeses made in Westport, MA
- **PetsiPies** sweet and savory pies and other treats
- **Shootflying Hill Sauce Co.** dessert sauces
- **Stillman's at the Turkey Farm** grass-fed meat
- **Thoreau Foods** organic cereals, toppings, smoothie boosters
- **Underwood Greenhouse** potted plants grown in Belmont
- **Waverley Place** flowers, herbs and perennials grown in Waltham



Food For Thought

Residents share their passion for fresh food, farmers' markets, and good living

Local community farmers' markets seem almost inevitable today, certainly more than they did in 2004 when discussions began about having one in Belmont. In our planning meetings then, we linked farmers' markets to good health, a predominant theme that included a desire for eating healthful food and leading active lives. News stories about e-coli outbreaks, slaughterhouse conditions, and pesticides raised questions. Thus, we wanted to know more about the origins of our food and how it was grown.

We also wanted to promote Belmont's one remaining farm, highlight our Town's farming heritage (realizing a sesquicentennial was coming up soon), and help slow the loss of New England family farms. Our concerns were for the environment as much as about food quality. During these past few years, we have become increasingly aware that agriculture is an important part of a global economic network interwoven with energy and fuel factors. More than ever now, with rising food costs added to mounting source and environmental questions—and the old fact that fresh produce usually tastes and is nutritionally better—consumers seek out and support local food production. Home gardens, victory gardens, CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), supermarkets selling and restaurants featuring local produce, *and* farmers' markets are all growing in number. In fact, last year the New Oxford American Dictionary selected "locavore" as its word of the year, reflecting this increasing emphasis on what is grown or made nearby.

Local describes much of what farmers' markets are all about! USDA statistics show that nationally the number of farmers' markets almost doubled in a decade from 2,410 in 1996 to 4,385 in 2006. In Massachusetts, 115 markets operated in 2007. Eleven known communities wish to start markets this year. According to the State's Department of Agricultural Resources,

their biggest challenge is finding available farmers. BFM is part of a growing trend, and is fortunate to have farmer vendors who will return for their third season this year.

For many shoppers, farmers' markets also are all about establishing caring, trusting relationships with the providers of the food they eat. At BFM, consumers regularly ask vendors about how something is grown, what pesticides have been applied, and what to do with some unfamiliar vegetable. Vendors expect such conversations and take pride in sharing their knowledge with shoppers. In fact, you might say, both vendors and shoppers grow and thrive on these exchanges!

A seasonal farmers' market is a shared, open place where people are free to come and go without the impedimenta of electric doors, shopping carts, or constricted aisles. Farmers' markets are a paradigm of accessibility, and as such, they foster a strong sense of community. You may be surprised to read that there are folks at the Belmont Market who are neither shoppers nor vendors! These market visitors come because they enjoy looking at what has grown on nearby farms in recent days and talking with vendors, or running into and chatting with friends and neighbors. The brief four-and-a-half hours that the BFM is open means that, invariably, regular shoppers become familiar faces not only to vendors (who refer to them as "our regulars"), but also to each other. Consider, for example, a recently overheard conversation in which one person said to another, "You look familiar." The reply, "You do, too," was followed by reconstructing the connection: a casual conversation had taken place while shopping at the Belmont Farmers' Market about how to cook celeriac!

Celeriac? If that's unfamiliar to you, come to the Market this season and find out what it—and much more—is all about!

—Heli Tomford, Coordinator
Belmont Farmers' Market Committee

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came into play as he turned these humble vegetables into lyrically-named featured items such as shaved kohlrabi with lemon-herb vinaigrette, celeriac and apple salad “bonne femme,” braised escarole and pork shoulder and warm salad of napa cabbage and radicchio with crumbled blue cheese and bacon.

Joh looks forward to hosting other events open to the public. These events can be an opportunity to collect recipes and advice from Joh, local farmers, and other participants. They can also be a great way to taste “new” foods and to meet neighbors. One idea that interests him is offering a neighborhood dinner night where customers

would sign up for a *prix fixe* dinner to share family style. It would be like a dinner party with really good food, but no preparation or clean up. (A food lover’s nirvana!)

From the beginning Joh has felt welcomed by the Town. Jeffrey Wheeler, Belmont’s Planning Coordinator, provided all the information and forms he needed to get started. Similarly, Stefan Russakow, Assistant Director of the Board of Health, not only gave him forms to fill out, but also offered recommendations for running a business in Belmont, acting more like a consultant than merely as a town official.

Joh comes to restaurant ownership with an impressive culinary background. He received

formal training at the French Culinary Institute in New York City. He has worked at the Franklin Café in Boston and Gloucester, and was sous-chef for Wellesley College and Harvard’s Crimson Catering. He grew up in Lexington, but came to Belmont because he saw it as a good location to open his own place.

Joh’s creativity and dedication to high quality food in a neighborhood environment shines through his menu. And with its warm green walls and simple wood tables, Kitchen on Common is a most welcome addition to Cushing Square and Belmont’s already fine group of restaurants.

– Christina Kimball

Basic Ciabatta - great for panini!

Ciabatta – which means “slipper” in Italian – refers to the shape of the loaf. It has as many variations as there are bakers. Michael Rhoads of B & R Artisan Bread provided the basic hand-mixed recipe, below, as well as an olive variation. Rhoads offers a third delicious variation at our market website: www.belmontfarmersmarket.org.

Pre-ferment:

6 oz. King Arthur all-purpose flour
6 oz. water
Pinch instant yeast

Mix the ingredients together by hand in a large mixing bowl using room temperature water (72 degrees) until it is the consistency of pancake batter. Scrape the sides of the bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Let the mixture proof for 8 to 10 hours.

Final dough:

12 oz. King Arthur all purpose flour
6-7 oz. water, at room temperature
1 tablespoon sea salt
½ teaspoon instant yeast

Add all the ingredients to the pre-ferment. Mix by hand for 2-4 minutes with a stiff wooden spoon or bowl scraper. Scrape down the sides of the container and cover with plastic wrap. Set a timer for 30 minutes.

While you wait, preheat the oven to 450 degrees, and place a large pizza stone in the middle rack of the oven. After 30 minutes, fold the dough onto itself by pulling the sides into the center of the bowl and then flipping the dough over. Repeat this step 3 more times. This action will help the dough develop. By the fourth fold, the dough will be fully developed.

Lightly flour a small tablecloth that is spread out on your counter top and turn the dough out. Lightly flour the top of the dough, and use a dough scraper to divide the dough into two even pieces. Let the dough rest lightly covered by the tablecloth for 30 minutes.

Use a peel (a flat, shovel-like tool used to move bread into an oven) to carefully transfer the loaves into the oven onto the pizza stone. Use a spray bottle to lightly mist the loaves. Bake at 450 degrees for 10 minutes, then lower the



temperature to 375 degrees to bake for an additional 15-20 minutes until the bread is dark golden brown.

Olive Variation:

5- 6 oz pitted Niçoise olives
1 tablespoon fresh chopped rosemary
½ tablespoon fresh chopped oregano
Zest of one lemon

After the dough is mixed, sprinkle the above ingredients on top. The ingredients will become incorporated when the dough is folded. When you turn the dough out onto the tablecloth, cut it into one-inch wide strips that are about the width of a sheet pan. Gently lay the strips onto a sheet pan with 2 to 3 inches between them. Cover and proof for 30 minutes. Bake at 450 degrees for 5 minutes. Turn the oven down to 375 degrees and bake for additional 10 to 15 minutes.