

Roots & Sprouts

News and ideas from the Belmont Farmers' Market

April 2006



We are delighted to announce the inauguration of the Belmont Farmers' Market, bringing seasonal produce, fresh eggs, and products from local vendors directly to our community. Each month during market season, we will publish our newsletter, *Roots & Sprouts: News and Ideas from the Belmont Farmers' Market*. In it we will feature stories about farmers you will meet at the market, healthy eating, and seasonal recipes, and the importance of supporting local farmers and sustainable agriculture. We welcome your contributions of ideas, stories, and suggestions for future editions of our newsletter at belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing you at the market.

Beginnings

How the Belmont Farmers' Market Came To Be

The Belmont Farmers' Market is the fruit of a seed planted two years ago, during a conversation about how to foster more walking and biking in our small, well-trafficked town. With the encouragement of State Representative Anne Paulsen, an informal group of citizens, calling itself "Belmont Walks/Bikes" (BW/B) began discussing ways in which we can reduce our reliance on cars to get to work, school, and shopping.

Those brainstorming sessions led to the idea that a summer farmers' market in Belmont would foster both healthier lifestyles and a stronger sense of community. Already patrons of established farmers' markets in Arlington and Cambridge, members agreed that the availability of seasonal, fresh produce grown locally with organic certification or low pesticide use would benefit our community. There was unanimous agreement to explore the possibility of establishing a market in Belmont.

Through the spring and summer of 2005, that seed grew into months of planning with volunteers, meetings with state agriculture and local town officials, with market organizers in other communities, and with Belmont business owners. Simultaneously,

historian and Belmont resident Jane Sherwin presented her project, "The Farm Where You Live," a look at Belmont's own history as a farming community. Her talk drew a large audience eager to learn about our past as a town of farms, long before Belmont became "The Town of Homes." The audience that evening was asked: "Would you shop at a farmers' market in Belmont, if there were one?" Nodding heads and "Yes!" in chorus fertilized our seed.

In the fall of 2005 the small BW/B group became The Belmont Farmers' Market Committee (BFMC). We visited nearby markets to approach farmers about adding Belmont to their market schedules. Enthusiastic responses from growers of produce, herbs and flowers, as well as gatherers of fish and oysters, honey and maple syrup encouraged us. A meeting with the staff at the Federation of Massachusetts Farmers' Markets (FMFM) led to a survey of residents to gauge support and shopping patterns. During the same period, a truly local agricultural issue came to the fore. Concern developed that the Richardson Farm, also known as Sergi's Farm, and Belmont's only working farm, might cease operations after the 2005 season. Perhaps, we thought, establishing a farmers' market in Belmont

Thursday afternoons
2:00 to 6:30pm

From June 15th to October 26th

Belmont Center
Cross Street municipal parking lot
Claflin Street entrance

www.belmontfarmersmarket.org
email:
belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com

Roots & Sprouts is a publication of the
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PO Box 387
Belmont, MA 02478

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Why Farmers' Markets Matter

Where did that Red Delicious apple you bought at the supermarket come from? New Hampshire? Washington State? In fact, that apple may well have been grown in China, now the world's largest apple producer, and shipped across the sea to be sold to you, right here in New England, the home of Johnny Appleseed.

The globalization of the food we eat can spin a complex web of developments affecting price, quality, and selection. Often, produce grown and shipped from another continent costs less than produce grown a few miles away. Not only are labor costs far lower in developing countries, environmental controls of pesticide use are also minimal. When we buy apples and other products grown right here in New England, we support the farmers who keep our countryside open and green, and protect ourselves from unknowable levels of unregulated pesticides.

Farmers' markets enable us to stand face to face with the farmer, or someone who works with the farmer who grew the food we are about

to eat. They give us the now rare opportunity to ask, "When was this apple picked?" and "Are these eggs from free-range chickens?" We can inform our farmers of our preferences: "I really loved that variety of lettuce you brought last spring. Could you grow it again?" And to say, "Thank you for the care you took in growing these apples and collecting these fresh eggs."

And when you buy your apple from a farmers' market, you set in motion a different web of interactions that counter the effects of globalization. Your apple has only traveled a short distance. It is fresher, and has required less fossil fuel to reach you. The cost of your apple helps to support a small farm that chooses to grow food with safe, sustainable methods. They treat their animals well, avoiding the overcrowded conditions that create stress and disease. These farmers know that when we respect and care for the land and its animals, we increase the health of our food and environment.

--BFMC

What's Fresh?

*In June . . . Look for these seasonal crops
at the Belmont Farmers' Market:*

*arugula
asparagus
escarole
flowers
green onions
honey
kale
lettuces
(butterhead, frisee, leaf, romaine, cos)
herbs
radishes
raspberries
rhubarb
spinach
sugarsnap peas
strawberries
baby summer squash*

*Also coming to the Belmont Farmers'
Market this spring:*

*goat cheese, potted plants, fresh eggs,
pestos, spreads and sauces, breads, pies
and jams, and more.*

*For more information on farmers' markets and sustainable agriculture,
see these links:*

LocalHarvest - <http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/>
LocalHarvest maintains a nationwide directory of small farms, farmers' markets, and other local food sources.

The Massachusetts Department of Agriculture

<http://www.mass.gov/agr>

The MDA provides technical assistance to individuals and groups trying to start a farmers' market, helps farmers find appropriate farmers' markets to participate in, and encourages consumers to patronize farmers' markets through the publication of consumer listings, news releases, and other promotional activities.

The Federation of Mass. Farmers' Markets

<http://www.massfarmersmarkets.org/>

FMFM is a public, non-profit, charitable service organization dedicated to the needs of farmers, consumers, and communities. FMFM holds weekly Farmers' Markets in many local neighborhoods.

New England Small Farm Institute - <http://www.smallfarm.org/>

NESFI is a non-profit organization, founded to encourage more sustainable regional agriculture and promote small farm development by providing information and training for aspiring, beginning and transitioning farmers. They maintain an extensive resource collection.

Northeast Organic Farming Association - <http://www.nofa.org/>

NOFA is a non-profit organization of 4,000 farmers, gardeners and consumers working to promote healthy food, organic farming practices, and a cleaner environment.

Project for Public Spaces - <http://www.pps.org/>

PPS is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and sustaining public places that build communities, including advocacy for public markets.

Food for Thought

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

Whenever I travel to another city or another country, I always look for the local food market. They always are a pleasure, and a wonderful way to get to know the local food and customs.

When you visit a market, especially on a market day, you will usually find a very busy place with a multitude of produce, fish, meat, flowers, plants, and many, many more items. I remember several markets throughout Mexico that are so colorful, so full of wonderful fruits and flowers, unusual foods and wonderful people that I just want to go back again and again. And I do whenever I can.

I remember a small town in the south of France. We were lucky and arrived on market day. The market filled the entire downtown area. We saw fruits, vegetables we did not recognize, great cheeses, meat, bread and so many other wonderful foods. We were hungry so we shopped around and later sat on the footsteps of the church to prepare and eat our lunch. As we ate, we watched other people do

their shopping. In other words, we had food and entertainment at the same time. If you ask me, this is my idea of a good time.

“Live each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influences of each.”

--Henry David Thoreau

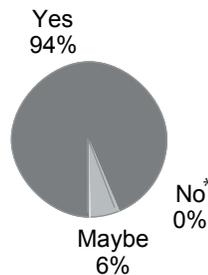
successful farmers' markets, and the numbers increase yearly. This summer you can add Belmont to list of fortunate communities with a farmers' market.

A wonderful farmers' market does not have to be big or famous. As long as it has local produce, local artisans and the support of the community, you have all the ingredients for a successful market, and your visit will provide the needed support for their growth. Even if you do not buy anything, you can still enjoy the atmosphere, the colors, the smells of summer, the friendly banter. Chances are good that you will like what you will see and will return for more.

--Andres Aguirre

Belmont said “YES!”

when asked, “Would you shop at a Belmont farmers' market?”



*There were 493 replies and one negative response.

The Belmont Farmers' Market needs your support!

Here is how you can make a difference in the success of the Belmont Farmers' Market:

- * Volunteer to help the Belmont Farmers' Market Committee on market days and in a variety of behind-the-scenes activities.
- * Please consider our neighbors by parking where permitted and keeping the neighborhood clean.
- * On market day, support our local merchants as well as the vendors who travel to Belmont weekly.
- * Donate to support our start-up operations. The BFMC receives no monetary support from the Town of Belmont.

Your gift will be dedicated to market expenses, including insurance, publicity, web hosting, and other organizational costs, and can be sent to: **Belmont Farmers' Market Committee, P.O. Box 387, Belmont MA 02478**. We count on your contributions to fund an activity that benefits all members of our community.

- * Communicate with us. We welcome and will consider all ideas, articles, reflections, and suggestions of new features each month. We want to hear from you at: belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com.
- * Bring your friends, family and neighbors each Thursday from 2:00 to 6:30pm to participate in this new community event. Enjoy!

("Beginnings" continued from first page)

might increase awareness of the farm, and build support for finding ways to keeping our last open land productive.

As 2005 drew to a close, one critical component of bringing a market to town remained unknown: a suitable location. Talking with town officials and private property owners, poring over town maps, and scouting open parcels and parking lots seemed to go hand in hand with winter darkness. Even in the deep of winter, however, we found light. Lydia Ogilby, whose family as the owners of Richardson Farm assured its agricultural use in perpetuity through a farming restriction, informed the BFMC that not only would Angelo Sergi continue his family's farming, but also that Belmont's first Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) would be launched at the farm in 2006. Arlington resident Gretta Anderson will pursue a CSA endeavor on one acre of the Richardson Farm, selling twenty-five shares of the produce to Belmont residents. Belmont's farming heritage would continue, after all. Gradually, we also narrowed the list of available, suitable locations for a farmers' market.

In addition, with over five hundred returned questionnaires, the responses from residents to our survey were overwhelmingly positive. Even more heartening was the number of respondents who indicated that they would like to participate in bringing a market to Belmont. The swelling ranks of the BFMC gave credence to the words of Helen Keller, "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much." At this writing, forty volunteers contribute an array of talents and energy to making the market blossom.

As the weather warms, we are thrilled to know that the farmers who will bring their peas, tomatoes, eggs, flowers, breads, and other fresh, organic, delicious goods to Belmont are already preparing their fields and planting their seeds. We hope you will join us in supporting their efforts, and enjoying their harvest.

--The Belmont Farmers' Market Committee

Eat Well!

Make the most of the seasonal produce offered at the Belmont Farmers' Market with these tempting recipes.

Pasta with Lemon, Creme Fraiche, and Arugula

1 lb. linguine pasta.
1-2 lemons (use Meyer lemons if they are in season)
3 large handfuls arugula greens
1 c. creme fraiche (if you don't have creme fraiche, you can use half sour cream, half heavy cream)
1 c. grated parmesan or pecorino romano
salt and pepper to taste (tastes better with ground sea salt and fresh pepper!)

1. Clean arugula greens
2. Start boiling water for pasta.
3. While you wait for the water to boil, zest and then juice 1-2 lemons, depending on how bold a flavor you want.
4. Grate cheese; you can use more or less cheese as you like.
5. Roughly chop arugula.
6. When the water comes to a boil, add salt to water and then add pasta. When pasta is cooked al dente, remove and drain, setting aside 1 cup of the pasta water.
7. Add the pasta back into the pot, pour over the creme fraiche and lemon juice, and add salt and pepper to taste. Toss together a few times.
8. Add cheese and arugula and finish tossing, so that the noodles are coated and the arugula is evenly distributed. If the pasta seems a little sticky (dry), add a little of the reserved pasta water.

Serve immediately with extra grated cheese on the side.

-- Adapted from *Cooking for Mr. Latte: A Food Lover's Courtship*, with Recipes, by Amanda Hesser

Sesame Asparagus Salad

2 lbs. fresh asparagus cut into 1 1/2 inch pieces

Cover in salted boiling water. Cook until tender. Rinse immediately in cold water to stop cooking process. Pat dry.

Mix 4 tsp. soy sauce, 1 tsp honey, 2 tsp. sesame seed oil, 2 tbsps. roasted sesame seeds and pour over asparagus.

Chill 30 minutes and serve.

-- Adapted from *The Festival Cookbook: Four Seasons of Favorites*, by Phyllis Pellman Good

