

# Roots & Sprouts

News and Ideas from the Belmont Farmers' Market

late summer 2007

[www.belmontfarmersmarket.org](http://www.belmontfarmersmarket.org)



*Now open!*

**June through October**  
**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 . . .*

**Where are the Honeybees?**  
**A conversation with the Morashes,**  
**New England gardeners**  
**Survey says . . . Shoppers respond to BFM**  
**Recipe: a traditional harvest dish**

## The Plight of the Honeybee

*Key natural pollinators have encountered a 'perfect storm'*

Last fall, as many of our readers know, more than 25 percent of American honeybee colonies collapsed, with the death of billions of bees. What was the cause of this colony-collapse disorder, what does it mean for agriculture in this country, and how might Belmont Farmers' Market vendors have been affected?

The work of bees is to feed their young both the nectar and the pollen of flowers, which they collect in wide-ranging flights from the hive. The nectar, once back at the hive, begins to evaporate and thicken, and is stored in the hexagonal wax cells – honeycomb. Honey, a natural sweetener, comes in as many flavors as there are flowers, as our new vendor, Merrimack Valley Apiary, can demonstrate.

Much as we all love honey, however, the practical value of bees as pollinators is enormously greater than the value of their honey and wax production. As bees go from flower to flower gathering pollen, a small amount is rubbed from their bodies and deposited on the flowers they visit. Although some plants, like corn, are wind pollinated and don't need insects, much of what is grown requires a honeybee to pollinate the flower. If fruit is shrunken or misshapen, if the apple isn't sweet, that's often the consequence of too little pollination. The bee must visit again and again for adequate pollination to take place. Without them there would be no peaches or apples, melons or oranges.

Bees pollinate more than 90 of our cultivated crops from vegetables to oils to forage

consumed by grazing animals. They are responsible for more than \$20 billion in annual pollination value and one-third of the food we eat.

Talk to any one of our farm vendors, and they will tell you—they depend on bees for the produce you buy at our farmers' market. Kimball Farms, for example, relies on their neighbor's bees to pollinate much of their fruit; at apple season, they even rent bees to make sure the flowers are fully pollinated. Butterbrook Farm has its own hives in different sizes, and belongs to the Middlesex Bee Association, where you can go to school to become a beekeeper. Even here in Belmont, Gretta Anderson is looking into having someone bring bees over to her CSA acre in the spring.

The sudden loss of bee colonies last fall remains a puzzle. What exactly happened? According to Eric Mussen of the Honeybee Research Facility at the University of California at Davis, the bees were living a very shortened life cycle. They are supposed to die away from the hive, and they did, but why did they die so soon? In other words, we know what happened, but not why.

For a while, rumors of death by cell phone radiation made the rounds of the internet, but there is no evidence for this. In a round-table discussion on *salon.com* in May, 2007, four bee experts, including Mussen, considered the various possibilities. Research is still underway, and no firm answers exist yet. Were the bees stressed by poor diet

*(continued on page 4)*

# Meet the Morashes

We recently caught up with Marian – “Chef Marian” to her TV fans – and Russ Morash, co-creator of *The Victory Garden*, *The French Chef*, and *This Old House* on PBS, in their home in suburban Boston for a conversation about the pleasures of growing your own food.

**BFM:** How much of your own food are you able to grow in season at home and on how much land?

**Russ:** Our garden is 75 x 75 feet and, when it was producing at maximum capacity, we grew all our own vegetables.

**BFM:** What does it mean to step out to your garden and pick something fresh for your dinner?

**Marian:** It is wonderful, but my husband is dangerous. He goes out into the garden and picks a lot. He comes in at 5 pm with 19 tomatoes, a basket of Swiss chard, a half-peck of new potatoes and 12 zucchinis, and expects me to cook them all. He gets carried away.

**Russ:** The life of a hunter-gatherer is not an easy one. At the moment I have some of the most glorious parsnips. Parsnips are one of the great triumphs over garden misery. They take a long time to get out of the soil. When you sow them, you really need to know where you planted them, or they will fool you and come up weeks later. Then you must be patient and let them grow throughout the summer and fall into the winter. They need a lot of cold weather to be truly sweet.

**Marian:** He brought some in two weeks ago, and they were just like sugar. In the market when you buy them, they are flavorless. A lot has to do with getting them from your garden; they have to winter over.

**Russ:** We don't long for them in July or September. We are perfectly happy to wait until April. This is key to the way we think gardening should be done: grow things in season and enjoy them in season.

**BFM:** Do you cook meals on the spur of the moment based on what's in the garden?

**Marian:** I certainly cook what's in the garden, but it's not spur of the moment because you know what is in your garden. I immediately think of a ratatouille in the summertime because the tomatoes, onions, bell peppers,

and zucchini are all ready in the garden. The meals do develop from what's in the garden at any given time.

**Russ:** Another big advantage is that you know where the product came from. Today this is more important than ever. It's not only a matter of how they were grown, but how they were harvested and transported, to say nothing of the cost of transporting them and the difficulty of the lives of the workers who pick them. It's something that people need to be thinking about. The other reason you grow your own is for the taste. It is extraordinarily different.

**Marian:** That is why a farmers' market is so valuable. There, you are not getting produce trucked in from across the country. You are getting it from local growers. There is a 100% difference in taste from asparagus harvested from local gardens or getting some picked days or weeks earlier from hundreds of miles away.

**BFM:** Where can the novice gardener get help on how to start?

**Russ:** One of the reasons we started *The Victory Garden* television show was because of this question. Because of my many failures growing the wrong things in the wrong soil with the wrong exposure, I wondered if it were possible to find a gardening teacher. I found a wonderful gentleman in Concord, Jim Crockett, who was willing to join us in a television experiment to see if we could demonstrate how to garden. His mantra was, “get the soil right and a lot of things will follow from having the soil right.” First-time gardeners should avoid certain vegetables that everyone says are easy to grow but are not. Until you've had some experience, avoid radishes, spinach, beets, or carrots, although each is considered easy to grow. Lettuce, on the other hand, is easy to grow, and what you raise will beat what you can buy in the store.

– Carlha Vickers for the  
Belmont Farmers Market Committee



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## Belmont Farmers' Market Committee

### Heli Tomford, Coordinator

Andres Aguirre	Cate McGrail
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Karla O'Brien	Marilyn Yee

### Contact us at

[belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com](mailto:belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com)

### Volume 2, Issue 3

*Roots & Sprouts* is a publication of the Belmont Farmers' Market Committee  
PO Box 387  
Belmont, MA 02478

Editors: Gale Pryor and Laurie Levy  
Designer: Dee Ippen  
Logo designer: Trey Klein  
Printer: Belmont Printing Co.

Printed on recycled paper

## 2007 Vendors

- **ButterBrook Organic Farm** herbs, vegetables, honey, flowers, eggs
- **Coutts Specialty Foods** jams, jellies, applesauce, relishes
- **Dick's Market Garden Farm** produce
- **The Farm School/Maggie's Farm** certified organic vegetables, fruits, flowers, soap, grass-fed meat
- **Fiore di Nonno Cheese** handcrafted fresh mozzarella
- **Gretta Anderson - Belmont CSA** produce grown in Belmont
- **Janique's Madeleines** fresh French cookies made in Belmont
- **Kimball Fruit Farm** vegetables, fruit, pies, honey
- **Leslie Wolf Baking** baked goods from a Belmont kitchen
- **Merrimack Valley Apiary** many varieties of honey
- **Nashoba Brook Bakery** bread
- **Nicewicz Family Farm** apples, peaches, plums, berries, vegetables, flowers
- **NorthStar Farm** perennial plants and cheeses made in Westport, MA
- **Not Your Ordinary Farm** grass-fed meat
- **Shootflying Hill Sauce Co.** dessert sauces
- **Stillman's at the Turkey Farm** grass-fed meat
- **Taza Chocolates** chocolate ground locally from direct-purchased beans
- **The Biscuit** bread and baked goods
- **Thoreau Foods** organic cereals, toppings, smoothie boosters
- **Underwood Greenhouse** potted plants grown in Belmont
- **Waverley Place** flowers, herbs and perennials grown in Waltham



## Survey Says . . .

### Results from the Belmont Farmers' Market Poll of Shoppers

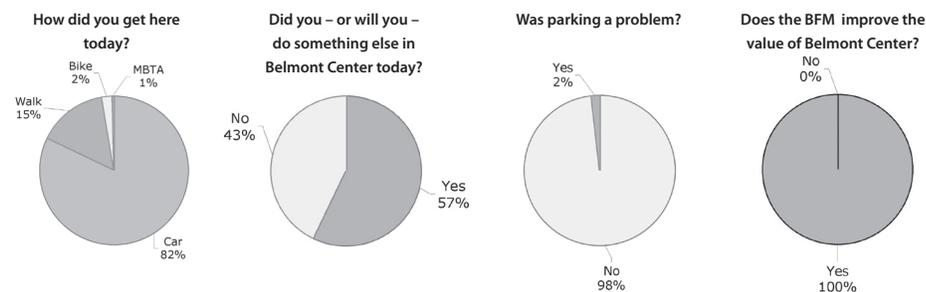
The numbers are in! As the popularity of farmers' markets grows across the country and 'eating local' becomes the new definition of 'eating right,' the Belmont Farmers' Market surveyed our own community of shoppers to trace the trends close to home. Here are our results.

The Market has been a huge success with shoppers. To evaluate the impact the Market has had on our community – its successes and areas where improvement is needed – volunteers asked shoppers at the Market a series of questions for five weeks in June and July (excluding July 19). These questions concerned distance traveled, means of transportation, ease of parking, their patronage of other businesses in Belmont Center, and their views of the value

and location of the Farmers' Market. They collected over 200 surveys, which were then compiled into a data table and graphs.

The Belmont Farmers' Market Committee is grateful for the assistance of our helpful volunteers: Derek Hall, Rebecca Hillel, Claire Mackevicius, Cate McGrail, Amrita Ray, Betsy Riley, Melody Sokol and Rose Wu.

– Betsy Riley



## Food on Film

Flett Room, Belmont Public Library

Please join us on Tuesday, September 11 when BFM's Food on Film movie series presents four short films from the 2006 juried *Slow Food on Film Festival*. This bi-annual event is held in the Piedmont town of Bra, Italy, home of the Slow Food movement. Slow Food is a non-profit, eco-gastronomic member-supported organization founded in 1989 to counteract fast food and fast life; the disappearance of local food traditions; and the dwindling interest in the food we eat. The 2006 festival featured 32 shorts and 15 documentaries from all over the world. Deborah Koons Garcia, who directed *The Future of Food* shown earlier this summer, was jury chairperson. The jury commended five films of which the BFM film series will show four:

- ***We Are What We Lost (Mi Smo Ono ěTo Izgubimo)*** by Srdjan Mitrovic (Serbia): a moving reconstruction of a specific personal experience within a given tradition to remind us of the constant interconnection between life, food, and death
- ***Good Morning (Chayo)*** by Shinya Okada (Japan): an elegant and mature interpretation of food as a vehicle of communication for a family-to-be.
- ***Cherry on the Top*** by Ayesha Sood and Nitya Mehra (India): a robbery in a cake shop.
- ***The Surprise (Die Űberraschung)*** by Lancelot von Naso (Germany): romance goes haywire

All are welcome and admission is free - 6:30 pm coffee, 7:00 pm film.

(continued from page 1)

or pesticides, and then finished off by a pathogen? What about the disruption caused by global warming, when flowers bloom at different times and nectar flows earlier in the year? Could the extreme dryness in California have contributed to the loss of bees?

Most likely, says Mussen, "What you're going to find is that in most cases there is not going to be one factor that did them in; it's going to be a combination. This is the perfect storm for honeybees."

But the concern for honeybees is only part of the larger problem of a decline in all pollinators, according to Jeffrey Pettis, research leader of the USDA's honeybee

lab. He says that the National Academy of Sciences recently published a study showing that all pollinators are in decline. "Whether it's urbanization, habitat fragmentation, or an increase in agricultural land use, something is severely impacting the native pollinators."

People at Kimball Farms noticed this spring that, while their plum trees were full of blossoms, there was very little fruit, probably caused by lack of enough bees to pollinate fully. Kitty Kiefer of Merrimack Valley Apiary says that their 16,000 hives lose 10-15% of their bees each year, but that they manage the hives and the health of the bees so that they recover each year from these expected losses. But she is aware that bees

are vulnerable to the misuse of pesticides. "Bees move freely between one orchard and another," says Kitty, "and the world gets smaller every year," and what one farmer does may well affect the life of bees in other locations.  
— Jane Sherwin

Sources:

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## Celebrate with Tzimmes

With the harvest season upon us, it is time to think of recipes for fall. Tzimmes (also spelled "tsimmes") is a traditional Jewish casserole: a combination of sweet potatoes, carrots, prunes and sometimes brisket cooked slowly over low heat. This sweet Eastern European dish is served as part of the meal for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, which occurs in late summer or early fall. The tradition is to eat sweet and honey-flavored dishes so as to ensure a sweet new year. While in Yiddish slang, the word tzimmes has also come to mean a complicated chore or fuss, as in "making a tzimmes" over something, this version of the recipe is not at all complicated.

- 5 large carrots, peeled and cut up into 1 inch slices
- 1 pound sweet potatoes (about 2 medium) peeled and cut up into 1-inch cubes
- 1 large apple, peeled, cored, cut up into 2 inch slices
- 1/2 cup raisins or pitted prunes
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 cup orange juice
- Butter to taste (optional)

Cook the carrots and sweet potatoes in boiling water covered for 10 minutes until barely tender. Drain. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Combine the cooked carrots and sweet potatoes with all the remaining ingredients, except the butter. Turn the mixture into a shallow 3-quart baking dish. Dot the top with butter, bake for 15 minutes and stir; continue baking another 15 minutes or until tender. This recipe should be made a day or two ahead, refrigerated, and reheated before serving. Serves 4

— Laurie Levy

## What's Fresh in... September

apples	hot peppers
arugula	melons
beets	okra
bell peppers	onions
blueberries	peaches
bok choy	snap peas
broccoli	peppers
cabbage	plums
carrots	potatoes
cauliflower	pumpkins
chard	radishes
corn	salad greens
cucumbers	scallions
eggplant	shelling beans
garlic	spinach
grapes	summer squash
green beans	tomatillos
green peas	tomatoes
herbs	winter squash
	zucchini



## Apple Recipe Contest!

Enter your favorite homemade apple dessert in the Belmont Farmers' Market contest on October 4th. Pick up an entry form when you buy apples at the Market, and find more details on our website.