



A PROJECT OF THE BELMONT
FOOD COLLABORATIVE, INC.

*June 13th to
October 31st
rain or shine!*

**Thursday afternoons
2:00 to 6:30 pm
(6:00 pm close after Labor Day)
Belmont Center parking lot**

in this issue . . .

Tips for savvy market shopping
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Shopping with kids in tow

10 Tips for Market Shopping

Get savvy and save money at Farmers' Markets this summer

Shopping at a farmers' market is a great way to enjoy a wide variety of fresh delicious food. Yet, even as new markets continue to open across the state, there's a persistent myth that produce at farmers' markets costs more than at supermarkets.

The reality turns out to be quite the opposite. Barry Estabrook's 2011 article in *The Atlantic*, "The Farmers' Market Myth," cited a Vermont study that found mixed results: some items cost less at the supermarket; others cost less at the farmers' markets. For organic produce, the farmers' markets beat the supermarkets on every item but potatoes.

My own informal produce price survey found a similar pattern. In a July 2011 survey of produce prices at the Belmont Farmers' Market and two area supermarkets, the farmers' market had the lowest prices on the most items. Many farmers' markets also double SNAP benefits up to a certain amount, allowing SNAP recipients to stretch their budgets even farther. At the Belmont Farmers' Market, shoppers can have their SNAP dollars matched up to \$25 per Market day.

Even so, successfully navigating a farmers' market takes some getting used to. Most of us are savvy supermarket shoppers. But most of us didn't grow up shopping at farmers' markets, and it helps to take a different approach. Here are ten tips to help you get your money's worth at farmers' markets.

1. Make a budget and take that much cash with you. You can't be tempted to spend what you don't have. If you are a SNAP recipient, check with the market manager to see

if the market accepts – or doubles – SNAP benefits.

2. Tour the market. Before you start buying, take a walk through the market to see what's available this week. This will give you a chance to check prices and quality at the different vendors. Keep your eyes open for sales.

3. Try new foods. There's often a wider variety of produce available at a farmers' market, and you can stretch your budget by trying something new. I've discovered some terrific new foods at the farmers' market, including garlic scapes, pea shoots (or tendrils), squash vines, and beet greens.

4. Ask for advice. See something new? Ask the vendor about it. They can give you recipes and tell you what to expect. Ask vendors what they recommend. You can also ask about growing practices. Don't be shy: Most farmers say that talking to customers is a big reason for attending farmers' markets.

5. Buy in season. While the first tomatoes and peppers of summer can be expensive, the prices tend to come down once they are abundant. Get an idea of what to expect with availability charts, such as this one available online: www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/docs/availability-chart.pdf

6. Go early for best selection. If you positively must have an item, go early to make sure it's available. If you can plan ahead, ask a vendor if they are able to save a particular item for you the following week.

(continued on page 4)

Destination: Belmont Acres Farm

An Interview with Mike Chase

Belmont Acres Farm (formerly Sergi Farm) is Belmont's last working farm, operated by Mike Chase and his family at 34 Glenn Rd. Please drop by the farm this summer to check it out and buy your produce fresh from the fields.

When is the farm stand open?

The farm stand will be open three days a week: Tuesdays and Fridays from 3–6:30, and Saturdays from 12–5. We added an extra day this year in an effort to increase convenience and to adapt to Belmont summer lifestyles. The farm usually opens the first week of June, depending on weather. Useful information throughout the season is available on our website: www.belmontacresfarm.com

What are some favorites at the farm stand?

One of our favorite things about eating locally is that your body really learns to adapt to the seasonality of crops. Starting with late spring and early summer, snap peas, fava beans, lettuces, arugula, and potatoes are some of our customer favorites. As we reach the warmer summer months, tomatoes, eggplants, fennel, zucchini, artichokes, and beans (soy, lima, and shelling) become more popular. When we first introduced okra to the stands, many of our customers told us that they had never seen fresh okra before. As the season moved along, our CSA members gradually learned to incorporate this exotic vegetable into their diet. We even had customers who learned through word of mouth that we offered fresh okra at the stand and came in to verify! In the fall, we offer almost any vegetable that can be grown in New England, and some that are new to the area. An example is the Romanesco cauliflower. One of our customers had seen this variety of cauliflower at a farmer's market in Italy and was very excited to find it in Belmont. While this may seem unusual to some, we have been growing this long enough to consider it the norm.

How many crops do you expect to plant in total this year?

We expect to grow over 100 varieties of crops this season. We are growing more than 10 varieties of potatoes alone this summer and 10–15 different varieties of lettuces.

What else can people buy at the farm?

We're expanding our flock of chickens and our bee hives, so hopefully both eggs and honey will be available at the stand, although they sell out quickly. We're also trying to partner with some other local farmers and augment the diversity of products that we offer at the stand (see the website for updates). One of our friends taps maple trees in Vermont, and we will have some maple syrup available at the stand this year. However, any produce we sell at the stand will be our own. As for flowers, we plan to offer a similar diversity of flowers as offered in years past.

What else can people do at the farm?

You are more than welcome to visit us on the farm and see what's going on. We are happy to answer questions about how we grow our produce when the stand is open. For visits outside of our normal stand hours, we ask that you contact us ahead of time to schedule a visit. Belmont Acres Farm is a working farm, and as such we do not allow free access to all areas, and we expect that people will treat the animals with respect.

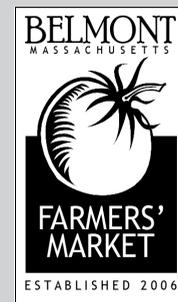
What is your philosophy?

Our core belief is building community through food and bringing attention to the broken food system in this country. The current system of production and distribution has removed the consumers from the realities and true cost of farming. While farming locally is a very costly endeavor, it is essential to building a healthy and well-balanced community through the creation of fairly paid jobs. Additionally, local farms raise awareness about our responsibilities to preserve our natural resources.

—Sarah Jensen



photo: Hal Shubin



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The Belmont Food Collaborative is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and the parent organization of the Belmont Farmers' Market

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Winner of Boston magazine's

**BEST OF
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2009**

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www.belmontfarmersmarket.org

The Market is a member of the Belmont Center Business Association.

Volume 8, Issue 3

Roots & Sprouts is a publication of the Belmont Food Collaborative, Inc.
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Belmont, MA 02478
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Editor: Jennifer Angel
Designer: Dee Ippen
Logo designer: Trey Klein
Printer: Belmont Printing Co.
Distribution: Laurie Levy and Nancy Jarzombek

Printed on recycled paper

2013 Vendors

Here are the vendors we expect this season. Not all of them will appear every week. Check the BFM website or e-newsletter for updates and complete details.

- **Belmongo Farm** fresh microgreens grown in Belmont
- **C & C Lobsters and Fish** a family run business selling locally-caught seafood
- **Carlisle Honey** local honey and hand-made beeswax candles
- **Coastal Vineyards** of South Dartmouth
- **Coutt's Specialty Foods** natural jams, jellies, applesauce, relishes
- **Dick's Market Garden Farm** vegetables, fruits, and plants
- **The Farm School** organic vegetables, fruits, flowers, eggs, grass-fed meat
- **Fior d'Italia: The Pasta Man** pasta in many different shapes and flavors
- **Flats Mentor Farm** fresh Asian produce
- **Foxboro Cheese/Lawton's Family Farm** fresh cheeses and veal
- **Goodies Homemade** award-winning, better-than-homemade cookies
- **Hutchins Farm** certified organic plants, vegetables, herbs, small fruit, and apples
- **Japonaise Bakery** French pastries with a Japanese twist
- **Kimball Fruit Farm** vegetables, fruit, and plants
- **Mamadou Bakery** handcrafted breads
- **Nicewicz Family Farm** apples, peaches, plums, berries, vegetables, flowers
- **Nobsco Artisan Cheese** made from raw milk produced in Framingham
- **Nonna's Soups** Belmont-made frozen soups based on Nonna's recipes
- **Real Pops** handmade Mexican-style fresh fruit ice pops
- **Samira's Homemade** Middle Eastern dips and salads, freshly made, delicious
- **Sfolia's Pizzelles** sweet and savory Italian treats handmade in Belmont
- **Soluna Garden Farm** herb, spice and tea blends, organically, sustainably produced
- **Still River Winery** apple icewine from Harvard, MA
- **Stillman's at the Turkey Farm** grass-fed meat and freshly cut flowers
- **Turtle Creek Winery** of Lincoln
- **Underwood Greenhouses** potted plants grown in Belmont
- **Westport Rivers Vineyard & Winery**
- **Wild Acre Inns** flowers, herbs and more



Food for Thought

Adventures of a Beginning Gardener

As hunter-gatherer for a household of four, I admit to knowing the layout of Star Market like I know the lines in the palm of my hand. A year ago, however, I decided to shake things up. I decided to grow my own organic vegetables. How hard could it be? We have plenty of dirt out there, and sunshine, and a water spigot nearby. Everybody's doing it; it is socially responsible, ecologically enriching, environmentally pure, economical, locavorish, and sustainable; perhaps it would even spur my teenage boys to broaden their vegetable choices. True, I don't know much about plants, but I admire the lush gardens of my neighbors. I can dig as well as anyone. I pictured in my mind all the gorgeous tomato salads we would be eating well into September. And hope and expectation keep us going, do they not?

On the first warm day I brought out the spade.

It turns out that I made a mistake with my very first step. Lesson no. 1: when clearing your plot, take time to make it as level as you can. I started small, with an eight-by-four foot patch in the sunniest spot of our back yard. Covered with grass, it looked flat, well, flat enough, although as I dug I realized that it sloped gently down into an established bed of irises to one side. Undeterred, I turned over the soil and added manure. As soon as danger of frost had passed, I put some tomato

plants in, some Swiss chard, and I fashioned a channel in the dirt for carrots. Carrot seeds, by the way, are so teeny-tiny that you cannot put them in one at a time. You just have to sprinkle them and hope for the best. Some stuck to my fingers, some blew away in the breeze, and a few landed in or near the channel. I got the hose and turned the water on, sprinkling my new little babies. The plants

Lesson #1: take time to make your plot as level as you can

liked that, but the carrot row, sloping gently, formed a seed-specked

river flowing down and out into the yard. I dashed to the faucet to turn the water off but it was too late. I'm sorry to report that the row never fully recovered. In time, however, we discovered carrot tops emerging in the most surprising places throughout the garden and well into the irises.

Here's the lesson: plants like to grow, even despite their tender's ineptness. We had a few tomatoes, and several nights' worth of green beans. These were celebrated. Two of the pea vines came up and gave us exactly six sugar snaps. Even though I waited until the end of September, the carrots were tiny. But the zucchini – Oh, the zucchini! Within days of putting it in the ground it spread luxurious bristly leaves up, up, and out. Yes, it was a mistake to put the tomato plants so close, but one cannot blame the zucchini for that. To the contrary, zucchini was my hero; it made me feel like I had done something right. I regarded it with unadulterated joy, and I vowed to redouble my gardening effort next year.

— Nancy Jarzombek



(continued from page 1)

7. Be flexible. If you can't find what you're looking for, ask a vendor to recommend a substitute. You may also be able to use more of an item than you expect. When you buy beets with their greens attached, for example, you get an extra serving of vegetables from the edible (and delicious) greens.

8. Budget for a splurge item. Set aside a few dollars for a treat: a fresh loaf of bread, the first summer tomato, or a cookie.

9. Check in with the market. Look for the market manager's tent and say hello. You find all kinds of information here, from recipes to upcoming events to vendor information. Ask if there's a market newsletter, or if the market is active on Facebook or Twitter. (Belmont Farmers' Market is active on both, and it has an e-newsletter you can sign up to receive.)

10. Have fun! Farmers' market shopping is a more social experience than supermarket shopping. Get to know the market vendors and enjoy spending some time outdoors.

—Becky Prior. This article first appeared in a blog published by *FOOD DAY MASSACHUSETTS*. Food Day, held each year on October 24, is a nationwide celebration and a movement toward more healthy, affordable, and sustainable food.

Tips for Tykes at the Market

Children can practice lifetime skills while having a blast

Kids and farmers' markets go together like, well, like peas in a pod! Markets offer such a delightful smorgasbord for each of the five senses. With the many vibrant colors of foods on display (and even a few samples) and the opportunity to meet some friendly people and pets in the community, the market can provide a bounty of learning opportunities for little ones. Here are a few ways children can learn lifetime skills while discovering all of the wonderful things the market offers during your next sojourn:

Take along a pack of crayons and paper. Invite your child to choose a farm stand and draw what they see! You can take the picture home and use it as a centerpiece or a fun place mat for the dinner table.

Guess how much the fruits weigh. Ask your child to help select a certain number of fruits and then try to guess how much they weigh. They might be surprised with the answer!

Interview a farmer. Have your child think of some questions for a farmer, such as how long they've been farming or what their favorite tip is for growing vegetables. Then they can ask a farmer the questions and write down the answers. Snap a picture of your child with the farmer to add later.

Make up a scavenger hunt! Assign your child tasks such as, "Find four items that are red at the market, find three that are green, get an autograph from a farmer, sample two different foods..." You can be as creative as you wish. Perhaps the prize at the end might be a fresh piece of fruit of their choosing?

Practice budgeting. For school-age children, set a specific amount of money your family has to spend at the market, say \$20. Have your child go around and select items that add up to that amount: no more, no less. This is a fun way to get some real-life budgeting and money management practice.

Find shapes. When you look closely you'll discover all sorts of different shapes at the market. See how many different shapes your child can find.

What are some ways you help make a trip to the market a learning experience for children? Please let us know by sending a note to belmontfood@gmail.com

—Leah Lesser



photo: Kim Foster