

Weekly Market Bulletin

State of New Hampshire
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Governor

Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
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Vol. 87

Wednesday, July 23, 2008

No. 21



From Your Commissioner...

NH Eat Local Week Catches on with NH Eaters

New Hampshire Eat Local Week is off to a great start. We received Governor Lynch's proclamation of August 3-9 as 'New Hampshire Eat Local Week' just in time to print it in last week's Market Bulletin. Print and broadcast media are spreading the word, and groups all around the state are excited about participating in Eat Local Week challenges and activities.

Dedicating a week to the celebration of "all of the local food that is grown and raised in New Hampshire" is the brainchild of Sara Zoe Parker. The Rye resident is coordinator of Seacoast Eat Local, an organization with the mission of connecting consumers with sources of locally grown and produced foods. "What better way to discover more about our state, support our farming community members, encourage food self-reliance, and make a positive impact on our environment than a week of local eating!" she explains on the new website www.nheatlocalweek.org.

The Upper Valley Localvores also lent support to establishing a week devoted to eating more locally. Localvore (or locavore) was recently chosen as the Oxford American Dictionary 'Word of the Year.' Localvores are people who are committed to eating foods from their local foodshed, sometimes defined as within a 100-mile radius of their homes, sometimes more in terms of a region. The Seacoast and Upper Valley groups have been communicating with their extensive networks—other local food advocacy groups, Slow Food chapters, chefs, and more—to build support and enthusiasm for the state's first official Eat Local Week. The website has links to several of these organizations around the state, including Plymouth and Keene.

The really great thing about NH Eat Local Week is this grassroots origin, propelled by consumer (or eater) demand. These are fans of locally grown and produced foods, citizens who value good, fresh, quality foods and products produced by their neighbors and local businesses. These organizations foster and celebrate relationships between local farmers and the people who are their customers, directly or indirectly. Seacoast Eat Local sponsored an eat-local challenge last September, which culminated with a pot luck supper and barn dance at Berry Hill Farm in Stratham, owned by Agricultural Advisory Board member Caroline Robinson.

The week of August 3-9 was chosen for NH Eat Local Week because it is also National Farmers Market Week, creating opportunities to highlight farmers markets as places to find local foods and connect consumers with local farmers and growers. NH Eat Local Week encourages people who are just discovering or getting interested in obtaining more of their diet locally to explore local foods and sources. For more advanced local-eaters, it's a chance to engage in a little friendly competition to ratchet up their local food quotient. The NH Eat Local Week Challenge Card suggests three levels of participation: Sprout, Seedling, or Perennial.

This will be a week of truly local-based, grassroots events. Everyone is welcome to create ways to participate and celebrate our local foods and farms—and to extend the spirit and activities beyond this one week. Groups are planning pot-luck events, and some restaurants will feature local foods.

Popular books by Barbara Kingsolver and Michael Pollan have inspired many people to venture into finding more of their food locally. People are even learning to prepare and preserve more of their own foods, rediscovering traditional seasonal flavors and specialties—and the benefits of families coming together for meals. We're seeing bigger crowds at farmers markets, and increased traffic at farmstands around the state.

Lorraine Merrill, Commissioner