

## **FARM-TO-CHEF WEEK**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

#### **What is Farm-to-Chef Week?**

Farm-to-Chef Week is an annual showcase of Connecticut Grown ingredients featured in menus creatively developed by chefs and foodservice professionals throughout Connecticut. Each Farm-to-Chef menu includes four or more items using Connecticut Grown farm products such as fruits, vegetables, and herbs; meats, poultry; shellfish, and other proteins; dairy; eggs; maple syrup and honey; wine; and more. The Connecticut Department of Agriculture created Farm-to-Chef Week in 2010 as part of its ongoing Farm-to-Chef program to help connect local farms and foodservice professionals.

#### **When is Farm-to-Chef Week?**

Farm-to-Chef Week occurs every September. This year it will run September 18-24, 2016.

#### **Where is Farm-To-Chef Week?**

Farm-to-Chef week occurs in participating venues throughout Connecticut, including restaurants, campus dining halls, school and corporate cafeterias, healthcare facilities, and other foodservice institutions.

#### **Who is eligible to participate?**

Any foodservice business in Connecticut able to meet the Farm-to-Chef Week [guidelines](#) can participate, including restaurants, banquet halls, and caterers; schools, colleges, and universities; hospitals and other healthcare facilities; corporate cafeterias; etc..

#### **How does a chef/foodservice participant sign up?**

Any Connecticut foodservice establishment can sign up by completing and submitting a [registration form](#) with the small registration fee (\$25/location through July 31 and \$50/location August 1-19).

#### **How do chefs participate?**

After completing and submitting the registration form, chefs and foodservice managers begin planning their special Farm-to-Chef menus. They reach out to nearby farms to see what will be available to purchase that week and can be used in the menu as a featured ingredient, and then also start planning special activities to promote those farms during Farm-to-Chef Week such as farmer appearances/talks, exhibits and displays, etc.

#### **How can farmers participate?**

Farmers do not officially register but participate by partnering with participating foodservice establishments, to supply Connecticut Grown ingredients and information about how they produce those ingredients. Interested farmers are encouraged to reach out to registered foodservice participants to initiate new connections and forge new business relationships.

#### **How can diners participate?**

Diners can participate by visiting one or more of the participating foodservice establishments, ordering from their Farm-to-Chef menus, and partaking in the special Farm-to-Chef Week activities offered at that venue.

#### **Will diners be able to meet with participating chefs and farmers during Farm-to-Chef week?**

As part of Farm-to-Chef Week, participating venues promote the farms producing the Connecticut Grown ingredients on the Farm-to-Chef menu through special talks, exhibits, displays, and/or other means. For more information about what a specific participating venue will be offering during Farm-to-Chef Week, please contact them directly.

**Why should chefs and foodservice professionals participate in Farm-to-Chef week?**

Farm-to-Chef Week is an ideal opportunity to connect with the men and women who grow and raise Connecticut Grown ingredients and to build stronger relationships with them. It is also an excellent opportunity to showcase your use of Connecticut Grown ingredients, whether you already do it every day or are just getting started in sourcing more locally.

**If a restaurant already sources from local farms, why should they participate?**

Farm-to-Chef Week is one way for those establishments who already source most of their ingredients from local farms to further showcase the good work they are already doing, and to attract new customers who may not yet know about them. Farm-to-Chef Week provides a good opportunity to connect with additional local farms and strengthen relationships. It also encourages creativity—it is a chance to try working with a new product or an old favorite in a new way.

**If a foodservice establishment does not currently source from local farms, how can they begin?**

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is creating a new Farm-to-Chef website that will make it easier to find Connecticut farms specifically interested in selling to restaurants and institutions. In the meantime, the agency's [Consumer Information](#) page has a wide variety of listings including farm stands/stores, specific types of farms (orchards, dairies, etc.), farmers' markets, and more. Call or stop by and ask about product availability, wholesale pricing, and any delivery options. Purchase a small amount of product to try. Soon you find some farms that are a good fit to supply your business. Then be sure to let your customers know about the men and women who have grown and raised the food used in your menu.

**If a restaurant or institution already has a good food supplier, why should it buy from local farms?**

Most chefs and foodservice professionals find connecting directly with farmers to be highly rewarding and well worth any extra effort. The freshness and quality of the ingredients cannot be matched--fruits and vegetables can be picked at the peak of ripeness because they do not have to endure a lengthy shipping and/or storage process, and unusual and more flavorful varieties that would be too fragile to ship can be enjoyed. Personally knowing the men and women who grow and raise the food, and appreciating the work that goes into that process, is something many chefs also find gratifying. Diners, whether restaurant patrons, school children, or healthcare clients, enjoy not only the super-fresh, delicious ingredients, but also learning more about the farmers, the entire food chain from farm to plate, and what is involved every step of the way. Purchasing directly from farmers supports their bottom line and allows them to put a greater share of each dollar paid for their products back into their farms, enhancing long-term viability and sustainability. Supporting small, local, family-owned farm businesses and keeping more money in the local community benefits everyone involved.

**How is Farm-To-Chef week promoted?**

Farm-to-Chef week is promoted through a variety of avenues including media releases and subsequent articles/features, website information, email blasts, word-of-mouth, and through advertising made possible through the generous support of Farm-to-Chef Week sponsors. (To learn more about becoming a sponsor, please see the [2016 sponsorship guide and form](#).)

**How can someone get more information about Farm-to-Chef Week?**

For more information, visit the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's website, <http://www.ct.gov/doag/site/default.asp>, the new Farm-to-Chef website, <http://www.ctfarmtochef.com/>, call 860-713-2543, or email [Elizabeth.Aguilar@ct.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Aguilar@ct.gov).