

CONNECTICUT FARM-TO-CHEF PROGRAM NEWS 10/03/07

Farm-to-Chef Program Logo Contest

The deadline for submitting designs to the Farm-to-Chef logo contest has been extended until **OCTOBER 12, 2007**. There is still time to get your ideas in!

Please send entries in EPS, JPG, or PDF format to Linda.piotrowicz@ct.gov. Hard copies of artwork can be sent to Linda Piotrowicz, CT Department of Agriculture Marketing Bureau, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 129, Hartford, CT 06106.

Winner will receive something really cool (yet to be determined) and bragging rights. The winning artwork will become property of the CT Department of Agriculture.

CT Grown Fruits and Veggies Now Available

Although the growing season is winding down (sob), there still is great produce from which to choose. But hurry – those items below marked with an asterisk will be wiped out with the first killing frost!

If you need help locating sources of these items, please contact Linda at 860-713-2558 or Linda.piotrowicz@ct.gov.

Apples
Beans (green, Italian, wax)
Beets
Cabbage
Carrots
Collard Greens
Cucumbers (seedless, slicing, pickling)
Culinary Herbs
Eggplant
Kale
Kohlrabi
Leeks
Lettuce (and other salad greens)
Melons
Onions
Parsnips
Peppers (bell, frying, hot)
Plums
Potatoes
Raspberries
Summer Squash (yellow, green, pattypan)
Sweet Corn
Swiss Chard
Tomatoes (cherry, red, heirloom)
Turnips
Winter Squash

Although cold weather does limit local fruit and vegetable choices, plenty of other fantastic CT Grown products are available YEAR-ROUND: fresh meat, milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs, honey, maple syrup, and more! If you need help locating sources of any of these products, please contact Linda at 860-713-2558 or Linda.piotrowicz@ct.gov.

CT Seafood Availability

This month Connecticut clams, oysters, lobsters, squid, scallops, and whole fish such as tautog, bluefish, and black seabass should be readily available.

The UConn's Sea Grant Program has developed a great on-line resource for CT Seafood. Check out <http://seagrants.uconn.edu/aquaguide/>. They also have a terrific CT Seafood Buying Guide on their website. Go to <http://www.seagrants.uconn.edu/seafdbuy.pdf>. A link will be added to the Farm-to-Chef website's resource page for future reference.

LOCAL SEAFOOD PRODUCT	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Hard clams	Yes											
Oysters	Yes											
Sea scallops	Yes											
Conch	Yes											
Squid	Yes											
Royal red shrimp	Yes											
American lobster	Yes											
Blue crab	Yes											
Jonah crab	Yes											
Blackfish / tautog	Yes											
Bluefish	Yes											
Butterfish	Yes											
Cod	Yes											
Dogfish	Yes											
Summer flounder / fluke	Yes											
Winter flounder	Yes											
Yellowtail flounder	Yes											
Hake	Yes											
Herring	Yes											
Mackerel	Yes											
Monkfish	Yes											
Porgy / scup	Yes											
Sea bass	Yes											
Shad	Yes											
Skate	Yes											
Whiting	Yes											

CT Grown Duck

CT Grown duck is available from Cedar Meadow Farm in Ledyard. Call Julia Cronin at 860-608-7442 for more information.

Green Planet Opportunities

Green Planet in Oakville supports many local producers and their products and would like to feature more.

They have a walk-in cooler and full commercial kitchen available. They also are looking for an independent contractor to run their deli counter. Please call Doug Peterson at 860-274-4779 for more information.

Hilltop Farm Considering Commercial Kitchen

Friends of Hilltop Farm (FOFAH) in Suffield, CT is surveying potential shared- kitchen users to find out how local producers would use it if it were built. Caterers are included too. If you are interested, please contact Bob Bernstein at 603 357-1600.

Out and About with Program Chefs

On September 9, 2007, Chefs **JONATHAN RAPP**, **DREW MCLACHLAN**, and **JASON COLLIN**, shared the honor of preparing local, sustainable food for approximately 600 VIPs at the 2007 FarmAid Concert on Randall's Island, New York, NY.



Chef Jonathan spends one of many long hours next to the stove in the hot sun, cooking for hundreds of Farm Aid VIPs.

The chefs were joined by approximately 25 volunteers, including **NUNZIO** and **IRENE CORSINI** of Four Mile River Farm, who helped prep and cook a gourmet feast outdoors in blazing heat. The signature **DINNERS AT THE FARM** truck provided a portable kitchen and visual adornment.

Chef Jason (left) checks to be sure every detail of the menu is in place while Chef Drew works tirelessly aboard the mobile kitchen.



Diners lined up in droves to have the chance to taste this remarkable food. Raving accolades were heard from concert audience members, staff, and performing artists from Guster and the Allman Brothers Band.



Farm Aid VIPs braved long lines for a taste of the delicious gourmet local food prepared by Connecticut's own distinguished chefs.

Appearing as part of a speakers panel at the Farm Aid event (along with Chef Alice Waters, among others) was Chef **MICHEL NISCHAN** from the Dressing Room Restaurant in Westport.

Chef Michel mingles with the VIPs during the concert.



That same weekend, many of our program chefs were busy at the annual Celebration of CT Farms, cohosted by **JACQUES PEPIN** and **FAITH MIDDLETON**, and organized by **JOHN TURENNE**. This popular event enjoyed by all who attended.

Chef Jason Collin was back in the spotlight on September 13, 2007, when his Firebox Restaurant and the Farmers' Market at Billings Forge hosted a CT Grown lunch for students from Burns Elementary School with Lt. Governor Michael Fedele, Agriculture Commissioner F. Philip Prelli, and Hartford Food Service Director Lonnie Burt.



Chef Jason addresses the students with a little help from CT Grown mascot Beta Carrot.

The kids were so busy devouring the delicious food, including Four Mile River Farm's all-natural, pastured beef hamburgers and nitrate-free hot dogs, Groszyk Farms corn on the cob, and Windham Hill Gardens fresh watermelon, that they nearly forgot the meal was as good for their health as it was for their tastebuds.

Chef John Turenne was spotted at the Coventry Farmers' Market on September 16, 2007, teaching marketgoers how to make his signature grilled pizzas, with some help from Topmost Herb Farm's Carole Miller.

Chef John (right) spreads roasted garlic on a grilling crust while Carole (left) slices finished pizzas for spectators to eat.



September 21, 2007, Chef **REBECCA GORIN** hosted UConn Dining Service's second annual Chili Cook-Off in conjunction with their Celebrate CT Day. (We're still waiting to hear if Chef Rebecca's own chili recipe took the trophy...)

Chef **TIM CIPRIANO**, aka Local Food Dude, will teach two "Cooking with Kids" classes on October 7, 2007 as part of the Plough to Plate Coalition's "Back to the Barn at the Farm" event. This family event celebrating local food and agriculture runs 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the Hunt Hill Farm in New Milford.

Also on October 7, 2007, Chef **CHRISTOPHER PROSPERI** from MetroBis Restaurant will perform a cooking demonstration at the Collinsville Farmers' Market using fresh, local ingredients obtained that day from the market's vendors. He will do a similar presentation on October 15, 2007 at the Whole Foods Farmers' Market in West Hartford.

Other upcoming farmers' market cooking demonstrations include Chef **DANIEL CHONG-JIMENEZ** from the Spa at Norwich Inn at the Denison Farmers' Market on October 14, 2007, and Chef **DENISE APPEL** from Zinc Restaurant at Whole Foods Farmers' Market on October 22, 2007.

The Farm-to-Chef Program applauds these chefs as well as every other local culinary professional who is committed to using and promoting CT Grown in their work.

Chefs Sought for 2008 Farmers' Market Demonstrations

Next year the Farm-to-Chef Program plans to feature culinary demonstrations featuring CT Grown products at as many of the state's 90 farmers' markets as possible.

This is a great opportunity to help teach the public about the beautiful, beneficial bounty from our local farms (not to mention get some well-deserved visibility for you and your business).

The CT Department of Agriculture has a limited amount of funding to reimburse participating chefs up to \$100 for the cost of product used in each demonstration.

More information will be sent out this winter about this exciting opportunity.

Guest Editorial – from Chef Emily Brooks

(MANDATORY DISCLAIMER: These views are the author's and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the CT Department of Agriculture or the Farm-to-Chef Program...)

HAPPINESS ISDissecting the Grass-Fed Movement

By Chef Emily Brooks, Edibles Advocate Alliance, LLC

I set out on a mission to define, understand, and put a face on the grass-fed movement of our Connecticut producers and their animals.

Definitions first. The American Grassfed Association defines grass-fed products from ruminants, including cattle, bison, goats and sheep, as those food products from animals that have eaten nothing but their mother's milk and fresh grass or grass-type hay from birth to harvest. For grass-fed non-ruminants, including pigs and poultry, grass is a significant part of their diet, but not its entirety, since these animals need to consume grains.

So why is a grass-fed diet important to the animals and ultimately the resulting food products? Meat and dairy animals allowed to graze on open fields live longer and

can produce longer due to more natural, less stressful, conditions. Hormone shots, antibiotics and animal proteins added to feeds in conventionally fed animals boost production in the short-term, but reduce the quality of life in the animals in the longer term and compromise the nutritional quality of meat and dairy products.

By contrast, environmentally friendly grazing operations are really “grass farms”, which use livestock to process grass into a healthy food product and they don’t use a lot of diesel or gasoline to power the equipment used to farm commercial grains.

I was unable to locate any commercial feed lots in Connecticut. In our Buy Local campaigns and mindsets we automatically assume that local meat and dairy producers in Connecticut adhere to this utopian vision of pure grass-fed nirvana. In reality, Connecticut’s seasons, temperatures, soil compositions, industrial waste by-products and population size place severely limits on the availability of expansive pasture land necessary to sustain our animals entirely on grass alone. Our long and cold winters force producers to choose between the health and maintenance of their animals and the NOFA 100% Certified Grass-Fed Beef marketing stickers on packages. While a few small select producers in Connecticut are fortunate enough to mature their animals generally on grass alone, most grant an animal as much pasture as it happily wants and then supplements their feed with grain as needed to protect the health of the animal and our limited pasture resources; an integrity, called “pasture raised.”

While the syntax really shouldn’t matter, our implied norms and principled expectations lead us to believe that it is supposed to. The truth is, more goes into the quality of the farm, the quality of life of the animals, and our resulting dinner than an esoteric principle manifested only by a particular color-coded label. And too, I have come to understand that “grass fed” has quickly become washed-out wording in our ever evolving gourmand lexicon. We use “grass fed” the way we use “free range,” to imply holistic ethics and impart greater virtue – an intrinsic value not given to the farmer or the animal, but to us, the consumers . Long ago, these terms actually defined a neighborly arterial relationship between man and beast that fed our psychosocial need to participate with the cattle grazing on rolling hills with picturesque red barns twinkling against sunny blue skies. When we buy organic, or free-range, or grass-fed, we feel better regardless if it is a mass-produced product with deceptively implied marketing, substituting a pretty farm picture on labeled packages for a hand-shake with our friend and neighbor. Perhaps it is our needy attempt to assimilate with and comprehend this foreign and invisible symbiosis called the Farm in our ever evolving corporate and industrial infrastructure.

As consumers, when deciding the measure of health and value, we most often vote with our pocket book, not our fork, or our palate, or our tangible knowledge, or our neighborliness. The

higher the cost the finer the product, yes? And yet our general comprehension of farming is so conceptually elusive that most of us don't even know what it is we don't know. It would be ludicrous to say that all fiction books are the same story, or that all reds are the same color, but we'll illogically paint farming with a broad "one is all" brush. And so we assimilate and interpret "grass-fed" to mean human interaction; a carefully tended symbiotic relationship between man and beast, regardless of its actual definition.

The simplest of questions to our grass-fed producers, "why do you do this?" yielded stunned guffaws that made me realize that perhaps there might actually be such things as stupid questions after all. Not one farmer cited a primary goal of reducing childhood obesity, or responded with a passion to pump more cash into our local economy. No one stated that their primary purpose hinged on reducing environmental pollution, or a singular dedication to increasing the nutritional value of our meat supply – all of the reasons we consumers choose as priorities by our purchase choices. In short, every farmer I spoke with tends these animals because they absolutely love doing so.

Such simplicity and intensity of passion made me feel as if I were having tea with Monet or Picasso; that this blind passion for tangibly nurturing our land was, in its fundamental essence, a rare art form; that perhaps the deep and internal fulfillment of a man can actually cascade onto his symbiotic relationship with his animals. As I toured farms, I realized that the misplaced quibble between defining "grass-fed" and "pasture-raised," and which is healthier or more preferable, detracted from the fundamental beauty of a holistic natural environment.

The beauty of the Buy Local movement in Connecticut has not matured to its full ripeness. Indeed we are going to the farmers' markets and we are voting with our forks, but we are only half way back to the time and place where the symbiosis of man and his food source was be etched and celebrated in every facet of our lives.

Finishing our journey will begin with a handshake. Food labels will be replaced by forging strong friendships with and tangible memories of our neighbors and farmers. We'll begin to paint each producer with their own stylistic brush as intelligent, passionate individuals – an evolution of awareness regardless of "grass-fed" or "pasture raised" or any other inane and intangible marketing language. The final phase of our Buy CT journey will arise when we appoint health and value to our food purchasing decisions not with our pocket book, but with our tangible knowledge and our neighborliness. As Baba Dioum said, "In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we have been taught."

And for our grass-fed producers, it is hard to tell who is happier . . . who is most nurtured in their natural environment . . . who is most fulfilled . . . the farmers or the animals they tend to.

I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to Nunzio and Irene Corsini of Four Mile River Farm and Suzanne Sankow of Beaver Brook Farm for their gracious hospitality during the writing of this article.

*For more information on local grass-fed and pasture raised producers in Connecticut, visit:
http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/pdf/2007_livestock_and_meat_producers_brochure.pdf*

*Curried CT Grown Short Ribs, Chef Emily Brooks, EA Alliance
Serves 4-6*

*5 lbs CT Grown pasture raised or grass-fed beef short ribs
¼ lb fresh CT Grown pasture raised bacon, diced
4 CT Grown garlic cloves, minced
2 TBL minced ginger
1 medium CT Grown carrot, diced small
3 medium CT Grown leeks, sliced thinly
¼ cup curry paste or 3 TBL curry powder
1 14 oz can unsweetened coconut milk
6 cups chicken stock
2 TBL lime juice
2 medium CT Grown tomatoes, sliced into 8 wedges
sea salt and pepper to taste
chopped CT Grown cilantro for garnish*

- 1. Preheat oven to 350F.*
- 2. On stove top in a large, heavy-bottomed ovenproof pot over medium-high heat, sear bacon until crispy. Remove.*
- 3. Sear ribs on all sides, adding a little grapeseed oil if needed. Remove ribs and set aside.*
- 4. Add leeks, garlic and ginger to the pot and cook over low heat until the leeks are soft, about 10 minutes.*
- 5. Stir in the curry paste or powder, making sure there are no lumps.*
- 6. Add coconut milk and stock and bring to a light simmer.*
- 7. Return short ribs to the pot, cover, and braise in the oven for 1 ½ to 2 hours, until the meat is tender.*
- 8. Remove from oven and gently stir in the tomatoes, salt and pepper and lime juice.*
- 9. Garnish with cilantro and serve with plain rice.*

The crisped bacon, crumbled, makes a lovely garnish for a simple green salad accented with grapefruit wedges, sliced scallions, and dressed with a drizzle of fresh-squeezed grapefruit juice. Prepare salad just prior to serving, and you'll find that the tart and simple combination is a perfect accent to this velvety meal!

Contact Chef Emily at chefamily@ediblesadvocatealliance.org

Additional Guest Editorials Sought

The Farm-to-Chef Program is seeking other guest editorials from both chefs and farmers to provide for this newsletter.

Topics might include your discovery of a great local product, how you overcame a particular challenge in your job, suggestions for local menus during the winter, a special recipe you want to share , etc.

Please send submissions to Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov.

CT Farm-to-Chef Program Website Listings

We are always seeking more restaurants, institutions, and other dining facilities to be listed on our site. If you or someone you know is serving CT Grown food and would like to let people know, please contact Linda at 860-713-2558 or Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov so we can add you to our website.

We also are continually looking to updating our producers/wholesalers listings. If you are purchasing CT Grown from someone not on our list, please let us know so we can include them!

You can access the [Farm-to-Chef Program](#) from the CT Department of Agriculture's home page, www.CTGrown.gov and then click on the Farm-to-Chef link on the right sidebar under "Featured Links."

CT Department of Agriculture Mascots

The Department has four vegetable costumes (carrot, corn, cucumber, and pea), as well as a cow, lobster, and chicken. The Mascots are a fun, effective way to promote the benefits of nutritious CT Grown foods. Look for them at events such as farmers' markets, fairs, and shows around the state.

All of the costumes are available to borrow for special events. For more information, please contact Linda at 860-713-2558 or Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov.



CT GROWN! - THE LOCAL FLAVOR.

www.CTGrown.gov