



CT Department of Agriculture

Program Briefs

The first-ever **Farm-to-Chef Program Annual Meeting** was held on February 13, 2008. For those who were unable to attend, a lengthy recap of the event is included in this newsletter. For those who did attend, please take a few minutes to respond to our short online post-meeting [survey](#).

The meeting generated some thought-provoking dialogue that we would like to continue. Future issues of Farm-to-Chef newsletters will feature a **Member Q+A** section for everyone to post inquiries and responses. Please send your posts to Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov.

We have heard from several entrepreneurial individuals interested in becoming **CT Grown distributors**. Please be assured that we will keep you in the loop should any new companies arrive on the scene.

Farm-to-Chef cooking demonstrations will be scheduled for CT Grown farmers' markets throughout the entire state this summer and fall. We will be seeking chefs to go to markets and show customers ways to prepare and serve some of the products sold at the markets. Reimbursement will be offered to cover the cost of the CT Grown ingredients used. More information will be distributed about this program soon.

Another **chefs' workshop** will be held this summer. This year's workshop will move to Milford but will again feature CT Seafood by popular demand. Details of this year's workshop still are being arranged, but we promise you will not be disappointed!

Contributors are needed for the Commentary section of this newsletter. If interested, please contact Linda Piotrowicz by [email](mailto:Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov) or at 860-713-2558.

March 2008

CT Grown Now in Season

CT Grown seafood, dairy, eggs, meat, honey, and maple syrup are available year-round.

Lettuce, herbs, and other greens are produced in a number of CT greenhouses throughout winter.

Celared produce such as apples, pears, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and more may still be available from your local farmer. Don't be shy—call and ask them what they have!

Our state is blessed with several **winter farmers' markets** this year, as well as a number of **year-round farm stands**. Please see Page 8 of this newsletter for an ever-growing listing.

If you need help locating any CT Grown items, please [contact us](#).



Contact Us

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Annual Meeting Recap

Recap of 2/13/08 Farm-to-Chef Meeting

by Linda Piotrowicz, CT Department of Agriculture
Photos by Alan Budney Photography

The CT Farm-to-Chef Program conducted its first-ever annual meeting of members on February 13, 2008 at the Wadsworth Mansion in Middletown.

A room-capacity 120 people registered for the event. Although some were unable attend due to the storm that engulfed the state that morning, turnout was still impressive.



After a quick welcome by Linda Piotrowicz from the CT Department of Agriculture, moderator Michelle Paulson from MP Solutions took over. She introduced the first speaker, Jonathan Rapp (pictured at left with Michelle Paulson), chef-owner of River Tavern Restaurant in Chester and creator of the highly acclaimed Dinners at the Farm series.

Spontaneity and creativity are trademarks of Jonathan's menus. Using what is in season, freshest, and available on any given day is the key to making his food so delicious. Jonathan frequently heads to the farm to see what looks best before beginning to plan what he will cook that day. "When you work with good ingredients," he said, "the best thing you can do is to keep it simple and let the flavors of the food come through and speak for themselves."

An edited version of from Jonathan's address is included in the Commentary section this newsletter.

Thomas Peterlik (pictured at right with Michelle), Director of the Culinary Resource Center at Yale University, was the second to speak. He discussed a very different approach to using local food in his menus.

Because of the enormous volume of food used by Yale's Dining Services Department and consumed by students, Thomas must plan his menus out to the finest detail up to a year in advance. Working through a local wholesale distributor, Thomas seeks out area farmers willing to commit to growing one or more specified crops at agreed-upon prices for the coming season.



At the conclusion of both addresses, the 10 panelists introduced themselves:

Chefs/Users

- Jason Collin, Firebox Restaurant
- Susan O'Keefe, UConn Dining Services
- Thomas Peterlik, Yale University
- Jonathan Rapp, River Tavern
- John Turenne, Sustainable Food Systems

Producers/Providers

- Dan Batchelder, Fowler & Huntting Produce Company
- D.J. King, King Lobster
- Patty King, Dolan Brothers Shellfish
- Bill Stuart, Stuart's Family Farm
- Ken Zaborowski, Urban Oaks Organic Farm

Marydale DeBor from New Milford Hospital, Rebecca Gorin from UConn, and Suzanne Sankow from Sankow's Beaver Brook Farm also were scheduled to participate on the panel, but were unable to attend due to extenuating circumstances (weather and lambing).

Annual Meeting Recap (continued)



At left, chef/user panelists (left to right), Jonathan Rapp, Thomas Peterlik, Jason Collin, John Turenne, Susan O'Keefe.



At right, producer/provider panelists (left to right), Dan Batchelder, Ken Zaborowski, Bill Stuart, D.J. King, Patty King

Michelle Paulson then introduced the four discussion topics:

1. Building Relationships between Local Producers and Local Chefs
2. Pricing and Payment
3. Delivery and Distribution of Local Products
4. Use of "Seconds" and "Sub-Prime" Products

To start off each topic, Michelle asked a question and panelists answered, giving their personal perspective on the issue. Members from the audience then were invited to join in with questions and comments pertaining to the topic at hand.

Common themes permeated all four discussion topics. Among them were the importance of communication and strong relationships between producers and users, and the challenge of getting the product to the user in a manner that was convenient, or at the very least limited the *inconvenience*, to both grower and chef.

The group concurred that timely communication about what producers had available was critical to the ability of the food preparers to use that product. Some audience members commented that weekly or regular email "blasts" from vendors were among the most useful forms of communication.

Both producers and users agreed that building loyal, long-term relationships is imperative to a local food system. Flexibility and, at times, compromise, are necessary. Mother Nature does not always cooperate, and crops do not always mature at the time or in the quantities planned, regardless of the grower's skill and expertise.

Chefs must be comfortable shifting gears and implementing Plan B (or Plan C or Plan D) when the unexpected inevitably occurs. Producers must be willing to work with their chefs to arrive at solutions, such as selling smaller-than-expected or spotted produce at a reduced price, or offering an alternative product when the first choice does not come through as anticipated. This flexibility and willingness to work together helps to build trust and loyalty that become invaluable down the road.

Annual Meeting Recap (continued)

During the discussion of pricing and payment, many users indicated that prices of locally produced foods are often higher and sometimes irreconcilable with budgetary constraints. It was pointed out, however, that the fairness of those prices was never a question – the chefs believe that the producers charge what they must, based upon the costs of production. Therefore users must choose products that are most important to them. Sometimes an alternative crop, cut of meat, or type of seafood can be used, still using local ingredients while staying within the budget. Again, flexibility and creativity are critical to success.

Delivery and distribution continue to be challenging for both sides of the table. Farmers' time is best spent in the field (or on the fishing boat), and chefs' time is best spent in the kitchen. Time on the road delivering or picking up product reduces efficiency. On the other hand, as one producer pointed out, using a "middleman" eliminates the face-to-face contact that both sides find to be a valuable component of the farmer-chef connection.

It seemed as though different distribution methods might be appropriate in different situations, or even at different times in the same circumstance. One chef panelist encouraged others to try to get their staff out to the farm every so often, just so they can gain a greater understanding of where the food they work with actually comes from. Likewise, it would be beneficial to producers to visit the chefs on occasion to better appreciate where and how their food is being used.

The use of "seconds" and "sub-prime" products was a lively discussion. A significant portion of this session centered on meat. Thomas Peterlik pointed out that a single animal produces only two tenderloins. He asked a meat producer present how many animals he had at any one given time (response: "a couple hundred"). Laughter erupted when Thomas then asked the audience to figure out how many animals would be required to supply tenderloins for a single event serving 400.

Though humorous, the point was clear to all. In a sustainable food system, all parts of the animal must be used, not only select cuts. Several of the chef panelists offered ideas for using tougher cuts of meat. A chef in the audience urged her peers to educate their customers about the food they chose to serve, including introducing them to lesser-known cuts and ingredients.

One of the producer panelists encouraged chefs to consider seafood that is not picture-perfect. "A one-claw lobster tastes exactly the same as a two-claw lobster," he remarked, bringing chuckles from participants, "But it costs a lot less. For a fancy white-tablecloth dinner, maybe you want the two-claw lobsters, but for an outdoor picnic, why not serve the one-claws?"

A discussion arose regarding using produce that might otherwise be discarded due to minor bruising or other deformity. If a chef is going to cut it up anyway, why not just cut around the bad spot? Why waste the good portion of the fruit or vegetable, especially if using it allows the producer to sell it and allows the chef to purchase it at a reduced price? While this concept may involve too much extra labor to make it feasible in large institutions, it could be a regular practice in smaller restaurants or businesses.

The group broke just before noon. A buffet lunch featuring a bounty of CT Grown meats, cheeses, fruits, vegetables, and juices was savored as participants enjoyed the opportunity to meet and network with others. Many stayed for as long as two hours chatting and exchanging information and ideas.

A follow-up [survey](#) has been posted on-line and all attendees are strongly encouraged to take a few minutes to respond. This feedback will be extremely helpful in making the next meeting of this type even more productive and valuable to members.

The event generated tremendous energy and enthusiastic discussion. While no consensus on what the single "right" solution to some of the challenges at hand might be, certainly these issues deserve continued dialogue and creative thinking. This newsletter can be one vehicle for that dialogue, and will print questions and comments from members in each issue. Please send your queries and responses to Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov.

Tips for Chef-Farmer Relationships

Submitted by John Turenne, [Sustainable Food Systems](#)

The following are suggestions from chefs and farmers, compiled by the Portland Chapter of Chefs Collaborative

NOTES FROM A CHEF TO A FARMER

1. **Commitment.** Restaurants, for cost control, need to be somewhat automated in their purchasing patterns. When a chef commits to buying a certain amount from the farm, the chef anticipates it to be delivered accordingly.
2. **Delivery Schedule.** Chefs depend on the arriving product. Work with your chef so the restaurant can have a steady stream of fresh produce during the week from you farm. Also, try to establish a delivery system that works for both the kitchen and your schedule. Know your restaurant's busy times and plan your calls and visits around these times, not in the middle of them.
3. **Sell What You Can Deliver.** Don't short the kitchen; the chef is expecting a certain quantity. If the product is different than what you offered call the chef and ask if they still want it.
4. **Sell Your Product.** Chefs love free samples. Be generous with your prized produce when you first stop by the restaurant (do call in advance!) and on that first delivery day encourage them to try and taste the difference. Offer samples at farmer's markets where chefs are known to cruise and taste.
5. **Get to Know Your Customers.** Eat in the restaurants where you deliver. Lunch is a cheaper alternative if offered. Just as important as having a chef visit your farm, you'll see how your product is used. You'll be inspired.
6. **Reinforce My Loyalty.** Part patience and part diligence -- remember to be consistent in your work and with your produce. Assist the person receiving the delivery by collecting your boxes, be on time, courteous, and prepare invoices ahead. Call if you will be late.
7. **Billing.** Like any other businessperson you have a right to be paid on time. First time deliveries may be paid in cash, but it far more efficient for everyone to establish an account.
8. **Specialize and diversify.** Diversify the produce that you offer and make yourself unique. Research the market so you know what others are growing and where the holes are. Talk to your chef about what they would like to see on their menus in the future. Sell flowers and vegetables offering them both to the same restaurant. Be creative.

NOTES FROM A FARMER TO A CHEF

1. **Commitment.** Buy consistently while a product is in season rather than for just a small amount of time, or communicate with your farmer that you may need a product for only a short time. This gives the grower the opportunity to sell it elsewhere. If a requested item isn't picked each week it ends up in the compost.
2. **Delivery.** Establish a delivery schedule with your farmer.
3. **Buy What You Can Use.** Both chefs and farmers think about their bottom line. Do expect to pay full price even if you are buying the last cases directly from the farmer at the market. Challenge yourself to use it well. Establish a predictable routine with your farmer for phone calls, orders, and questions. Give the growers advance notice of what you would like for delivery.
4. **Learn about Your Product.** Continue to learn about the items your farmer grows and inspire your co-workers and employees to do so. Most farmers are great cooks because they cook directly from their garden. They are a great resource for learning about growing seasons, product use, and availability.
5. **Get to Know Your Grower.** Taste the produce with them and talk to them about what you plan to do with it and what it will be paired with. Ask your grower how they use it. If you are unhappy with something let them know and why. It is in our interest to make you happy. Talk to your grower about trends and request varieties you're interested in.
6. **Cultivate Trust.** There is always a degree of uncertainty regarding crop size and quality. Remain flexible and patient with your farmer, they know about disappointment and surprises.
7. **Billing.** Work out a system with your farmer. Most farms like to be paid COD or within 7 days.
8. **Be Flexible.** Use what is fresh and in season. It will make your plates better. Generalize your menus. If certain vegetables are fresh that day they can be incorporated into a dish without having to change the menu.

Commentary

The following has been adapted from the address given by Jonathan Rapp at the 2/13/08 Farm-to-Chef Meeting

Building a Local Menu

by Jonathan Rapp, Chef Owner [River Tavern Restaurant](#), Chester, and [Dinners at the Farm](#) Series

As individuals, we are each committed to sustaining and building our local agricultural community through our work as growers, chefs, distributors and public servants.

Together, we are a group that can make positive change happen in the way we as a society grow, sell, buy and eat our food. We are the grassroots of the local food movement.

Today we can start the process by talking to each other, finding out what we each need and how we can work together for the common good. I'm optimistic that solutions to most of the challenges we face will be found - starting today.

I want to start by asking a basic question: *Why does local food matter?*

I have known since I was a kid that the best food is the freshest food. We all know there is no substitute for a salad right from the garden or fish cooked within hours of being caught. It also seems clear to me that food is about more than just sustenance. How and what we eat is a crucial component of who we are as a culture. Growing, cooking, and eating food historically has been one of the foundations of society.

Back when our society was still largely rural and agrarian, food and its production was a fundamental component in the lives of a majority of Americans. Farms were at the center of our way of life. By the end of the long transformation to today's predominately urban, industrial nation, food had become an industrial commodity produced and marketed to a population that was no longer connected to it in any meaningful way.

I think it is clear that this shift, inevitable and largely permanent as it was, resulted in a substantial loss of heritage, and of connection to how and what we eat. How many people make the connection between the plastic-wrapped, skinless chicken breast in the store and a real flesh-and-blood chicken?

I am of course aware that we will not be returning to a time when all of our food came from small family farms. But I do think it possible and important to restore the faith and confidence in how our food is grown and to remember why we eat: *To sustain ourselves and our society*. The practices and benefits of traditional farming are still valid and valuable; they can show the way back to a more culturally integrated, healthy and meaningful food system.

At right, Jonathan prepares locally raised chicken for 700 VIPs at the 2007 Farm Aid Concert



Commentary (continued)

I am excited and very sure of the future of local food- and seeing all of you here, I am happy to know that aside from the power of conviction, we have numbers!

My own experience with buying, cooking, and selling local food stretches back to 1992 when my dad and I opened a restaurant in NYC called Etats-Unis. Like so many, my passion for local food was sparked by Alice Waters. From May through November, three times a week, I would go to the Union Square green market. Twice a week I went to Fulton Street at 3:00 AM to buy fish, mostly local. Meat came from a co-op in Vermont. I could see, even in the days before "local" became a buzzword, that this was the way to cook.

My time spent with farmers and fishmongers at the markets was my favorite part of the day - experiencing the sense of connection and meaning that comes from knowing where your food comes from, how it's grown, and who's growing it.

When I moved here and opened River Tavern in 2001, I figured it would be even easier to source local ingredients. I was in the country after all, surrounded by farms. I soon realized what a gift Union Square had been.

For me it has been a slow, time consuming process of finding farmers who are close enough to the restaurant and can supply what I need at prices I can afford. It has taken a serious commitment of time and energy to make this happen and we still have a way to go to get to our goal of basing our menu on local products year round. It's a lot more work than simply picking up the phone and having what we need delivered.

Until there is a workable distribution system for small farms, my original hope of using an extensive network of farms has given way to what I think will be a more efficient plan of working with only a few nearby farmers who are able to commit to growing what we need and who are willing to work with us on pricing.

My hope is that this arrangement will benefit them by assuring them a market and fair price for a good chunk of their production, encourage them to grow specialty crops they might not otherwise be able to sell, and most importantly, reduce the overhead of marketing and transporting their product.

For us, this arrangement will ensure a supply of top quality, truly local food from growers I know and respect. It will allow us to work with specialty and heirloom varieties not currently available to us, and it will substantially reduce the time and energy I need to spend sourcing and transporting product.

Most importantly our customers will know they are eating the freshest, localist - if that's a word - and healthiest food possible.



Jonathan, at left, cooking aboard the Dinners at the Farm mobile kitchen truck at the 2007 FarmAid concert

Winter Shopping Venues

WINTER/EARLY SPRING FARMERS' MARKET DATES AND LOCATIONS

Fairfield

[Indoor Winter Farmers' Market](#)

Saturdays 1/13/08 through 4/28/08

Fairfield Theater Company, 70 Sanford Street

10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

New Haven

[Wooster Square Farmers' Market](#)

Third Saturday of month

(1/19/08, 2/16/08, 3/15/08, and 4/19/08)

Russo Park, at corner of Chapel Street and DePalma Court

10:00AM to 1:00 PM

New London

[Fiddleheads Food Cooperative](#) Indoor Farmers' Market

Saturdays 2/2/08 through 4/28/08

13 Broad Street, New London

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Woodbury

[Masters' Table](#) Winter Indoor Farmers' Market Fundraiser

NOTE NEW DATE! Saturday 03/15/08 (one day only)

Nonnewaug High School, 5 Minortown Road

11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

YEAR-ROUND FARM STANDS/STORES

[Bishop's Orchards Farm Market](#)

1355 Boston Post Road, US Rte. 1, Guilford
203-458-PICK (7425)

Mon. – Sat. 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM
Sun. 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM

[Ekonk Hill Turkey Farm](#)

227 Ekonk Hill Road, Sterling
860-564-0248

Mon. – Fri. 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Sat. – Sun. 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

[Four Mile River Farm Stand](#)

124 Four Mile River Road, Old Lyme
860-434-2378

Daily Self-Serve, Honor System

[Holmberg Orchards Farm Store](#)

1990 Rte. 12, Gales Ferry
860-464-7305

Daily 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM

[Killam & Bassette Farmstead](#)

14 Tryon Street (Rte. 160), South Glastonbury
860-633-1067

Daily 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM (Nov. – Jun.)
Daily 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM (Jul. – Oct.)

[Lyman Orchards Apple Barrel](#)

Jct. Rtes. 147 and 157, Middlefield
860 349-1793

Daily 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM

[Rogers Orchard](#)

[Home Farm](#), Long Bottom Road, Southington
860-229-4240

Late July through Mid May
Daily 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Sunnymount, Meriden-Waterbury Road, Southington
203-879-1206

Daily 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM

[Sankow's Braver Brook Farm](#)

139 Beaver Brook Road, Lyme
860-434-2843

Daily 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

[Urban Oaks](#)

225 Oak Street, New Britain
860-223-6200

Fridays 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM (or by appointment)

If you know of other farmers' markets or farm stands open this winter, please [contact us!](#)

Member News

UCONN Dining Services held their 8th annual Culinary Competition in January. Seventeen teams of three chefs competed in an "Iron Chef"-like competition called "Boiling Point." Stonington scallops, fresh from Long Island Sound, were the focus. The winning team featured FTC member chef Jim Buell, along with chefs Yukie Goodwin, and Cecelia Gomez.

Read the [Journal Inquirer article](#) about this exciting event.

On February 26, 2008, 10 Farm-to-Chef member chefs donated their time and talent to the CT Department of Environmental Protection's **No Child Left Inside** 2008 Season Inaugural Event at the Governor's Residence in Hartford.

Thank you to these chefs, listed below, who prepared and served, to rave reviews, spectacular dishes featuring fresh CT Grown ingredients.

Claire Criscuolo, Basta Trattoria / Claire's Corner Copia
Red Lanphear, Black Rock Tavern
Timothy Cipriano, Bloomfield Public Schools
Glen Collelo, Catch a Health Habit Café
Carole Peck, Good New Café
Carlos Cassar, Saybrook Point Inn and Spa
Daniel Chong-Jimenez, Spa at Norwich Inn
John Turenne, Sustainable Food Systems, LLC
Kevin Cottle, Country Club of Farmington
Leo Bushey, Hartford Club

Thanks also to FTC producer member **Jamie Jones** from Jones Family Farm and Jones Winery for participating in this special event.

No Child Left Inside is seeking FTC member chefs for future events. If interested, please contact Linda.Piotrowcz@ct.gov.



The CT Chefs Association will hold its 34th Annual Culinary Arts Exposition at the CT Culinary Institute in Suffield, CT on Monday, March 17, 2008. Included are a culinary student ice carving competition, professional chef demonstrations throughout the day, food service vendor displays and information booths, and an American Culinary Federation (ACF) approved culinary salon competition.

The Culinary Salon Competition includes many savory categories, as well as pastry and dessert categories, several cake decorating categories, and a showpiece category. Additionally there is also a CT Chefs Cake Competition with many categories from beginners to masters. Competition is open to all food service professionals.

For more information, contact these FTC member chefs:
 Culinary Salon Entry - Frank Cameron, 860-774-6652
 CT Cake Competition - Carol Murdock, 860-586-8202
 All other information - Shirley Markham, 860-454-4588.

Bloomfield Public Schools and FTC member chefs **Tim Cipriano**, Bloomfield Food Service Director and **Paul Waszkelewicz**, Bloomfield Culinary Arts Instructor, recently were featured in Food Management.

[Read the article.](#)

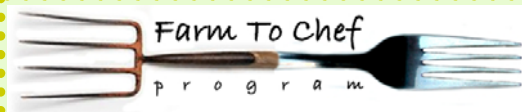
FTC member chef **Emily Brooks** of Bridges Healthy Cooking School, [Edibles Advocate Alliance](#), and [Masters Table Farm Markets](#), has been coaching Hartford Courant columnist and WTIC 1080 AM talk show host Colin McEnroe through a 12-week weight-loss challenge, emphasizing a healthy diet full of nutritious CT Grown foods.

Tune in live every Monday at 3:30 PM at www.wtic.com (or 1080 AM on your radio) to track Colin's progress and hear Emily's recommendations for the week. You can also hear [previous segments](#) (scroll down list on the left of the page) and check out [photos](#) on the station's website.

Photo Gallery



*Photos from No Child Left Inside Event
Clockwise from Top: Kevin Cottle,
Carole Peck (on right); Daniel Sergi,
Frank and Claire Criscuolo (left to right),
Claire Criscuolo and John Turenne;
Carlos Cassar; Kevin Cottle*



Farm-to-Chef is a free program that helps connect local culinary professionals with producers and distributors of CT Grown products. Informational newsletters, workshops, networking, promotions and other opportunities are provided to members as part of the program.

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The program also helps the public locate restaurants and other dining facilities that serve CT Grown foods.

Farmers, wholesalers, chefs, and other food service professionals are encouraged to join. Please contact Linda at the CT Department of Agriculture, Linda.Piotrowicz@ct.gov or 860-713-2558, for more information.