

Roots & Sprouts

News and Ideas from the Belmont Farmers' Market

August 2006

www.belmontfarmersmarket.org



Roots and Sprouts, a publication of the Belmont Farmers' Market, seeks to educate and entertain, including answering readers' questions about produce, agriculture, and farming. "Are tomatoes a fruit or a vegetable?" is one frequent query. Send your questions to belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com and we will provide answers in future issues.

Fruit or Vegetable?

Or... what is a tomato, anyway?

How do you decide the difference between fruits and vegetables? Is it as clear as the difference between a plum and a potato? It's not always as easy as it seems.

Fruits and vegetables are both parts of a plant. They can taste good, are often colorful, and have some nutritional value. A fruit contains seeds; it is the ripened ovary of a flower of a plant. Fruits propagate the plant by transporting its seeds in a variety of ways. It is easy to see the seeds in apples, oranges, grapes, pomegranates, watermelon, and pears.

A vegetable is any edible part of a plant: the roots, the stems or the leaves. For example, carrots, beets, radishes, potatoes, and turnips are the roots of a plant. Broccoli, rhubarb, cauliflower, celery, and asparagus are the stems of a plant. Arugula, spinach, and cabbage are the leaves of a plant. While "fruit" is a "botanical term," "vegetable" is a "culinary term" that refers to many different types of produce.

The debate often centers on whether a tomato is a fruit or a vegetable. To decide the answer once and for all, some research is required. According to The Fruit Pages (www.thefruitpages.com), a fruit is a "fleshy, seed-bearing part of a plant used as food." This definition would classify a tomato as a fruit. It is widely considered to be a vegetable, however, as it is eaten with the main, savory part of meals, as is customary with most

vegetables. In 1893, the question of whether a tomato is a fruit or a vegetable went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court because a tariff was imposed on vegetables but not on fruits. The Court ruled that a tomato is a vegetable and not a fruit because it is commonly eaten with dinner and not with dessert. Botanically, therefore, a tomato is classified as a fruit, but legally it is a vegetable.

Shoppers at the Belmont Farmers' Market have been surveyed for their opinion: Is a tomato a fruit or a vegetable? Thirteen shoppers voted "fruit" while six voted "vegetable." Several could not decide. While the debate continues, the Belmont Farmers' Market logo, a bright, red tomato, continues to represent both fruits and vegetables.

—Claire Mackevicius is a freshman at Belmont High School. She volunteers at Drumlin Farm and enjoys cooking and writing.

Editor's Note:

In addition to tomatoes, the term vegetable can also encompass non-sweet fruits such as seed-pods (beans), cucumbers, squashes, pumpkins, avocados, green peppers, etc., even some seeds (peas and beans) that are easily softened by soaking.



Thus, technically a vegetable can be a fruit, but a fruit cannot be a vegetable.

Now open!

June through October
Thursday afternoons
2:00 to 6:30 pm

BELMONT CENTER
In the municipal parking lot
behind the Leonard St. stores
off Cross St. & Channing Rd.

In this issue . . .

Fruit or vegetable?
Meet our farmers: Nicewicz Family Farm
Food for thought: Resources for eating well
Celebrate Farmers' Market Week
Stone Hearth makes panzanella

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food

Meet Nicewicz Family Farm

Each issue of *Roots and Sprouts* will introduce one of our farmers or vendors. We'll tell you about how they got started, how they grow or produce their products, and what they will bring to the Belmont Farmers' Market.

The Nicewicz Family Farm is one of a handful of farms in Bolton that has been in agricultural production since colonial times. In 1929, Julian and Catherine Nicewicz, immigrants from Poland, bought the fruit farm from Mike Brown of Bolton. The farm specialized in apples, peaches and pears, but Julian also harvested wild high-bush blueberries and cranberries from a 5-acre bog on the property. In addition, a small herd of cows enabled them to produce milk, cheese and butter.

Upon Julian's death, the farm passed to his son, Walter, and is today under the custodianship of the third generation of Nicewiczses: Alan, David, Ken and Tom. Their mother, Vera, manages the farm stand from July through October.

The farm today consists of 100 acres of beautiful land owned by the family as well as additional rented parcels of land surrounding the farm. Over the years they have brought in new farming techniques such as irrigation and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) primarily for their apple trees. Recently the majority of the farm became protected under the Agriculture Preservation Restriction (APR) program of Massachusetts, which means that the land is now permanently protected and will always remain a farm.

Today, the farm still produces pears, peaches and apples, as it did in the old days, but in larger quantities and greater variety. There are 500 peach trees which produce 15 different varieties, and they still grow their delicious blueberries on 1-1/2 acres of land. Apples are a major crop as in 1929. Of particular interest is the Mother Apple, one of the original apples grown on the farm.

Every day of the week one of the Nicewiczses can be found at a farmers' market in Middlesex, Norfolk or Worcester County. Helped by the success of these markets and their new business relationships, the family has added many new items: plums (Santa Rosa, Redheart, Elephant Heart, Blue Free and Stanley), an assortment of vegetables and flowers, along with a few heirloom fruits. They have also opened a pick-your-own apple section of the farm in September and October, hugely successful and greatly anticipated each year.

Heading into the markets for the third week of August, look for apples, peaches, plums, blueberries, zucchini, and summer squash along with Italian (Roma) green beans, eggplants, peppers, tomatoes (particularly their heirloom tomatoes) and the perennial favorite – corn!

—*Carla Vickers*

*Nicewicz Family Farm
116 Sawyer Rd.
Bolton, Massachusetts
976.779.6423*

What's Fresh in... August

apples
beets
bell peppers
blueberries
cauliflower
corn
cucumbers
eggplant

garlic
grapes
green beans
herbs
hot peppers
melons
okra
onions
peaches

plums
potatoes
raspberries
shelling beans
summer squash
tomatillos
tomatoes
zucchini



www.belmontfarmersmarket.org

Belmont Farmers' Market Committee

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We thank our many volunteers... thus far!

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It's not too late to help!

Contact us at
belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com

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2006 Vendors

- **Blue Heron Organic Farm** *occasional* produce and plants grown in Lincoln
- **Busa Farm** produce
- **ButterBrook Organic Farm** herbs, vegetables, honey, flowers, eggs and more
- **Coutts Specialty Foods** fine jams, jellies, applesauce & relishes
- **Dick's Market Garden Farm** a large selection of seasonal produce
- **Kimball Fruit Farm** vegetables, fruit, pies, honey
- **Leslie Wolf Baking** rustic fruit tarts and scones made in Belmont
- **Melissa's Flower Farm** potted herbs, annuals, perennials, cut flowers, jams, dried flowers
- **Nicewicz Family Farm** *beginning in July* apples, peaches, plums, berries, vegetables, flowers, and more
- **NorthStar Farm** quality perennials and ornamental plants
- **Sassy River Sauces** all natural, low-fat, healthy pestos, spreads and sauces
- **Sweet Sue's** cookies, pies, breads and other baked sweets
- **Thoreau Foods** organic breakfast cereals, cereal toppings, smoothie boosters
- **Toscanini & Sons** breads and baked goods
- **Underwood Greenhouse** *occasional* potted herbs, annuals, perennials and tomato plants grown in Belmont



Celebrate Massachusetts Farmers' Market Week August 20-26!

Stop by the BFMC tent for a schedule of special events planned for Thursday, August 24 to commemorate Farmers' Market Week. At the tent you will also find the latest vendor updates, information on food, nutrition and health, and ways to connect with others in Belmont who want to promote local food and local businesses.

Food for Thought

Residents share their passion for fresh food, farmers' markets, and good living

Shopping at farmers' markets is just one way to ensure that local farmers can continue to produce naturally grown produce, eggs, cheese and meats. Across the U.S. and internationally, organizations and individuals are acting to educate consumers, support sustainable agriculture, and celebrate seasonal, local food. Learn more and take action with the help of these resources:

Federation of Massachusetts Farmers: Founded in 1978, the Federation of Massachusetts Farmers' Markets (FMFM) is a service organization dedicated to the needs of farmers, consumers and communities. They work closely with and are aided by UMASS Cooperative Extension and the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture. www.massfarmersmarkets.org

Chefs Collaborative: A national organization that promotes sustainable raised, locally grown, artisan food. www.chefscollaborative.org

True Food Network: An information site regarding genetically modified foods. Provides a list of foods that are genetically modified and those that are not. www.truefoodnow.org

The Monterey Bay Aquarium: Offers *Seafood Watch: Sustainable Seafood Choices*, a list of which seafood to buy, why your choice matters, and what you can do to help. It includes a pocket guide to print out and carry with you on shopping trips. www.mbayaaq.org

New England Heritage Breeds Conservancy: This organization works to conserve historic and endangered breeds of livestock and poultry and encourages production of these breeds to preserve farmland. www.nehbc.org

Organic Consumers Association: Representing more than 600,000 members, the OCA is a grass roots nonprofit public interest organization advocating for food safety and environmental sustainability. www.organicconsumers.org

Slow Food: Founded by Carlo Petrini in Italy in 1986, Slow Food defends food and agricultural biodiversity worldwide. It includes over 83,000 members. www.slowfood.com

Community Sponsored Agriculture (CSA): This site maintains a definitive and reliable public nationwide directory of CSAs (share-supported farm produce), farmers' markets, small farms, and other local food sources, searchable by zip code. www.localharvest.com

Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture: Learn about sustainable agriculture and farm events in the Pioneer Valley at this useful site. www.buylocalfood.com

Eatwild: Offers information about the health benefits of grass-fed meat, milk and eggs, and lists of local producers. www.eatwild.com

The Food Project: Since 1991, The Food Project engages young people in personal and social change through sustainable agriculture. Each year the organization works with over a hundred teens to farm on 31 acres in rural Lincoln, MA and on several lots in urban Boston. Their mission is to grow a community of youth and adults who work together to build a sustainable food system and to provide youth leadership opportunities. www.thefoodproject.org

– Carlha Vickers

Shop at a farmers' market every day of the week!

Farmers' markets are sprouting up in towns everywhere with fresh, local produce and products available in season every day of the week. And remember – Sergi's Farm right here in Belmont (Blanchard and Glenn Road) sells just-picked corn, tomatoes, fresh flowers and more.

Monday

- **Cambridge/Central Square** – Parking lot # 5 at Bishop Allen Drive & Norfolk Street, May – November, 11:30 am – 6:00 pm (Closes at 5:00 pm in November)

Tuesday

- **Cambridge/Harvard University** – Near Sanders Theater, corner of Oxford & Kirkland Streets, June – October, 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm
- **Lexington/Lexington Center** – Corner of Massachusetts Avenue & Fletcher Street, 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Wednesday

- **Arlington/Arlington Center** – Russell Common parking lot, June – October, 1:00 pm – 6:30 pm
- **Somerville/Davis Square** – Day & Herbert Streets parking lot, May – November, 12:00 noon – 6:00 pm (Closes at 5:00 pm in November)

Thursday

- **Belmont/Belmont Center** – June-October, 2:00 pm- 6:30 pm
- **Brookline/Coolidge Corner** – Center Street west parking lot, off Beacon Street, June – October 1:30 pm – dusk



Friday

- **Cambridge/Harvard Square** – Charles Square Courtyard, June – November, 12:00 noon – 6:00 pm

Saturday

- **Cambridgeport** – Morse School parking lot, Magazine Street & Memorial Drive, June – October, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
- **Somerville/Union Square** – On the plaza, June – October, Saturday, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm
- **Waltham/Waltham Center** – Sovereign Bank parking lot, Main & Moody Streets, June – October, 9:30 am – 2:30 pm

Sunday

- **East Cambridge** – East End House parking lot, 105 Spring Street, June – October, 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
- **Cambridge/Harvard Square** – Charles Square Courtyard, May – November, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Stone Hearth Pizza's Panzanella

When corn and tomatoes are abundant, Michael Ehlenfeldt and the staff at Stone Hearth Pizza in Belmont Center enjoy this traditional Italian bread salad.

4 cups bread cut into 1-inch cubes and dried overnight
2 cups halved cherry tomatoes
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cups halved yellow pear tomatoes or roughly chopped heirloom tomatoes
6 ears sweet corn
1 small bunch arugula, washed and stems removed
½ cup coarsely chopped basil
2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Vinaigrette:

¼ cup red wine vinegar
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
3 tablespoons olive oil

- Husk and blanch sweet corn in salted boiling water for 30 seconds and cool. Cut the kernels off the cob and reserve.
- Sear the cherry tomatoes in 2 tablespoons of oil, cut side down, about 5 minutes until they have caramelized. Cool and reserve.
- Combine red wine vinegar, salt and pepper in a bowl, slowly whisk in the olive oil in a thin stream until emulsified.
- Combine all tomatoes, bread, corn, arugula, basil and vinaigrette, toss well and let rest 15 minutes to allow the bread to absorb the vinaigrette and tomato juices.
- Serve at room temperature with grated Parmesan.