

Roots & Sprouts

News and Ideas from the Belmont Farmers' Market

late summer 2009

www.belmontfarmersmarket.org



Open rain or shine!

**Thursday afternoons
1:30 to 6:00 pm
until October 29th**

BELMONT CENTER

**Conveniently located behind
the Leonard Street stores – in
the municipal parking lot off
Cross Street and Channing
Road – where it's easy to
run . . . walk . . . bike . . . and
"SHOP LOCAL" for food and
all your other needs!**

**BEST OF
BOSTON
2009**
Awarded by Boston magazine

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*The Belmont Farmers' Market
is a member of the Belmont
Center Business Association.*

Nature's Unexpected Surprises

Musings of a disabled gardener

I am someone who always thought that drip systems had to do with upper respiratory viruses. Then one year I went to the Farmers' Market and heard gardening music. I came home, threw down seedlings, forgot to weed, mulch or fertilize, and two months later, wandered back into the yard and noticed something green. It wasn't much, and yet, it lived. No matter who you have been or what you have managed in life, a garden causes you to feel wildly accomplished. Proud parent of a packet of seeds!

This summer is a little different. There has been no garden. I sit on the porch with a fractured foot, dutifully elevated and immobilized, looking at the calendar where a date was circled in May. The page has been turned since then, but the ground hasn't, because my foot broke a week beforehand.

If summer had gone as usual, around this time I would be counting my amateur tomatoes, thinking they looked odd in shape and irregularly sunburned, and worrying that the beans might be too wizened to taste good. Mint—a mistake to plant, but a non-gardener never learns—would be flourishing, and the attempt at a single watermelon unsuccessful . . . again. I would be comparing my crops to the ones in the Farmers' Market, spilling out of bins and baskets behind the parking lot on Thursday afternoons. Mine would be severely lacking, yet I would not find this dissatisfying. There is room for imperfection in Nature. On the whole she seems to encourage it.

As a non-gardener, not having a garden has been a strange kind of non-event. It is not as though I have lost an essential identity; I

still know who I am. I am not even really in mourning. I'm just a little melancholy.

This melancholy could use some untangling. It's not about missing the tomatoes. It's tied up in time we forget to think about. We take it for granted that opportunity is available year after year in a plentiful way. Gardens are the supreme example. They are so easy and annual. The ground is ready. The calendar has a circle. The time comes. And then, the time passes. Seeds don't make it out of packets and into soil—my fracture, your emergency business trip, a sudden surge of overwhelming never-mind, a month or two gone by. Whatever the reason, now it is almost September, and the opportunity for this particular garden, in all its accomplishment, is over. Time moves in one direction only. That is what makes me a little mournful.

Once I am allowed to lower my foot and hobble over there, the Farmers' Market will be a solace. Even before then, though, there is some cause to reconsider the melancholy. With or without my collaboration, Nature is on the job. Last week I glanced out the window to the spot where the vegetables would have been. I expected emptiness, but instead, there was abundant growth. A single crop had risen, without being invited, without being planted. It was fruitful and commanding, and it was spreading by the second. Everywhere I looked, to my dismay, I saw it: mint, mint, mint.

*—Elissa Ely, MD, is a practicing psychiatrist,
Belmont resident and frequent contributor
to THE BOSTON GLOBE.*

Practical Farm Training in Athol

Down to earth education for children and adults

As I drive up the dirt road toward The Farm School in Athol, Massachusetts, I hear the cows before I see the farm itself. A minute later, the barn comes into view. I park and walk across the road to the farm, which is quiet on a summer Saturday afternoon.

I meet Patrick Connors, The Farm School's Director, in the bunkhouse. The school is actually two locations, he tells me. This location focuses on programs for children. The Farm School, founded in 1989, provides a hands-on opportunity for children to learn about farming. During the school year, classes of schoolchildren come to The Farm School for 3-day programs. In summer, children attend 5- or 10-day summer camps. The children work on the farm, doing chores from gardening to milking to building.



The second location, Maggie's Farm, is a few minutes drive down the road. There, adult students attend a yearlong Practical Farm Training Program to learn farming skills. Following sustainable agriculture practices, they grow the organic produce for the Belmont Farmers' Market, as well as the farm's CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). I am met in the driveway of Maggie's Farm by Motor, one of the Farm's three cats (the others are Pedal and Clutch). Motor waits while I go into the farmhouse to meet Monica Pless, an Assistant Grower, who helps oversee the Farm School's tent at the BFM. When we return, Motor accompanies us on the tour of the farm.

Across the driveway from the farmhouse, where the farm students live, is a chicken coop full of fluffy yellow chicks. The Farm School's eggs are so popular that these chicks are needed to enlarge the flock of laying hens. Beyond this is the house garden, where student farmers choose the produce to grow for themselves.

Behind the garden, we walk into a dark barn where I meet Ruby and April, two large, brown Belgian draft horses. The students get experience working with the various tractors here, and they also learn to drive a team of horses, work with livestock, and prepare the harvest for market.

In a large area beyond the horse barn, vegetables are being prepared for distribution. Two students work as harvest coordinators, walking through the fields to determine what is ready to pick. After the vegetables are picked, they are brought to the preparation room. Here, up to eight people can work together along a row of washing stations. CSA boxes, farmers' market produce, and food for meals at the other Farm School location are then stored in the walk-in refrigerator.

Back outside, we watch a barn being built to house the farm's equipment. This project is an example of an independent student project. A bit further along are the vegetable fields. Peppers are planted in tidy rows, with tall, green garlic plants in the field behind them. There are a total of ten acres under cultivation at Maggie's Farm. The farm grows a wide variety of vegetables, including beans, collard greens, cucumbers, mesclun, potatoes, squash and tomatoes. Besides eggs, the Farm School also sells grass-fed meat at the Market.

We walk back to the farmhouse, with Motor still following along. The farm is truly lovely on this hot July day. It's been wonderful to spend the afternoon walking through Maggie's Farm, learning about The Farm School, and meeting some of the people who will continue to sustain us through their dedication to agriculture.

— By Becky Prior

The Farm School
488 Moore Hill Road
Athol, MA 01331
www.farmschool.org



www.belmontfarmersmarket.org

Belmont Farmers' Market Committee

Volunteers

Andres Aguirre	Seth Lancaster
Jennifer Angel	Laurie Levy
Libby Atkins	Holly Lorinser
John Beaty	Arvy Mackevicius
Carlos Benitez	Claire Mackevicius
Nicole and Ken Bernstein	Evanthia Malliris
Paulette Black	Susan Marsh
Fred Bouchard	Gretchen McClain
Patricia Brodigan	Cate McGrail
Summer Brown	Judy McSwain
Melissa A. Bruno	Cecilia Michaelis
Stinne Busse-Drechsler	Jocelyn Milton
Sarah and Shane Capron	Therese Nolan
Ann Celi	Becky Prior
Liliane Chaglassian	Gale Pryor
Rose Cherneff	Amrita Ray
Lorenzo Cosmo-Tourreilles	Emily Regier
Paolo Cosmo-Tourreilles	Stephanie Rich
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Julie Korrane	Rowan and Jasper Wolf
Madeleine Klein	Leslie Wolf
Trey Klein	Ed Yee
Emily Kohlenbrander	Marilyn Yee
Margaret Lazarus	Pam Young

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2009 Vendors

- **Coutts Specialty Foods** jams, jellies, applesauce, relishes
- **Dick's Market Garden Farm** vegetables, fruits, and plants
- **The Farm School** organic vegetables, fruits, flowers, eggs, grass-fed meat
- **Fior d'Italia** pasta in many different shapes and flavors
- **Fiore di Nonno Cheese** handcrafted fresh mozzarella
- **Firenze** artisan gelato and sorbetto
- **Follow the Honey** local raw honeys bottled in beautiful glass
- **Goodies** award-winning, better-than-homemade cookies
- **Happy Halo Whisper Cakes** treats that redefine what healthy tastes like
- **Hmong Farms at Flats Mentor Farm** fresh produce featuring Asian vegetables
- **Hutchins Farm** certified organic plants, vegetables, herbs, small fruit, and apples
- **Kimball Fruit Farm** vegetables, fruit, honey, and plants
- **Mamadou Bakery** handcrafted breads
- **Nicewicz Family Farm** apples, peaches, plums, berries, vegetables, flowers
- **NorthStar Farm** perennial plants and fresh organic eggs
- **Samira's Homemade** Middle Eastern dips and salads, fresh made and delicious
- **Sassy River Sauces** savory sauces without the fat
- **Sergi Farms** Belmont's only remaining working farm
- **Shootflying Hill Co.** dessert sauces
- **Siraco** sharper knives since 1953
- **Stillman's at the Turkey Farm** grass-fed meat and freshly-cut flowers
- **Thoreau Foods** organic cereals, toppings, smoothie boosters
- **Underwood Greenhouse** potted plants grown in Belmont
- **Waverley Place** flowers, herbs, and perennials grown in Waltham

Food for Thought

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

In the late spring, summer, and early fall, I volunteer at Sergi Farms, a small vegetable farm in Belmont.

Over time, the farm has become more than just a volunteer job; it has become a second home. In the field, tall vegetable and herb plants preen themselves proudly, showing off their rainbow of colors; green leaves embrace the nutrition that the sprouts provide. An aura of freshness, of soil, water, and greenery touches my nose: at last, I can breathe. Dirt crawls into the pores of my skin, nestling in the roughness of my hands and feet. The sun's rays beat down on the ground, encouraging the greens to emerge from the soil. Sweet kernels of corn melt like ice cream in my mouth.

It was after about a month of working there that the farm became a place of importance

to me. The day itself was just an ordinary day of work. I was picking tomatoes, probably my favorite plants to work on. There was something that attracted me to the soft, red body of the tomato, all squishy and ready to burst in my hand. Every now and then, I'd pop one into my mouth, and the sweet juice would run over my tongue and down my throat like lemonade. I was working alongside people who had become close friends of mine, and our conversation was making my stomach hurt with laughter. It was then, in the muddy field with the sun pleasantly baking my skin, that I realized I wasn't just working to make others happy; working had become a joy for me. That was when I acknowledged that the farm was a place of importance for me: it is now another home.

— by a Belmont High School student volunteer at Sergi Farms

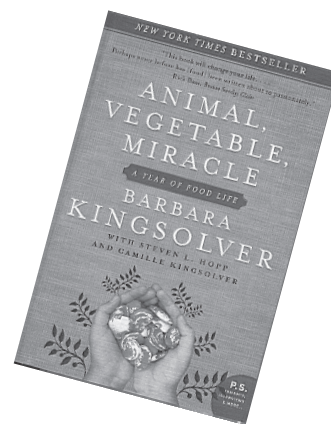
A Second Home in the Green

'One Book One Belmont'

The pleasures of locally grown food

Join this year's One Book One Belmont as we read the best-selling book *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*, by Barbara Kingsolver with husband Steven L. Hopp and daughter Camille Kingsolver. The book selection is intended to fulfill the mission of building a spirit of community by bringing together individuals and groups through a series of book-related events and discussions, and to promote reading as an enjoyable and mind-opening activity. From September 6 to October 8, the Belmont Public Library and fourteen co-sponsoring civic organizations, including the Farmers' Market, will offer programs that feature Belmont residents, past and present, with important connections to food and farming.

Also keeping in mind the Town's 2009 sesquicentennial, the Library's town-wide planning committee chose *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* to celebrate Belmont's agricultural heritage.



The book describes one family's adventures growing, buying, preserving and eating local food during a year's seasons. Kingsolver's joy in growing her own food is evident in her description of harvesting and eating the first tender asparagus stalks of spring; of making and braiding golden ropes of mozzarella; of canning a kitchenful of ripe, red tomatoes and seeing the jars lined up on her pantry shelf.

(continued from page 3)

Programs will feature Belmont residents:

Frances Moore Lappé, pioneer of the sustainable food movement;

Jane Sherwin, historian of Belmont's agricultural past;

Henry Ogilby and Sal Sergi, owner and farmer of our Town's last working farm; and

Roger Wrubel, Director of Mass. Audubon's Habitat, who will lead a walk that includes Belmont's two community gardens.

The 2009 One Book One Belmont program concludes at the October 8th Farmers' Market with cooking demonstrations by three chefs, all known for their dedication to serving dishes prepared with fresh, local ingredients:

Michael Ehlenfeldt of Stone Hearth Pizza,

Joh Kokubo of Kitchen on Common, and

Dante de Magistris of il Casale.

For a complete schedule of events, including those at the Belmont Gallery of Art Belmont and Belmont World Film, visit: www.belmont.lib.ma.us or pick up a One Book One Belmont "menu" at the BFM. Free raffle tickets will be offered at each event to win a book that celebrates the joys of cooking and growing food.

– By *Emily Reardon*, One Book One Belmont coordinator and head of the reference department at the Belmont Public Library



Fatoosh

(Middle Eastern Bread Salad)

- 3 pita breads
- 1 romaine lettuce, torn into pieces
- 3 scallions, white and green finely chopped
- 1 cucumber, peeled, deseeded and cubed
- 4 Roma tomatoes, cubed*
- 3/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup fresh mint, chopped
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/2 fresh lemon, juiced
- 1 teaspoon powdered sumac (optional)**
- Salt to taste

Separate or cut the pita bread horizontally so you get 6 pita rounds. Toast lightly in an oven until golden and crisp, and break into pieces. Set aside. In a large bowl, toss together the lettuce, scallion, cucumber, tomatoes. Make the dressing in a small bowl by combining the parsley, garlic, mint, olive oil, lemon juice, powdered sumac and salt. Pour over salad and toss. Best if allowed to chill for a few hours. Just before serving, add pita bread to salad and toss again. Serves 4-6.

*Any firm, meaty tomato may be substituted. An assortment of heirloom varieties would make for a very colorful salad.

**Sumac is a maroonish colored spice that is typical of Middle East cooking. It adds color and a fruity-tart flavor. While not necessary, it is a very nice touch to this recipe. (Not to be confused with U.S. poison sumac growing along roadways.) Sumac was used as a tart, acidic ingredient by the Romans prior to the introduction of lemons. Sumac is available locally at Eastern Lamejun Bakers, 145 Belmont St., Belmont.

– Adapted from a recipe by Susan Kline