

Roots & Sprouts

News and Ideas from the Belmont Farmers' Market

spring 2010

www.belmontfarmersmarket.org



Welcome to the fifth season of the Belmont Farmers' Market and our newsletter, *Roots & Sprouts*. "Market Thursdays" in the Center are fast becoming a Belmont tradition as people share community camaraderie, reconnect with favorite vendors, and enjoy entertainment — all while shopping for bountiful, fresh, locally-produced food. Belmont Center parking lot is the place. June 10th is opening day. See you at the market!

*Opening June 10th -
rain or shine!*

**Thursday afternoons
1:30 to 7:00 pm
until October 28th
Belmont Center parking lot**



In this issue . . .

**Protecting Massachusetts farmlands
How to have healthy snacks on the go
The Pomona Project
Recipe for lemon-thyme asparagus**

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

Saving Massachusetts Farmlands

*Massachusetts' Agricultural Preservation Restriction bolsters
the farming industry and saves precious rural landscapes*

When state leaders devised the Agricultural Preservation Restriction 30 years ago, were they looking into a crystal ball and seeing today's bustling farmers' markets?

Perhaps not. But the notion of saving local farms dovetails with the current local food movement and with people's desires to buy directly from farmers, heeding the call to "know your farmer, know your food."

The state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) was created in 1979 to stem an alarming loss of farmland. A 1976 study noted that, since World War II, the number of Massachusetts farms had declined from 35,000 to 5,000; farmland had decreased from more than two million to less than 600,000 acres. The APR was the first program of its kind in the nation; it has since been modeled in 27 states.

The voluntary program is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR). In its simplest form, it offers to pay farmers up front the difference between their land's fair market value (or development value) and its lesser agricultural value in exchange for a deed that restricts that land to permanent agricultural use.

The APR benefits farmers in several ways. For those whose equity is locked up in their land's

development value, it provides ready funds to invest back into their farms, expand operations, pay off debts, or pass land on to heirs without onerous inheritance taxes. It enables young farmers to enter the business by creating a market for more affordable farmland. It also helps keep existing farms active and viable, retains farming jobs, and saves some of the best soils and most productive agricultural land in the state.

Moreover, the APR protects quality of life for everyone. The open space supports wildlife, provides for clean air and water, and is often available for recreation. The continued operation of farms also means more opportunities for farmers' markets and CSAs (community supported agriculture).

Thirty years since it began, the APR program still thrives. By the end of 2009, the APR program had permanently protected more than 762 farms and more than 64,038 acres. "APR is a vital tool for the farming community," says



Ron Hall, program coordinator. Funding has held up, and the application process has been streamlined. "Even in a difficult economy," Hall

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Healthy Eating for Busy People

Organizing a well-stocked kitchen today may be one step towards combating obesity tomorrow

According to a 2009 report by both Trust for America's Health, a non-profit, non-partisan organization working to make disease prevention a national priority, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 30% of Massachusetts children ages 10-17 are overweight. How do we avoid unhealthy choices that have contributed to this dangerous epidemic? Here are a few suggestions about making healthy eating less of a chore and more of an adventure.

Planning, Shopping, and Prepping

Healthy eating starts with three words: planning, shopping, and prepping. First, set aside some time on the weekend for planning what you are going to eat for the week. Plan to cook a few large meals in order to have leftovers. For example, cook a large roast and use leftovers for stir-fry, soups, sandwiches, or burritos. Lasagna, casseroles, or chili could be quick heat-and-eat meals for later on in the week.

Before you go shopping, make a list of ingredients you will need. Shopping can be dangerous without a list! Try to stock up on healthy staples; that way you won't run short while cooking and become tempted to settle for take-out.

Next, schedule some weekend time for prepping and cooking, and rally your family and/or friends to help out in the kitchen. My kids love to help chop and slice, and they are learning while they help. Chop up veggies and fruit to have on hand for grab-and-go or for smoothies, omelets, stir-fry, or soups. Hard-boiled eggs also make good, easy snacks on the go.

Breakfast

Mother was right. Studies have shown eating breakfast helps to maintain your weight, to boost your metabolism after an all-night fast, and to improve cognitive and physical performance. Your breakfast choice does not always have to be breakfast-type foods. If cereal is not for you, try peanut butter or soy butter with fresh berries on whole wheat bread, veggie pita pizza, fruit smoothies with protein powder or peanut butter, hard-boiled

eggs, or fruit. You can also make enough breakfast burritos for the week and freeze them. Combinations might include scrambled eggs, low-fat cheese, and veggies on a whole-wheat tortilla, or chicken with black bean, low-fat cheese, corn, and brown rice on a whole-wheat tortilla. Microwave for a few minutes and take it to go!

Snacks

Before you start your busy day, pack your briefcase, backpack, or pocketbook with healthy snacks so that you don't go without food for more than four hours. Keep that blood sugar level on an even track with fresh veggies and fruit, unsalted trail mix, whole grain crackers, dried fruit, or unsweetened applesauce (less perishable than fresh fruit). Stock your car with healthy snacks that won't spoil in hot weather. Fill that stainless steel water bottle with water as often as you can, and don't leave it in the hot sun.

Our children are taught how and what to eat by us. May these suggestions help you and your children keep on the road to healthy eating!

— Kim Raubenheimer
Certified Nutrition & Fitness Coach
www.yourhealthsense.com

For a list of suggestions for stocking your pantry and spice rack, see www.belmontfarmersmarket.org.



www.belmontfarmersmarket.org

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2010 Vendors

- **Bee-Cause Apiaries** local honey
- **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
- **Goodies** award-winning, better-than-homemade cookies
- **Hmong Farms at Flats Mentor Farm** fresh produce featuring Asian vegetables
- **Hutchins Farm** certified organic plants, vegetables, herbs, small fruit, and apples
- **In Good Taste** Pam's black bean salsa
- **Kimball Fruit Farm** vegetables, fruit, honey, and plants
- **Lawton's Family Farm** fresh cheeses and veal
- **Leslie Wolf Baking** baked goods from a Belmont kitchen
- **Mamadou Bakery** handcrafted breads
- **Nicewicz Family Farm** apples, peaches, plums, berries, vegetables, flowers
- **NorthStar Farm** perennial plants, fresh organic eggs and produce
- **Samira's Homemade** Middle Eastern dips & salads, freshly made and delicious
- **Sassy River Sauces** savory sauces without the fat
- **Sassy Sauces** sweet dessert sauces
- **Sergi Farms** Belmont's only remaining working farm
- **Stillman's at the Turkey Farm** grass-fed meat and freshly-cut flowers
- **Underwood Greenhouses** potted plants grown in Belmont



Food for Thought

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

This spring, the Belmont Farmers' Market Committee, led by Joan Teebagy, BFM volunteer and avid gardener, launched the Pomona Project. The mission of the project is to select and make available attractive, interesting, and easy-to-care-for edible plantings that are appropriate for the local landscape. The name was inspired by Pomona, the Goddess of Fruits and Gardens, who appears on the Town of Belmont's official seal. Pomona symbolizes Belmont's agrarian



past, when the town was a major market garden center, and farms and fruit orchards dotted the landscape. With the Pomona Project, the Belmont Farmers' Market is expanding its community-based activities beyond the summer season. For its inaugural year, Joan organized a group

The Pomona Project: repopulating the berry plants of Belmont

purchase of blueberry and lingonberry plants at a competitive price during the winter. She selected varieties with good crop production as well as attractive fall coloration. Both types of bushes do well in this climate, and prefer the same sun and soil as rhododendrons and azaleas.

Demand for the bushes was high — about 300 plants were sold and are scheduled to arrive for local pick-up in late April. While the deadline to order has passed, please stay tuned if you are interested in participating in next year's order. In the meantime, look for an increase in blueberry and lingonberry bushes in gardens all over Belmont as a bit of our town's history comes back to life.

— Amy Rodriguez and Evanthis Malliris

For more information on the pick-up date and location and on how to care for your plants, go to: www.belmontfarmersmarket.org/community/pomona/group-berry-purchase.html

The Farmers' Market Needs You!

We are all excited about the opening of the market on June 10th, but we wouldn't have our award-winning farmers' market if we didn't have involved volunteers. The Belmont Farmers' Market Committee needs your participation, whether at the market on Thursday afternoons or behind the scenes at other tasks.

Besides a place to purchase local foods, our town's market has become a welcoming public gathering space. Music, dancing, drawing, face painting, and an apple dessert contest are among the activities that have added a festive atmosphere to market afternoons. Please share your talents or ideas!

What can you do to help? Contact us at belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com — or drop by our table on Town Day in Belmont Center, Saturday, May 22nd between 9 am and 3 pm and sign up.

— Belmont Farmers' Market Committee

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says, “the MDAR has been able to maximize Federal Farm Bill funding through USDA’s Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program. The [Patrick] administration appreciates the value of working landscapes, and over the past five years, we have enhanced the system with landowners, local municipalities, and non-profit land trust partners, so that the



pending project list has been shortened to just under two years.”

Actually, the APR is only one of several ways farmland is protected in Massachusetts. “Farmland prices here are some of the highest in the nation, and the state itself often cannot pay the vast difference between the value of land as farmland and land for development,”

says Kent Lage of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau and former assistant commissioner for MDAR. The U.S. and Massachusetts Departments of Agriculture, local land trusts, private non-profit trusts, and tax deductions — some or all of these may come into play in working out farmland restrictions. A good example is Belmont Farm, also known as Sergi Farms, which has been rented by the Sergi family on an annual basis. This property is protected under a restriction held by the Belmont Land Trust, with an executory interest granted to the American Farmland Trust.

Commenting on the variety of legal arrangements involved in saving farms, Lage says, “There’s a place for all these people at the table, because it takes a lot of organizations to make it work.” The result is that today

Massachusetts agriculture is healthy. One key to farms’ success has been the local food movement, which is driving the boom in farmers’ markets and CSAs, allowing more farmers to sell directly to their customers. Lage notes that this trend “has served as a bit of a catalyst for people to see farming as a second career and something that’s doable with smaller farm sizes.”

Will the supply of farms keep up with the demand for farmers’ markets — 200 strong and growing — statewide? We don’t know. But one thing is sure: the prescience of state leaders in the 1970s places Massachusetts farming in a far better place than it might have been without the MDAR’s efforts, the APR, and the land trusts.

— Dee Ippen

Lemon-Thyme Asparagus

Spring is asparagus time. It may surprise you that these tender shoots belong to the lily family and that asparagus is one of the most nutritionally balanced foods in the garden. Low in calories (less than 4 calories per spear), it contains no fat or cholesterol and is low in sodium. It is an excellent source of folic acid and a good source of potassium, fiber, vitamin B6, vitamins A and C, and thiamin. To maintain freshness, wrap a moist paper towel around the stem ends, or stand upright in two inches of cold water. Store in the back of the refrigerator away from any light, since folate is destroyed by exposure to air, heat, or light. We hope this recipe will help you enjoy the spring with the delicate and delightful flavors of asparagus.

- 1 bunch of asparagus (1–1½ lbs).
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 clove garlic (crushed)
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme (chopped)
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- Kosher salt & black pepper (to taste)

Snap off and discard tough ends of asparagus. In a large pot of boiling water, cook asparagus for 2 – 3 minutes. (It should be bright green and just slightly floppy.) Drain and immediately put asparagus into ice water to stop the cooking.

In a medium skillet, heat olive oil, garlic, and thyme on low heat until garlic just starts to brown (5 – 6 minutes). Stir in lemon juice and turn up heat to medium high.

Toss asparagus in oil mixture, and stir until asparagus is heated through (5 – 6 minutes). Season to taste with kosher salt and black pepper.

— Kim Foster

