

Sustainability at the Dinner Table

September 2009

Fall is one of my favorite seasons. The days are growing cooler, the leaves are starting to turn color, and the Community Harvest Farmers' Markets at Syracuse University are in full swing on Fridays. In this edition of Sustainable News, I invite you to come along with me as I take a trip to the market. If you have not had the chance to visit the market, perhaps this edition will inspire you to make your own visit to one of the upcoming markets, which run 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on October 2 and 9.

As I begin my visit to the market, the first thing I notice is that the ordinary parking lot on the corner of Waverly and South Crouse Avenues is transformed by the shoppers, tents and colorful displays of local produce and other goods. I don't want to miss anything, so, I start out by wandering from booth to booth. As I chat with vendors and look over the bounty they have brought, I realize that from this one place, I can purchase nearly everything I need to create a delicious dinner for my friends and family. The meal will not only be fun to cook and share, but will also support our local farmers and vendors, which is a choice that lies at the heart of sustainable living.

After my first pass through the market, I decide to make a beef stew, with my specialty, a peach blueberry crisp for dessert. I have a tough time deciding where to purchase my veggies because there are at least three vegetable stands, all with quality produce. I know I will need carrots for the main dish. One of the vendors has some unusual purple carrots, which she assures me taste just as good if not better than traditional carrots and they are grown organically. I know that an organic approach is also great for the environment, so purple carrots go into my reusable shopping bag. Next on the shopping list are the sweet onions, Roma tomatoes, mushrooms, peaches, and blueberries. At a meat vendor, I select a #3 chuck roast, about 2 inches thick.

I have almost everything I need. The few remaining ingredients will come from my garden or from a quick stop at the grocery store on my way home—but there are other enticing items at the market. To my delight, I find pepper plants. I buy six different varieties, all with peppers already on the plant. I will re-plant them in larger pots and place them in a sunny window, enjoying fresh peppers all winter. To my delight there is a maple syrup stand that is selling grade B syrup, which is used for cooking. I have a hard time finding this grade of syrup, so I am very happy to pick some up. In fact, I decide to put maple chicken wings on this weekend's dinner menu.

Finally, I have bought everything I need for this week and it is time for me to leave the market and head back to work. But, before I leave I glance around and mentally start preparing my list for next week's farmers market. I hope that many of you will soon have the chance to take your own trip.

Need dinner ideas? Just follow the links to access recipes for Beef Stew, Peach Blueberry Crisp, and Maple Wings. Bon appétit!