

FY 2012 - Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency

\$70,533 to the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, Bristol, CT, to expand Urban Oaks Farmers Market capacity to serve more of the low-income, low food-access surrounding community and enable more farmers to participate in the market by increasing storage and display capacity at the market and increasing the market's service range by purchasing a refrigerated truck to make deliveries of fresh produce to markets.

[Final Report](#)

FARMERS MARKET PROMOTION PROGRAM

Capacity Enhancements for an Urban Farmers Market in a Food Desert/Low-income Community



DECEMBER 12, 2014

CENTRAL CONNECTICUT REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

12-25-G-1541

Acknowledgements

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Farmers Market Promotion Program
Final Performance Report
For the Period of October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2014

Date: 12/12/2014
Recipient name: Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Project Title: Capacity Enhancements for an Urban Farmers Market in a Food Desert/Low-income Community
Grant Number: 12-25-G-1541
Project Location: New Britain, CT
Year of Grant Award: 2012
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Contact: Timothy Malone, 860-589-7820, tim@ccrpa.org

Program Summary

The mobile market was made possible by a Farmer's Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant provided by the USDA which was hosted and administered by the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

"The goals of FMPP grants are to increase domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products, and to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets by developing, improving, expanding, and providing outreach, training, and technical assistance to, or assisting in the development, improvement, and expansion of, domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities."
– USDA FMPP

\$70,533 was awarded to the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency to expand Urban Oaks Farmers Market's capacity to serve more of the low-income, low food access surrounding community in New Britain, CT. The grant program also aimed to enable more farmers to participate in the market by increasing storage and display capacity at the market. To expand Urban Oaks' service area beyond their farm stand, a refrigerated truck was purchased to allow the delivery of fresh produce to markets around the city.

"Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum:

- The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
- Assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies)."

- USDA Economic Research Service

Without the basic tenets of food security around it, a community is considered to be a food desert. According to the USDA's own Food Access Research Atlas, most of New Britain is considered a food desert.

After interviewing stakeholders in the fight against hunger and poor nutrition, CCRPA created its own metrics for determining where the worst barriers to healthy food in the region were. Some of these metrics included household income, unemployment rates, vehicle ownership, and participating in food assistance benefits. The results of this study echo what is reported in the Food Access Research Atlas and found that New Britain faces the greatest barriers in accessing healthy food.

The latest Census indicates that 50% of households in New Britain have an income of less than \$40,000 a year, the highest percentage in the Central Connecticut region.

New Britain also has the highest unemployment rate (13.4%) within the same region. In downtown, three neighborhoods report over a quarter of the population as being unemployed.

More than 15% of households in New Britain do not have a vehicle, again the highest in the region. Limited vehicle access poses another barrier to obtaining healthy food.

New Britain also has the highest percentage (over 19%) of its population using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the region.

While there are many food sources in New Britain, most are low quality. 93% of the food retailers in New Britain are corner stores, convenience stores, drugstores, or small delis. These stores may be in close proximity to a food insecure neighborhood, but the quality of foods available may not be fresh, healthy, or appealing.

CCRPA used this evidence to help assess need, and aid Urban Oaks in determining where the Mobile Market would be of the most service to the community.

Mobile markets are essentially a farmer's market or small grocery store on wheels. These markets bring fresh, local, healthy, and often organic foods directly to areas where people with limited food access live and work. Mobile markets offer greater flexibility compared to typical grocery stores by bringing goods directly to the customer base. They also have lower overhead costs to food distributors. Much like static farmer's markets, the mobile markets would be able to accept federal and state benefits such as SNAP and WIC.

By implementing a mobile market, a community can help to overcome the challenges that face many of its food insecure residents, including, but not limited to, a lack of transportation.

This is exactly what Urban Oaks aimed to do.

Project Approach

Preparation

Creating a mobile market for Urban Oaks was an incredibly ambitious undertaking. The process began in 2012 when the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency was awarded a \$70,533 grant from the USDA Farmer's Market Promotion Program on Urban Oaks' behalf. Planning the market required more than just purchasing a truck. It was necessary to ensure that all aspects of the farm were prepared to handle this new task. Efforts were also required for community outreach and promotion of the market.

Capacity Building

In order to take on the mobile market, operations at the farm needed to become more efficient and streamlined to manage the increase in demand for goods and staff time required to run a mobile market. To accomplish this goal, much of the equipment, including refrigerated storage, scales, and cash register systems, was added or upgraded. The new storage allowed for more produce to be picked and ready to load in advance of market days; scales ensured quick, accurate pricing and measurement of goods; the new cash registers reduced time spent waiting in line and doing inventory by half.

Staffing

With its limited budget, Urban Oaks has a small paid staff that can only attend to the needs of the farm and the farm stand. Urban Oaks could not spare its existing staff or afford to hire new staff members. In the winter months leading to the debut season, it was apparent that neither the existing staff nor the board could devote the time necessary to scheduling the market and building connections with the host sites. In light of this, a Mobile Market Manager was hired in March to complete these essential tasks. As spring drew closer, it also became apparent the effort required to prepare, set up, sell, and breakdown the market each day was too much for just one person. In June, a part-time assistant was hired to aid in these duties. Without the FMPP grant, Urban Oaks could not have created these new jobs necessary to running the mobile market.

Advertising

Key to the mobile market's success was letting people know it existed. In the months leading up to the launch, the farm decided to spread the word in a variety of ways. First, the truck was painted to display Urban Oaks' logo and to advertise the market and essentially functioning as a mobile billboard. Print materials, including multilingual flyers and brochures, were created with CCRPA's assistance and were distributed throughout New Britain and the surrounding towns.

Funds from the grant program were also invested in bus advertising. During the summer, four buses, which ran through Bristol, Plainville, and New Britain, displayed the Urban Oaks logo and announced the mobile market on the outside of the bus. All twenty buses in the New Britain area also sported interior ads detailing the mobile market's schedule.

On the digital side, the farm completely overhauled its website, allowing the farm to improve its online presence and more effectively update clientele about the mobile market and happenings at the farm. These efforts led to attention from local media outlets including the Hartford Courant, New Britain Herald, and WSFB Local News, further spreading the word.

Market Truck

For \$31,484, Urban Oaks purchased a used 2007 GMC W4500 Refrigerated Box Truck with the FMPP funds. This truck was ideal not only for the price, but also because it did not require a commercial license to drive. Inside, built in shelving was already installed to house the farm's produce. In addition to the painting, the truck was also customized with an awning, which traditionally is used for RVs. In the heat of the summer, shade is essential to preserve produce and provide comfort for customers. Compared to pop-up tents, the awning allows for much easier setup and breakdown, and is much more resilient to wind and rain.

Locations

Using CCRPA's research from their Food Access Study, Urban Oaks selected neighborhoods which faced the greatest barriers to food security. Within those neighborhoods, the Mobile Market Manager partnered with various community organizations to help host and promote the market. For its first season, the market stopped at two elementary schools, a senior center, and a community health center.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The grant project's main goal was to expand Urban Oaks Farmers Market's capacity to serve more of the low-income and low food-access community. Equipment like the new walk-in cooler, scales, and cash register system assisted Urban Oaks in their operations. These items allowed Urban Oaks to run more efficiently while serving more customers and increasing their sales.

By far, the mobile market has been the biggest success of the grant program. Through the four mobile food truck sites, Urban Oaks was able to reach many residents who live in low-income and low food-access areas. Initially, the mobile market was scheduled to end in August. Due to its popularity with the residents of New Britain, Urban Oaks was able to extend the market through September.

The market manager has met many residents who are unable to afford to eat healthy foods. One resident in particular recently lost his job and was struggling to make ends meet to support his pregnant wife and 2 year old daughter. In a survey with the Market Manager he explained, "I don't want to be in this position, but we wouldn't be eating without these coupons. Thank you!"

In addition providing the residents of New Britain convenient access to healthy food, the farm itself also had a successful year. The mobile market alone accounted for \$14,611.04 in sales between June and September. These sales figures are commendable given this was the first year the mobile market ran.

Sales	June	July	August	September	Total
Cash	2,747.72	2,403.59	3,272.10	1,284.12	9,707.53
SNAP	416.33	286.99	289.65	321.99	1,314.96
WIC	5.00	20.00	27.00	29.00	81.00
WIC FMNP	240.55	921.00	1,932.00	414.00	3,507.55
Total	3,409.60	3,631.58	5,520.75	2,049.11	14,611.04

August was the busiest month for the mobile market. The mobile sites began receiving more customers as residents became accustomed to seeing the truck on a regular basis each week. The mobile market will likely see stronger sales in the next season because residents have an established knowledge of the service and are expecting its return.

The mobile food truck also helped raise awareness for Urban Oaks. Many residents were not aware that the farm existed, nor were they aware that the farm store was open year round. Staff at the mobile sites were able to inform residents about the farm, its hours, and encouraged them to visit.

The chart below details the farm stand sales between 2013 and 2014. The addition of the mobile market contributed to significant increases in sales in comparison to the previous year. These increases may be

attributed to the mobile market raising awareness for the farm and its farm stand. As the mobile market continues to be successful, the farm will likely experience an increase in customers.

	June	July	August	September
2013	15,632.79	11,181.34	11,380.75	11,224.07
2014	26,298.00	17,410.00	22,813.00	25,283.12
Amount Increase	10,665.21	6,228.66	11,432.25	14,059.05
Percent Increase	68%	56%	100%	125%

Beneficiaries

The main beneficiaries of this grant project have been Urban Oaks and the residents of New Britain. Urban Oaks benefited by having an additional outlet for selling their produce. The food truck also raised awareness for the farm. The farm operates a year-round store, although many residents were not aware of this. During one of the mobile markets, a patron told the market manager “I heard about the mobile market on the news! I had no idea there was an organic farm so close.” Patrons of the mobile market may be interested in purchasing produce at the farm stand during the months the mobile truck is not in operation.

The mobile food truck also benefited the low-income populations of New Britain. The goal of this project was to help these populations have better access to fresh produce to encourage healthy eating. The mobile food truck provided a convenient location for these residents to purchase produce. “Thank you for coming to our neighborhood”, one of the patrons told the market manager. These neighborhoods tend to be far removed from a full-service grocery store. Smaller corner stores may not have fresh produce readily available. The mobile food truck fills this gap.

Lessons Learned

For its first running year, the mobile market has met considerable success and has gained valuable insight to help improve operations for the next season. Here are recommendations for future seasons:

New sites

Based on feedback from the market manager and data from the sales reports, next season’s schedule should be adjusted to accommodate some different sites. This past year, the mobile market was set up at four different locations – two elementary schools, a senior housing complex, and a community health center. While the elementary school sites and the Community Health Center were very popular, the senior housing complex site received little business. Other senior housing complexes in New Britain may be in more need of the food truck. Mobile market staff should work closely with managers of these complexes to assess the needs of residents and can determine if the mobile food truck is needed.

Food demonstrations

The market manager noted many customers hesitated in purchasing produce they were unfamiliar with. The market offers in-season produce that can greatly differ from what is typically available in a grocery store. Customers are less likely to purchase something unfamiliar because they may not know how to prepare it. Food demonstrations minimize this concern by offering customers a taste of a recipe that

incorporates a particular fruit or vegetable. Customers can taste the recipe and speak with the market staff to learn how to prepare the food at home.

This year, Urban Oaks filed all the necessary paperwork required to operate demonstrations at the market. The Community Health Center had originally volunteered to steer these demonstrations. Unfortunately due to lack of staff time, and short notice to coordinate the demonstrations, this program was not offered this past season. With months ahead of the 2015 season, Urban Oaks and the Community Health Center have ample time to coordinate such a program.

Coupons

To encourage healthy eating, Urban Oaks participated in a program that doubled all SNAP and WIC coupons. This program allowed those with a limited budget the opportunity to purchase twice the amount of healthy produce.

In addition to this program, the Community Health Center, one of the mobile market sites, also participated in a coupon program to help patients eat healthier. Coupons worth \$5 were distributed to patients to purchase produce at the weekly on-site market. Urban Oaks market staff noted that while this program is popular with customers, the Community Health Center did not distribute the coupons on a weekly basis, as was intended. If this program is available next year, staff should ensure patients receive the coupons each week when the mobile food truck visits.

Education and Awareness

Urban Oaks should partner with other agencies to raise more awareness of healthy eating and access to healthy food. The Market Manager noted at the senior site that many visitors were unaware they were eligible to receive assistance (SNAP) that would help them purchase produce from the truck.

Coordinating these weekly mobile food truck events with agencies that can help sign senior citizens up for assistance programs would allow a better opportunity for the elderly to afford to purchase healthy produce.

As with any farmers market, it takes a while to build a steady customer base. Since 2014 was the first year for the mobile market, many residents were not aware of the service. Now that the market has one year under its belt, residents are more aware of the service. However, efforts should still be made to continue outreach and promotion for the mobile market.

Additional Information

Urban Oaks website:

<http://www.urbanoaks.org/>

Our Mission

We aim to nourish the communities in the North & Oak St. neighborhoods and in greater CT with high-quality produce accessible to all; education and employment opportunities; and economically viable, progressive, organic farming methods that promote and provide sustainable, ecologically sound agriculture in an urban environment.



About Us

Urban Oaks began in 1999, when the City of New Britain invited two experienced organic farmers, Mike Kandefer and the late Tony Norris, to take over the abandoned Sandelli Florist. The farm provides fresh, local produce year-round to the community. We are proud members of the North Oak NRZ and are 1 of 2 urban farms in CT.

We have always placed an emphasis on farm education, providing school groups and community members the opportunity to tour the farm and get a taste of the work required to produce food and its delicious results.

The farm has a dedicated team of staff and volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering or scheduling a tour, please email us at:

urbanoaksorganicfarm@gmail.com

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Work-shares & Veggie Bucks

Urban Oaks offers Winter and Summer CSA farm and work-shares each year!

Call us for more info or email us to register

Restaurants & Wholesale

Urban Oaks is on the menu at many great restaurants around the state that support local farmers.

Please visit our website for a current list.



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www.urbanoaks.org

www.facebook.com/UrbanOaksOrganicFarm

Baystate Organic Certifiers 
Organic Certifiers for the Northeast United States

Special thanks to the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency and the USDA for the creation of this brochure



Fresh

Local

Organic

Accepts SNAP WIC
& FMNP

Visit Our Farm Stand

At 207 Oak St.

Between Allen St. & Lasalle St.

Fridays: 2 – 6 pm

Saturdays: 10 am – 1 pm

ALL YEAR LONG!

On the O & S Bus Lines



We are both a working farm and a food hub, of mostly CT-grown fruits and vegetables, as well as locally produced eggs, cheeses, breads, and honey



Mobile Market Schedule Summer 2014

Find us at a location near you!

**Hablamos
español**

Monday	1:00 –3:00	Community Health Center 85 Lafayette Street
Tuesday	2:30—4:30	The Jefferson School 140 Horse Plain Road
Wednesday	12:30—2:30	The Senior Center 55 Pearl Street
Thursday	2:30—4:30	The Smith School 142 Rutherford Street

We accept SNAP, WIC & FMNP



**Hablamos
español**



Come Visit Urban Oaks!

207 Oak St. New Britain

Fridays: 2 – 6 pm

Saturdays: 10 am – 1 pm

ALL YEAR LONG!

**On the O & S
Bus Lines**



**Fresh, Local &
Organic Fruits &
Vegetables
Year-round**

**International &
Southern
Favorites**

Local Honey

**Accepts WIC,
SNAP, FMNP &
Other Benefits**

**Part of the
Neighborhood
Since 1999**

**Summer & Winter
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Free Tours!

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Venga a Urban Oaks!

207 Oak St. New Britain

Viernes: 2 - 6 pm

Sabado: 10 am - 1 pm

¡DURANTE TODO DEL AÑO!



**En los O & S
bus**

**Frutas y Verduras
Frescas, Locales y
Orgánicas**

Todo del Año

Favoritos

**Internacionales y
del Sur**

Miel local

**Acepta WIC, SNAP,
FMNP y**

Otro Vales

**Parte del Barrio
desde 1999**

**¡Verano y Invierno
CSAs y Work-
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¡Guiadas Gratis!

**¡Mercado Móvil
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**Fresh, Local
& Organic
Fruits &
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CT Grown

**International
& Southern
Favorites**

**Find an Urban Oaks Mobile Farmer's Market
Near You!**

June—August 2014

**Accepts WIC,
SNAP & FMNP**

**Hablamos
español**

**Local Honey,
Eggs, Cheese,
Meat & Bread
at the Farm
Stand**

Visit the Farm Stand All Year Long!

At 207 Oak Street, New Britain

Monday	1:00 –3:00	Community Health Center 85 Lafayette Street
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Friday	2:00—6:00
Saturday	10:00am—1:00pm



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Encuentre un Urban Oaks Mercadillo Agrícola Móvil Cerca de Usted!

Junio—Augusto 2014

Lunes	1:00 –3:00	Community Health Center 85 Lafayette Street
Martes	2:30—4:30	The Jefferson School 140 Horse Plain Road
Miércoles	12:30—2:30	The Senior Center 55 Pearl Street
Jueves	2:30—4:30	The Smith School 142 Rutherford Street

Visite el Puesto de Granja Todo el Año!

A 207 Oak Street, New Britain

Viernes	2:00—6:00
Sábado	10:00am—1:00pm



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**Frutas y
Verduras
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Productos



Favoritos

**Internacionales
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**Acepta WIC,
SNAP y FMNP**

**Miel, Huevos,
Queso, Carne
y Pan Locales
al Puesto de
Granja**

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Zesty Kale Salad



Provided by Urban Oaks Organic Farm, the USDA, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

Ingredients:

3	cloves garlic, peeled
½ cup	lemon juice
¼ cup	soy sauce
3 inches	fresh ginger, peeled (ginger is easily peeled with the side of a metal spoon)
½ teaspoon	black pepper
1 cup	olive oil
1 bunch	kale, washed, de-ribbed, and leaves chopped
1	carrot, grated
1 cup	red cabbage, thinly sliced
½ cup	dried cranberries
1 cup	garbanzo beans or chick peas, canned or cooked

Directions:

1. In a blender, add the garlic, lemon juice, soy sauce, ginger and black pepper, and puree.
2. Using the lid opening, slowly add olive oil with the motor running on low to thicken the dressing.
3. In a large bowl, add kale, carrots, cabbage, cranberries and garbanzo beans. Pour dressing into the bowl and toss to coat. Mix thoroughly and let salad sit for at least 20 mins.



Easy Eggplant Stir Fry



Provided by Urban Oaks Organic Farm, the USDA, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

Ingredients:

2	Eggplant (Peeled and cubed)
1	Zucchini (Thinly sliced)
1 cup	Green Bell Pepper (Cut into strips)
2	Onion
3 tablespoons	Italian Salad Dressing
2 cups	Cherry Tomatoes
2 cups	Brown Rice (Cooked)

Directions:

1. Place eggplant, zucchini, green bell pepper, onions and salad dressing into a skillet.
2. Stir lightly to combine and cook over low heat until tender.
3. Stir in cherry tomatoes and cook for 3-5 minutes. Serve over cooked brown rice.



Apple-Stuffed Acorn Squash



Provided by Urban Oaks Organic Farm, the USDA, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

Ingredients:

4	Acorn Squash (Washed)
1 Tablespoon	Butter (Or margarine)
2	Apples (Washed, chopped)
2 Tablespoon	Brown Sugar
1/2 Teaspoon	Cinnamon

Directions:

1. Cut squash into halves and remove seeds. Place in a glass dish, cover with plastic wrap and microwave on high for 5 minutes.
2. Melt butter in a separate bowl in the microwave. Mix in apples, sugar, and cinnamon. Microwave for 1½ minutes.
3. Spoon apple filling into each squash half. Cover and microwave on high for 3-5 minutes until squash and apples are tender. Serve warm.



Lemon Asparagus



Provided by Urban Oaks Organic Farm, the USDA, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

Ingredients:

2 pounds	Asparagus (Washed and trimmed)
2 tablespoons	Butter (Or margarine)
2 teaspoons	Lemon Peel (Grated)
1	Garlic Clove (Large, minced)
2 tablespoons	Lemon Juice

Directions:

1. Cook asparagus in a pot of boiling water until tender, about 4 minutes.
2. Drain, Cool, and Dry asparagus
3. Melt butter in a heavy large skillet over medium-high heat.
4. Add lemon peel and garlic and stir for 30 seconds.
5. Add asparagus and toss to coat.
6. Sprinkle with lemon juice. Sauté until asparagus is heated through and coated with sauce, about 3 minutes.



Vegetable Chilli



Provided by Urban Oaks Organic Farm, the USDA, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

Ingredients:

2	Onion (Large, cut into 1/4 inch pieces)
1	Green Bell Pepper (Cut into 1/4 inch pieces)
3	Garlic Clove (Minced)
2	Jalapeno Chilis (Fresh, diced)
2 tablespoons	Vegetable Oil
1 tablespoon	Chili Powder
1 tablespoon	Cumin (Ground)
1 can (28 oz)	Whole Tomatoes (Cut into 1/4 inch pieces or 8 medium fresh tomatoes)
2	Zucchini (Medium - cut into 1/4 inch pieces)
2	Summer Squash (Medium - cut in to 1/4 inch pieces)
1 can (28 oz)	Kidney Beans (Rinsed)
1 cup	Cilantro (or Coriander) (Chopped, fresh)
optional	Salt and Pepper to taste

Directions:

1. In a large pot saute onions, bell pepper, garlic, and jalapeno in oil over medium high heat for about 5 minutes - stirring often.
2. Add chili powder, cumin, half of the chopped cilantro, salt and pepper, and continue cooking for another 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Add the tomatoes, zucchini, squash, and bring mixture to a simmer.
4. Simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Add beans, and continue to simmer for another 5 minutes.
6. Serve the mixture hot. Put remaining cilantro on top.



Zucchini Casserole



Provided by Urban Oaks Organic Farm, the USDA, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

Ingredients:

1 pound	Sausage (Ground)
1	Onion (Small, diced)
2	Zucchini (Small, diced)
3	Yellow Summer Squash (small, diced)
3	Potatoes (Medium, peeled, diced)
1 can	Tomatoes (Stewed, cut)

Directions:

1. Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees
2. Cook onion and sausage together in a skillet, until sausage is brown.
3. Drain liquid. Mix all ingredients together and place in a casserole dish.
4. Cover with foil and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.



Title

Provided by Urban Oaks Organic Farm, the USDA, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

Ingredients:

Amount	Ingredient
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Directions:



Title

Provided by Urban Oaks Organic Farm, the USDA, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency.

Ingredients:

Amount	Ingredient
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Directions:





