

**IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF *buyCTgrown.com* FOR
PRODUCERS, CONSUMERS AND WHOLESALE BUYERS
FY 2011**

BuyCTGrown.com -- an online web search portal for finding locally grown food and agricultural products in Connecticut -- was built and designed between 2006-2010 through a strategic partnership between CitySeed, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, and the Connecticut Northeast Organic Farming Association. UConn Extension joined the partnership in 2010.

By fall of 2010, despite new self-listing options and social media features, project leaders recognized that the website was losing some of its initial momentum. Usage of *buyCTgrown.com* by farm and food businesses, the original beneficiaries of the project, had leveled, and many of the 1000+ farm and business listings had not been updated since the website launched in 2009. At the same time, the website was drawing new consumer visitors every month. While these increases in website usage rates were promising, project leaders wanted to help producers understand how to update their own listings so site visitors would find accurate, seasonal information and return to the site on a regular basis.

Project leaders were also eager to explore opportunities to increase producer income through potential sales to wholesale buyers, assuming that many producers who were relying heavily on direct-to consumer sales were poised for wholesale accounts with chefs and food service professionals actively seeking locally grown products. Since there already was mapping capability on *buyCTgrown.com*, as well as search and listing services, it was hoped the website could become a viable tool that would be useful for producers and wholesale buyers.

The goal of this FSMIP project was to enhance the utility of *buyCTgrown.com* toward increasing the profitability of Connecticut farm businesses. As the project progressed, it was decided that the focus and priority needed to be on consumer enhancements and that the wholesale focus would need additional time and resources to be fully effective.

FINAL REPORT

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FSMIP Final Report

Improving Effectiveness of BuyCTGrown.com for Producers, Consumers & Wholesale Buyers

September 2011- February 2014

Outline of Issue or Problem

BuyCTGrown.com -- an online web search portal for finding locally grown food and agricultural products in Connecticut – was built and designed between 2006-2010 through a strategic partnership between CitySeed (which hosts the website) and several key local agriculture service providers, including CT Dept. of Agriculture, CT Farm Bureau Association, and CT Northeast Organic Farming Association. UConn Extension joined this partnership in 2010.



By fall of 2010, in spite of new self-listing options and social media features, project leaders recognized that the website was losing some of its initial momentum. Usage of buyctgrown.com by farm and food businesses (the original beneficiaries of the project) had leveled, and many of the 1000+ farm and business listings had not been updated since the website launched in 2009. On a positive note, the website was drawing new consumer visitors every month. The number of “unique visitors” (people who had never been to the site before) increased from 1,561 in October 2010 to 2,522 in November 2010. Over the same period, the number of page views also increased from 8,207 to 9,462 in a single month. While these increases in website usage rates were promising, project leaders wanted to help producers understand how to update their own listings so site visitors would find accurate, seasonal information and return to the site on a regular basis.

At the time of this FSMIP proposal, project leaders were also eager to explore opportunities to increase producer income through potential sales to wholesale buyers. Project leaders assumed that many producers who were relying heavily on direct-to-consumer sales were poised for wholesale accounts with chefs and food service professionals actively seeking locally grown products. Since there already was mapping capability on buyctgrown.com, as well as search and listing services, project leaders hoped the website could become a viable tool that would be useful for producers and wholesale buyers.

How the issue or problem was approached via the project

The goal of this FSMIP project was to enhance the utility of BuyCTGrown.com toward increasing the profitability of Connecticut farm businesses. The objectives were:

Objective 1 – Conduct a needs assessment with producers to determine how the website is currently meeting their needs, what are the barriers to using it more actively, and what improvements might be made to make it more useful as both a marketing tool as well as increasing sales. Make adjustments to BuyCTGrown.com based on the results.

Objective 2 – Gather evidence from web traffic and consumer purchasing behaviors (through a local pledge campaign) to monitor patterns and consumer responsiveness to the website’s information.

Objective 3 – Conduct an outreach program to producers and service providers about how BuyCTGrown.com can be used most effectively for marketing and increasing sales.

Objective 4 - Evaluate existing web-based tools that allow producers to conduct sales of farm products to wholesale buyers (with an emphasis on chefs and food service professionals).

Objective 5 – Working with a stakeholder team of producers and buyers, identify barriers and opportunities for using a web-based platform to help producers conduct sales of farm products to wholesale buyers seeking locally grown ingredients.

Objective 6 – Based on the results of Objectives 4 & 5, pilot a web-based wholesale service (on BuyCTGrown.com) that will allow producers to conduct sales of farm products to wholesale buyers.

In the workplan, UConn Extension supervised all aspects of the project. CitySeed functioned as the fiscal and administrative agent of the website. A Project Coordinator hired with grant funds worked under the joint supervision of Jiff Martin, UConn Extension Educator in Sustainable Food Systems, and Nicole Berube, Executive Director of CitySeed. As has always been the practice for the website since it launched in 2009, ongoing strategic input and guidance was sought throughout the project from CT Department of Agriculture, CT Farm Bureau Association, and CT Northeast Organic Farming Association.

In January 2012 the project hired Nancy Barrett as Project Coordinator. Nancy is a producer and owner of Scantic Valley Farm in Somers, CT. Her farm is a multifaceted family farm including heritage beef and pork, laying hens, PYO berries, and fall activities including Corn maze, hayrides, pumpkin picking and food concessions showcasing their farm raised products.

Workplan activities were as follows:

Activity 1) Producer Needs Assessment - The Project Coordinator conducted 20 interviews with producers with listings on Buy BuyCTGrown.com regarding the usefulness of the website, including the new self-listing and social media features.

Some producer quotes from the interviews:

"It [the website] is an effective tool for us but not enough people (consumers) know about it." – Heather Bucknam, Treat Farm, Orange

"We need to have more current social media intergrated into our site for this to really work." - Keith Padin, Jones Family Farms, Shelton

Activity 2) BuyCTGrown.com adjustments - The Project Coordinator aggregated data from interviews and surveys and present to Project Leaders, which identified areas for improvement. The Project Coordinator led follow up work with CitySeed and web programmers to make adjustments to the website's features that would reflect the needs of producers.

Activity 3) Online Pledge Campaign – UConn Extension and CitySeed incorporated and launched an online consumer pledge program on BuyCTGrown.com. The CT 10% Campaign asks consumers to pledge 10% of their food and gardening dollars to locally grown products. The campaign includes a mechanism for collecting monthly data from individuals that take the pledge regarding the total amount of money spent on local products, and where they purchased these products at a farm, farmers' market, or other venue.



Some producer quotes confirming their interest in a 10% Campaign:

"There is no time like the now, we need to educate the consumers to the benefits of buying local , we do not want this to be a fad." – Linda Auger, Taylor Brooke Winery, Woodstock

"The Potential of the 10% Campaign is GENIUS it advocates to buy Connecticut grown! This is what the site will be know for." – Keith Padin, Jones Family Farms, Shelton

Activity 4) Outreach/Training - The Project Coordinator conducted outreach to producer associations, farmer market managers, and service providers about how to utilize BuyCTGrown.com effectively. These outreach activities included presentations and tabling at the following events:

- Windham County Extension Council Annual Meeting – May 2013
- Plant Science Day – Aug 2013
- Green Expo – Sept 2013
- Celebrating Agriculture at Woodstock Fairgrounds – Sept 2013
- Coventry Regional Farmers Market – Sept 2013
- Cornucopia Festival – Oct 2013
- Comstock & Ferre Festival – Oct 2013
- West End Farmers Market – Oct 2013
- Open Farm Day at Jones Family Farms – Oct 2013
- CT Farm Bureau Association Annual Meeting – Nov 2013
- Taste of the Seasons, Lymans Orchards – Nov 2013
- Pomological Society – Dec 2013
- CT Christmas Tree Growers Association Annual Meeting – Dec 2013
- CT Fruit & Vegetable Growers Annual Conference – Jan 2014
- Tolland County Extension Council Annual Meeting – Jan 2014
- Maple Syrup Producers Association Annual Meeting – Feb 2014
- CT Flower Show – Feb 2014
- Build Your Network, Grow Our Future – for beginning farmers – Feb 2014
- Perennial Plants Conference (University of Connecticut) – Feb 2014

Activity 5) Pilot Wholesale Service on BuyCTGrown.com - The Project Coordinator and Project Leaders assessed the current landscape of web-based programs designed to foster greater wholesale transactions between producers and chefs/food service professionals. Based on this assessment, the Project Coordinator endeavored to pilot 3 to 5 wholesale food hubs in partnership with a CT-based partner at cropups.com

We attempted to facilitate 3 – 5 new CropUps, and by the end of the project had only succeeded in establishing the skeleton of a CropUp for the South Windsor Farmers Market. Among our unsuccessful recruits to the wholesale pilot were UConn Dining Services, a public school food service department (Guilford), and a restaurant in New Haven. The South Windsor Farmers Market demonstrated the greatest progress, however the Market Manager expressed his frustration with trying to get chefs to sincerely give the CropUps tool a try (he plans to attempt again in 2014 season).

Description of the contribution of public or private agency partners

[CitySeed](http://CitySeed.org) was the primary partner in the project. CitySeed is a community based non-profit in New Haven working in the arenas of food access and farm viability. CitySeed is the fiscal administrator of the website. In addition, CitySeed staff (Executive Director Nicole Berube, and Project Director Ashley Kremser) committed extensive time and

commitment to working closely with UConn Extension on all activities in this project. This took the form of team meetings, at least once a month during the project grant period. Strategic decisions about the project were jointly made by UConn Extension and CitySeed.

[CT Farm Bureau Association](#) (CFBA) – CFBA is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to the future of farming in Connecticut. CFBA’s Executive Director, Henry Talmage, participated in 2 full day strategy sessions regarding the goals of buyctgrown.com and website’s redevelopment in Nov 2012 and January 2013. CFBA marketing staff have been an exceptional partner in promoting the CT 10% Campaign in their member materials as well.

[CT Northeast Organic Farming Association](#) (CT NOFA) – CT NOFA is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to strengthening the practices of ecologically sound farming and gardening, and to the development of local, sustainable agriculture. CT NOFA’s Executive Director, Bill Duesing, participated in 2 full day strategy sessions regarding the goals of buyctgrown.com and website’s redevelopment in Nov 2012 and January 2013.

[Center for Environmental Farming Systems](#) (CEFS) – CEFS is a partnership between North Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. CEFS develops and promotes just and equitable food and farming systems. CEFS is the host of the NC 10% Campaign, the originator and model of our CT 10% Campaign. The staff at CEFS were extremely helpful as collaborators, open to sharing the web programming for their project, eager to share lessons learned, and patient with the process of exporting the program to implement in another state.

[CropUps.com](#) – CropsUps is an online ordering platform designed to facilitate the exchange of locally grown food in central places (i.e. at a ‘CropUp’). The website is designed for chefs and farmers. This FSMIP project worked with the founders of CropUps to try and pilot this wholesale tool in other regions of the state and with other users, such as food service directors and farmers market managers.

Summary of Results, Conclusions, Lessons Learned

The project’s most notable success has been the launch of the CT 10% Campaign on a dramatically redesigned and re-conceptualized buyctgrown.com platform. This success reflects 3 strategic decisions that were informed by activities in this FSMIP project:

Strategic Shift #1) Redesign a website for consumers first! Up until late 2012, project leaders had assumed that buyctgrown.com was built for both producers and consumers, and were constantly trying to address the needs of both. This led to heavy investment of time and money trying to teach producers how to use the site, and persuade them to create a listing or even purchase a listing with better advertising position. In spite of this, producers reported in the needs assessment that they were unsure who was actually

responsible for buyctgrown.com. Producers also asked for new tools that would allow them to list themselves as a winery instead of a vendor of liquor, or share their agri-tourism events, or list their farmers market locations. After 2 all day strategy meetings with key partners, a new consensus emerged that the website needed to be tailored for consumers seeking ways to experience local agriculture.

Strategic Shift #2) Launch a consumer awareness campaign about locally grown products. Although the original FSMIP proposal envisioned some sort of ‘buy local pledge’ element, the full complexity of this endeavor was unclear until the project was underway. Nevertheless, although challenging to implement, both UConn Extension and CitySeed have fully engaged in this initiative that will educate Connecticut residents about the importance of local food systems. We remain neutral, however, as to whether this campaign will significantly impact the viability of farming enterprises. Neither the website nor the CT 10% Campaign have the capability of determining if new producers are selling locally, or if producers are shifting production toward local markets.

Lessons Learned:

Fostering wholesale buyer/seller business relationships in the local food sector, and then evaluating their needs, should drive the development of an online platform for managing transactions: The project was unrealistic in its assessment of how wholesale opportunities might be achieved through its website. We found that a web platform designed for consumers is inherently not ideal for wholesale transactions. More importantly, although there was great appeal in partnering with CropUps.com as an alternative approach to our planned activity, we failed to appreciate that the success of this model had been built on pre-existing wholesale relationships between farmers and chefs who embarked on building an online ordering system to centralize deliveries, save time for farmers packing orders, and help chefs plan menus. Through this project we learned that building wholesale business relationships is a major undertaking, and the lack of staff time to conduct more business-to-business networking made the investment to pilot an online ordering platform unwise. In hindsight, there was at least one clear warning from a food hub expert that building an online ordering system before the wholesale sellers and buyers had expressed what they needed was backward.

Crowdsourcing is easier than enlisting individuals to share data – We have learned there is great willingness to participate in crowdsourcing in order to propel our website and CT 10% Campaign, in this case tapping into the collective enthusiasm and knowledge of consumers interested in experiencing local agriculture in order to improve our listings, build our calendar of events, and add destinations to the website. But tracking what those people do as individuals, how much each spends, and where, is far more difficult. While consumers and businesses (chefs, food service directors) are easily persuaded to ‘take the 10% pledge’, we have discovered that our reporting system has several inherent barriers that limit an individual’s willingness to report their purchases. Some of these barriers are: a user may only report their purchases once a week, a user is prompted only once a week on Sunday to report their purchases, a user has to log on to their account to access their dashboard to report their purchases, a user cannot change what level of spending

they set as their baseline, and a user cannot see if their reporting levels actually equal 10% of their spending levels. We have addressed these challenges through varied approaches, establishing a 10% e-newsletter, piloting incentives for reporting weekly purchases, e-mail reminders users to report their purchases, and experimenting with facebook messages to applaud those that report their purchases.

At this point, the use of the data reported by individuals is still unclear to us. Our stated objective in this activity was to gather evidence from web traffic and consumer purchasing behaviors in order to monitor patterns and consumer responsiveness to the website's information. We have not reached a quantity of data that merits this

sort of analysis yet.

Measurable results:

As a result of this FSMIP project, users on buyctgrown.com appear to be 1) having a better quality of experience with the site, 2) exploring more of the site's pages and features; 3) motivated to participate in the 'buy local pledge' through the CT 10% Campaign. Comparing web traffic data from February 2012 to February 2014, the bounce rate for the website dropped from 60% to 46% (the bounce rate is the percentage of single page visits, i.e. the number of times in which persons left the site without interacting with anything on the page). This would suggest that when people intend to visit buyctgrown.com they are actually reaching it. In the same period the "page views" went from 7000 to 8200, so the average page view per session went from 3 pages to 4 pages, and users were staying on the site 1 minute longer. At the end of this FSMIP Project, usage rate for the website in Feb 2014 was up to 3800 hits per month, up from 1600 just 6 months earlier.

In terms of improving the website's usefulness for producers, out of the 723 current listings on the website there are 102 newly improved listings and another 173 new listings. This activity reflects much of the outreach of the Project Coordinator.



In terms of the CT 10% Campaign, the latest data shows 271 people and 96 businesses took the pledge over 8 months since the campaign launched in August 2013, collectively reporting nearly \$200,000 in purchases. Project partners hope to track at least \$500,000 by the end of 2014 through the campaign. More than 400 individuals receive the CT 10% Campaign e-newsletter.



Senator Richard Blumenthal

Conclusion:

The project was overwhelmingly successful in improving the effectiveness of the buyctgrown.com website for consumers, but not for wholesale buyers. The launch of the CT 10% Campaign exceeded our intended goals of the project to launch a 'buy local pledge' program, and has played a major role in shaping our thinking about future iterations of the website and our efforts to educate consumers about the local food system.

Current & Future Benefits:

The CT 10% Campaign has given us an exciting platform to work with both traditional and new collaborators. Some key partners that have emerged are CT Farm Bureau Association, Bishop's Orchards, The Farmers Cow, and the CT Department of Agriculture. Outreach opportunities to speak with the public, as well as food and farm business operators seem limitless. Consumers respond enthusiastically to our outreach and express a strong willingness to show their support for local agriculture. Since this project timeline ended, we have continued to conduct outreach about the 10% Campaign at numerous events such as the CT Sheep Breeders Association Annual Fair, the CT Master Gardener Work Fair Day, the CT Food System Alliance Gathering, and at CT Ag Day at the Capitol.

UConn Extension is embarking on the development of a 10% mobile app in the summer of 2014. The 10% mobile app is intended for more nimble reporting for individuals, the ability to search for local products with the same tools as the website, and the ability to push information out to users about nearby events and opportunities to experience local agriculture.



Recently we have started discussions with counterparts in Vermont (at VT Farm To Plate) about the launch of a similar 10% Campaign in that state, and whether we might start to imagine a New England version of the 10% initiative in the future. We are very excited by this idea, since we are happy to share some of our lessons learned and eager to build momentum around the 10% pledge concept.

Other potential collaborations we're exploring for our 10% Campaign include the CT Department of Education and its Harvest for Schools pilot project, and the New London County Farm to School Initiative.

Next Steps & Additional Research

In order to advance the project's goals further, we feel next steps should include:

- Development of online resources to help 10% Ambassadors conduct outreach and recruit pledges independently
- Training and recruitment for Extension Educators, Master Gardeners, and 4-H volunteers willing to function as 10% Ambassadors
- More focus and investment on electronic-based communications and marketing of the website and the 10% Campaign (to replace some of the time and staff-intensive tabling at events), which would include reciprocal blogging, social media, short videos, challenges and incentives, etc
- Innovative strategies (crowdsourcing) to update website content, including events, destinations, listings, and user-generated 'trails'

Project Beneficiaries

Project beneficiaries have been the 700+ farm and food direct-to-consumer businesses that have listings on the website, and the 3000+ average monthly website visitors.

Project Information

WEBSITE: buyctgrown.com



CT 10% Campaign Landing Page: <http://www.buyctgrown.com/ct-10-percent>

Outreach products (see appendix):

Info sheet for CT 10% Campaign and buyctgrown.com – 2500 printed and distributed to farmers, chefs, and at tabling events

Slim Jim info cards – 5000 designed, printed and distributed (in 2 styles, for food lovers and garden lovers) to collaborators, CSA farmers, farmers market managers

Window clings of 10% logo for promotional partners – 500 small (3"x4") and 200 (6"x7") large printed and distributed to CSA farmers, farmers market vendors, and chefs

CT 10% Newsletter – Initiated in January 2014 as a means of communicating with individuals that take the pledge about featured businesses. Newsletter is produced every 2 weeks.

Contact:

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The CT 10% Campaign is a statewide initiative to promote locally grown products.

Find farmers and businesses who grow, prepare, distribute and sell CT agricultural products at www.buyCTgrown.com



How to join the CT 10% Campaign:

- Pledge to spend 10% of your personal or business' existing food and gardening dollars locally.
- You will receive scheduled emails with a few simple questions about your local product purchasing.
- We will track your progress, and you will see our progress statewide.

Why 10 percent?

By spending AND tracking 10% of your food and gardening dollars locally, we are able to support a statewide effort to:

- Build the CT local food economy.
- Impact CT jobs in farming, food services and related industries.
- Help sustain vibrant, healthy communities here in CT.

Find more information and take the pledge at:

www.buyCTgrown.com

For updates on the CT 10% Campaign, LIKE us at:

www.facebook.com/buyctgrown



Source a flavor you can't buy anywhere else!

CT 10% Campaign is a joint collaboration led by:



UConn Extension funds for this project were matched with Federal funds under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program of the Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Pledge TO GO



Hey Food Lovers!

create a movement right
in your backyard!

Pledge to spend 10% of your food and gardening dollars locally!

PLEDGE

Fulfill your pledge by purchasing produce, farm products, restaurant farm to fork meals and garden plants grown in CT. Pledge to spend 10% or more of your existing budget on these items.

SEARCH

Use the buyctgrown SEARCH tool to find out what foods are in season and where to find them locally. Find a local farm-to-fork restaurant and enjoy a delicious night out while fulfilling your pledge.

TRACK

We'll email you with a few simple questions each week. Track your pledge and see how our progress grows statewide!



Pledge Now at:
buyctgrown.com/10-campaign



Track and Share

help create a movement

You've pledged to go 10% local and you're making a valuable difference. Now, be sure to track your progress each week and encourage others to go local too!

WHY TRACK AND SHARE?

You may not realize it, but **tracking and sharing your progress on social media each week**, goes along way to influencing your friends and neighbors to take the pledge too.

Sharing what you're doing on social media makes your tracking impact go from good to great. By tracking and sharing just once a week, your support to local farms is significant and done with ease. **Add it all up and you're helping create a movement right in your backyard.**

HOW ELSE CAN YOU HELP?

Beyond social media it's always helpful to share with your friends personally. You can also encourage your favorite restaurant, grocery store or caterer to take the pledge and TRACK and SHARE as well!



Tell us **"Why you buy local"** and get started with your 10% pledge at buyctgrown.com today!



"Like" buyctgrown.com

UConn



UConn funds for this project were matched with Federal funds under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program of the Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Pledge TO GO

10%
LOCAL

buyctgrown.com

Hey Gardeners, dig this!

**Pledge to spend 10% of your
gardening and food dollars locally!**

PLEDGE

Fulfill your pledge by purchasing CT grown vegetable and flowering plants for your gardens and landscaping. Produce you harvest from your own gardens counts toward your pledge as well!

SEARCH

Find out what is in season and explore the vast opportunities CT nurseries, greenhouses and farms have for you by using buyctgrown.com. Use the SEARCH tool to find timber for building a raised bed, compost for your vegetable garden, or mulch for landscaping. All CT grown plants and products derived from a CT grown items count toward your pledge!

TRACK

We'll email you with a few simple questions each week. Track your pledge and see how our progress grows statewide!



Pledge Now at:
buyctgrown.com/10-campaign



Track and Share

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"Like" **buyctgrown.com**

UConn



UConn funds for this project were matched with Federal funds under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program of the Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Subject: 10% News on Local Food

Date: Thursday, January 16, 2014 1:51:58 PM Eastern Standard Time

From: buyCTgrown - CT 10% Campaign

To: Martin, Jiff

Food & Goods, Seasonal Recipe, Food Facts & Events

buyctgrown.com

Month:	Year:	Issue:
January	2014	1



Make it a family challenge: Finding meals that you can source more than 10% of the ingredients from CT farms, *even in January!* Try this chicken, bacon, spinach, mozzarella pizza!
Can't find a local ingredient? Find it on www.buyctgrown.com.

The Food and Goods Page is LIVE!

Check out our featured farmer:

Sweet Acre Farm
and featured food business:
Bistro 7

SWEET ACRE FARM
JONATHAN JANEWAY &
CHARLOTTE ROSS started



Sweet Acre Farm in 2011 on a 1-acre plot of land in Mansfield, CT. They are first generation farmers that with great plans for 2014. Some of their plans include raising a laying flock of chickens and two baby goats which they plan to breed and milk this year! Jonathan and Charlotte were gracious enough to answer a few of our questions.

[Read More>>](#)



BISTRO 7 BRENO DONATTI

We asked young restaurateur Breno Donatti of Bistro 7 in Wilton a few questions about why he buys local! Bistro 7 has a fresh, healthy approach to American comfort food by providing dishes made with organic produce from local Connecticut farms as much as possible. Breno's passion is to create the ultimate dining experience. Born in southern Brazil, Donatti migrated to the United States where he made his home in Connecticut.

[Read More>>](#)

[Visit Our Food and Goods Page](#)

Anna Liffey's Shepard's Pie

Adapted from the cookbook
New Haven Chef's Table

Shepard's pie is one the most popular dishes on the menu and Chef Shane Carty divulges his recipe! We've slightly modified it, but you can get the recipe true to form in the cookbook New Haven Chef's Table!

Check out [Winters Farmers Markets](#) near you for in-season ingredients (marked with an astrix) included in this recipe!



INGREDIENTS

For the mashed potatoes:
1 pound local [potatoes*](#), peeled and chopped
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 1/2 cups local [milk*](#)
2 1/2 tablespoons local [butter*](#)

For the filling:
1 pound local ground [beef*](#)
1 large onion, finely chopped
2 small local [carrots*](#), diced
1/2 cup ketchup
1 1/2 cups fresh peas cooked
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1/2 cup grated cheddar [cheese*](#)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the broiler. Boil potatoes in salted water until soft.
2. While potatoes are cooking, brown ground meat in a frying pan over medium-high heat. When meat is cooked, drain excess oil and remove from pan.
3. In the same pan, saute the onion and carrots over medium heat until soft. Stir in cooked ground beef, ketchup, peas and gravy. Season with salt and pepper. Bring mixture to a boil and then remove from heat.
4. When potatoes are cooked, drain off the water. Add milk and butter and mash together until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Pour the hot beef mixture into a baking dish, cover with hot mashed potatoes (Anna Liffey's uses a pastry bag with a large star tip), and sprinkle with cheddar cheese.
6. Broil for 3 to 4 minutes or until cheese is melted.

Did you know...?

- The average hen lays 250-270 eggs/year.
- Only in New England are brown eggs preferred to white eggs.
- It takes 24-26 hours for an egg to form.
- Records show Egyptians had laying hens as early as 1400 BC.

[Click here for a listing of CT eggs](#)



Upcoming Events

January 18

[Getting Started in Organic Farming Conference](#) hosted by CT NOFA

Location: Goodwin College, East Hartford

To help aspiring organic farmers develop successful farming careers. This event teaches the basics of developing and running an organic operation.

January 23

[Root Cellar Soups-N-Garden event](#) hosted by Hillstown Grange

Location: 617 Hills Street, East Hartford

Come enjoy homemade soup dinner followed by a gardeners' forum about getting the garden started.

[Click here for a list of CT Events](#)

Quotable!

"What great motivation for our customers and CT consumers to find and buy local. Even for my greenhouse customers that are purchasing our homegrown tomato plants or squash plants to grow in their own garden, it still meets the 10% pledge. This campaign is long over due!"

[Freund's Farm Market](#) owner, Theresa Freund of East Canaan, CT addresses the value of the 10% campaign on her small, local business.



The CT 10% Campaign is a collaborative project led by

UConn
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND NATURAL RESOURCES
EXTENSION

buyctgrown.com

STAY CONNECTED



Subject: 10% News on Local Food

Date: Thursday, January 30, 2014 1:35:38 PM Eastern Standard Time

From: buyCTgrown - CT 10% Campaign

To: Martin, Jiff

Events, 10% Partners, Season Top 10 & Food Facts

buyctgrown.com

Month:	Year:	Issue:
January	2014	2



Did you know that January is National Soup Month?
Can't find a local ingredient? Find it on www.buyctgrown.com.

Upcoming Events

January 30
2014 Bee School

February 20 - 23
CT Flower and Garden Show

Location: Storrs The Eastern Connecticut Beekeepers Association announces our 2014 Bee School! We will focus on the basics of Beekeeping and take you from selecting and assembling the necessary equipment to managing your hive as the season progresses.

February 02
Chowdafest-The SOUPer Bowl for Foodies

Location: Bridgeport
 The SOUPer Bowl for Foodies! Love food? Then don't miss Chowdafest, CT's premier culinary competition where YOU get to be the judge. Sample over 30 different chowders, soups and bisque from some of the states best chefs & restaurants! Then vote on your favorites.

February 08
Tap a Tree Maple Syrup Program

Location: Ambler Farm in Wilton
 Wilton Sign up for Ambler Farms immensely popular, Maple Syrup Tap-a-Tree program. Sign up quickly...these classes fill up fast. Learn the science and history of maple syruping by being a hands-on part of the process.

Location: Hartford
 The 33rd annual Connecticut Flower & Garden Show covers almost 3 acres with the 2014 theme "Backyard Paradise," featuring many ideas for homeowners and apartment and condo dwellers alike.

February 22 - 23
Lyman Orchards' Winter Fest

Location: Lyman Orchards
 Celebrate the Fun side of winter! Cure your cabin fever! Go snow tubing! Hug a Husky! Watch your child learn to drive a team of trained sled dogs! Come watch an exciting ice carving demonstration and competition featuring New England's best carvers.

March 01
CT NOFA's Annual Winter Conference

Location: Danbury
 The 2014 Winter Conference brings into focus the challenges of the next generation of farmers and how they affect all of us. Join us to discuss the future of sustainable farming and celebrate local food. Early registration ends February 8th.

[Click here for a list of CT Events](#)

Our list of 10% Partners is GROWING!
Check out the businesses that have taken the CT 10% Pledge!

Restaurants and Dining Halls	Farms and Farmers Markets	Non-Profits and Membership Organizations
Max's Oyster Bar	Botticello Farms, LLC	Ecology Center
Salisbury School	Secchiaroli Farm	Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
Bistro 7	Sub Edge Farm	Thames Valley Sustainable Connections, Inc.
UConn Dining	Sport Hill Farm LLC	CitySeed
Garden Fresh Baby	Palmer Family Farm	Sustainable Food Systems, LLC
Zinc	Ragland Farm	
Cavey's	Good Bug Gardens	
	Pakulis Farm, LLC	
	Anderson Farms	
	Full Heart Farm	
	Freund's Farm Market	
	South Windsor Farmers Market	
	Hydeville Sugar Shack	
	Hollandia Nurseries	
	Abington Grown at We-Li-Kit Farm	
	Bright Acres Farm Sugar House	
	Scantic Valley Farm	

Do you have a favorite farm, restaurant or business that is serving local?
Encourage them to become a **Partner of the CT 10% Campaign!**

Did you know...?

By buying 'local' dairy products you are supporting the dairy farms in Connecticut and helping to maintain our state's farmland and beautiful landscape.



In 2009, 72,000 acres of farmland was dedicated to dairy farming! Help to keep those acres for farming by sourcing CT dairy products.

Not sure where your milk is processed?
Check out this site to find out:

www.wherismymilkfrom.com

Looking for local dairy products?

[Click here for CT dairy listing](#)

Five of our Winter's Top Ten:

1. Attend a workshop at the CT NOFA Winter Conference and learn about vegetable gardening from Lee Riech, how to grow your own Shitakees, raise chickens, make wine, grow beans and more.
2. Visit Logee's Green House in Danielson, CT.
3. Tour the Litchfield Winter Wine Trail or the CT Coast & Country Winter Wine Trail!
4. Go snow tubing or watch an ice carving demonstration at Lyman's Orchards Winter Fest!
5. Plan your garden! Take a trip to Comstock and Ferre, Co. in Wethersfield and grab lunch at Firebox in Hartford.

[Click here for the Season's Top 10](#)

10% Spotlight! - Why was it important for you to take the Pledge?

We are very excited that folks all over Connecticut are taking the pledge and supporting the CT 10% Campaign! We interviewed Patrick Leahy of New Haven County, one of our 10% Heroes who has consistently reported his progress.

Why was it important for you to take the Pledge?

My wife Cathy and I are members of two CSAs, Boulder Knoll in Cheshire and Eve's Corner Garden in Bethany. We also frequent the farmers markets in New Haven at Edgewood Park and Wooster Square. We also regularly frequent Lyman Orchards for Pick your own. Lyman is my 3 year old granddaughter's favorite trip. She loves apples and we have spoiled her with nothing but the best, right off the tree.

I think the pledge is important because it supports an environment where we learn to care for the land and enjoy its bounty. We need to encourage local production of food. The quality is better because the food cannot be fresher.

What is your favorite restaurant serving locally grown?

My favorite restaurant specializing in utilizing local produced food is The Stone Hearth in Westville, New Haven. We have taken friends there and everyone raves about the quality of the food.

I am happy to encourage others to shop for local produced food.

Hats off to Patrick, Cathy and their granddaughter!



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Subject: 10% News on Local Food

Date: Thursday, February 27, 2014 1:00:41 PM Eastern Standard Time

From: buyCTgrown - CT 10% Campaign

To: Martin, Jiff

Fresh, Local and In Season!

buyctgrown.com

Month:	Year:	Issue:
February	2014	4



Pictured above: CT Farm Fresh Eggs. Even with snow on the ground, a CT product that is available year-round is fresh eggs! Do you know what kind of chicken lays blue eggs? We'll share the correct answer in the next newsletter.

Upcoming Events

March 01
[CT NOFA's Annual Winter Conference](#)

March 08
[Bright Acres Farm Sugar House Annual](#)

Location: Danbury

The 2014 Winter Conference brings into focus the challenges of the next generation of farmers and how they affect all of us. Join us to discuss the future of sustainable farming and celebrate local food.

March 01 - 02

Maple Sugar Festival Weekend!

Location: Stamford Museum & Nature Center

Celebrate the sweetness of the maple sugaring season! Visit the little red sugarhouse on Heckscher Farm and see firsthand how sap is turned into maple syrup. Witness how trees are tapped and sap is collected.

March 01 - 02

UConn Horse Symposium

Location: Storrs

Get some new ideas for the riding and driving season! Sign up now to ride or drive in a clinic! No need to worry about pre-registration for auditors or spectators, pay at the door!

Open House

Location: Hampton Come visit our sugar house and see maple syrup being made. Taste warm maple syrup! Maple syrup and candy for sale in our barn.

March 10

Maple Maddness @ Welles Shipman

Ward House Location: Glastonbury

Location: Glastonbury See how maple syrup is made from the sap of the maples. Sample last year's stock. Rain date: Sunday, March 17

March 19

Ag Day at the Capitol

Location: Hartford

Held in the North Lobby and Hall of Flags at the State Capitol building in Hartford, over 50 organizations and state and federal agencies from across Connecticut, celebrate agriculture in Connecticut at the state's annual Ag Day at the Capitol.

[Click here for a list of CT Events](#)

Oatmeal Maple Syrup Cookies

Recipe provided by John Thomas of Glastonbury. These delicious cookies were a hit with the folks at buyCTgrown, so much so, we thought we'd share the recipe with you! Thanks again to John who first delighted us with the cookies and then with the recipe!

Ingredients

1/2 cup soft **local butter**
3/4 cup palm sugar or granulated maple sugar
1/4 cup **local maple syrup** (grade B or dark grade A, room temperature)
1 **local egg**
1/2 cup almond flour
1/2 cup all purpose flour
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp baking soda
1 1/2 cups rolled oats
1/2 tsp vanilla
1/4 tsp cinnamon
1 cup raw cashews (halves/pieces)
1/4 cup flaked coconut (unsweetened)



Directions

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees
2. Mix together thoroughly with a fork the flours, salt, cinnamon, oatmeal, and baking soda and set aside
3. Cream together butter and sugar. Thoroughly mix in maple syrup, vanilla and one egg. Add dry ingredients gradually. Dough will be thick. Fold in cashews and coconut.
4. Shape dough into balls about the size of a walnut and press down flat.
5. Bake on un-greased cookie sheet or lined with parchment paper for 8 - 9 minutes. Cool on wire racks. Makes about 16 cookies.

Connecticut Farm Fact - 22 %

If you didn't catch it in your local news this week, data was just released from the USDA's Preliminary 2012 Census of Agriculture. The report shared these statistics:

Connecticut had the fastest growth rate in New England in terms of total number of farms between 2007 and 2012.

The number of Connecticut farms during the five-year period grew by 1,061, or 22 percent, to 5,977 farms in 2012

The data also revealed that the amount of land being farmed in Connecticut grew by 8 percent, or 30,790 acres, to 436,406 acres in 2012.

[To learn more, click here](#)

Five of our Winter's Top 10

We shared the first 5 to-do in Newsletter #2, [here's more suggestions for enjoying CT agriculture this season:](#)

6. Plan your garden! Take a trip to Comstock and Ferre Co. in Wethersfield, buy your seed starting supplies, including CT-made CowPots and grab lunch at Firebox in Hartford (about 10 minutes away).

7. Tour the Litchfield Winter Wine Trail or the CT Coast & Country Winter Wine Trail!

8. Warm up by the fire with CT Wool blanket

9. Become a beekeeper, take a beekeeping course.

10. Take the 10% pledge and fulfill it at a winter farmers market.

Have a favorite winter time activity that's not listed here? We love to receive suggestions, just [email us here](#).

[Full list of Winter Top 10](#)

10% Spotlight! - Why was it important for you to take the Pledge?

We interviewed Maryann of New Haven County recently, one of our 10% Heroes who consistently reports her progress for her 10% pledge.

Q: Why was it important for you to take the Pledge?

A: As far as the pledge, I simply want to know where my food comes from. I've been buying local for years so taking the pledge seemed like the right thing to do. The more I've learned of corporate agriculture the more disgusted I became so I started to looking for sources of local food. It started with eggs and most recently I've been able to find a year round source for meat. I'm fortunate that in Oxford we still have a few sizable farms around and I've become friends with the local farmers where I get a majority of our food. With the abundance of produce I spend the summer canning and freezing that help supply us through the winter.

Q: Where is your favorite place to shop for locally grown?

A: Caraluzzis in Newtown would be my favorite grocery store to shop at but the majority of my food comes straight from the local farms here in Oxford. I get my fruits and some vegetables from Belinsky farm (Oxford), the remainder of our vegetables come from Gazy Brother Farm(Oxford) and Shortts Farm in Sandy Hook. Eggs, Pork, Maple syrup and honey come from

Schreibers farm and I've recently added Percy Thomas Meadows in Bethlehem for additional meat.

During the summer months I get CT clams at the Shelton farm market from Ed and Laurie of Pepe's Cream of the Crop Shellfish Farm. We also have 4 hens, a vegetable garden and fruit trees at home. Dairy is always the biggest challenge, CT milk is available but I haven't been able to find a source for cheese.

Thanks Maryann! We're glad to have you as a pledge partner!

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