

Seacoast Eat Local Winter Farmers' Market

Winter marketing opportunities for vegetable farmers in the Seacoast area of New Hampshire have changed dramatically in recent years. Seacoast Eat Local's Winter Farmers' Market is now in its eighth year. As our own winter market has grown and evolved, several other winter markets have started up and stabilized into reliable marketing outlets for area farmers. In the 2014 edition of Seacoast Harvest (www.seacoastharvest.org) we listed 10 winter farmers' markets in Rockingham, Strafford, and York Counties. We've also seen an increase in Winter CSAs and year-round vegetable sales to local restaurants and other wholesale buyers. There are currently 15 farms offering winter vegetable shares in our area, and several others who offer some type of "late season" share in November and/or December.

Twenty-two vegetable farms will participate in Seacoast Eat Local's Winter Farmers' Market during the 2014-15 season (up from 16 farms in 2010). Farms such as Meadow's Mirth (Stratham), Heron Pond Farm (South Hampton), and Brookford Farm (Canterbury) have successfully increased winter vegetable production over the last several years by adding new storage facilities, hoopouses, and a host of other season extension strategies. As their vegetable production has increased, these farms have diversified their marketing well beyond winter farmers' markets, with winter CSA shares and year-round wholesale delivery as key strategies.

While winter marketing is becoming more diversified, Seacoast Eat Local's Winter Farmers' Market remains a substantial piece of the winter marketing plan for many local farmers and food businesses. Our markets have gained broad popularity with an enthusiastic base of loyal customers, and both supply and demand for locally grown winter foods have grown steadily as our Winter Farmers' Market has evolved. Market vendors continue to diversify their product offerings, bringing a larger selection of foods to market all the way through the winter season. With a diverse and abundant supply of winter foods now available, Seacoast Eat Local continues to work on increasing customer attendance at the markets, and building broader community support, so that the market will be a winter resource for farmers and customers alike, for years to come.

SEL's Winter Farmers' Market webpage:

<http://seacoasteatlocal.org/find-local-food/our-winter-farmers-market/>

During the NESARE grant period (June 2010 – May 2013), Seacoast Eat Local:

- held 32 winter farmers' market events
- hosted 12 vegetable cooking demonstrations
- produced 17 "Vegetable of the Day" recipe cards
- held 1 farmer focus group meeting
- conducted 3 online vendor surveys
- conducted 2 online consumer surveys
- conducted 7 in-person consumer surveys
- led 2 workshops for winter market organizers (total of 30 participants)

Background: Market Schedule and Locations

In November of 2007, Seacoast Eat Local began holding indoor winter farmers' markets. We started with 3 markets the first year, and expanded to 6 markets in 2008-09. Based on overwhelming demand from market customers, and positive feedback from participating farmers, fishermen and food vendors, we decided to increase the frequency of the winter markets, and secure indoor spaces large enough to accommodate 40 to 50 vendors.

Our Winter Farmers' Market season now runs from late November through April, alternating between 2 indoor locations in Rollinsford and Exeter, NH. We host 11 or 12 market dates each winter, starting the Saturday before Thanksgiving.

Location	Capacity
Wentworth Greenhouses, Rollinsford, NH <i>Glass Greenhouse</i>	56 vendor spaces
Exeter High School, Exeter, NH <i>Cafeteria</i>	39 vendor spaces

Key Ingredients to Organizing a Successful Winter Farmers' Market

- constantly building SEL's email list (4,138 count as of 12/1/14)
- distributing print materials (postcards and posters) and maintaining our online presence (website, blog, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). Facebook has a particularly important tool (5,396 followers).
- paying dedicated staff to plan, promote, and manage the markets
- recruiting volunteer board members and winter market committee members
- organizing a strong base of market volunteers
- cross-promotion and partnerships with other winter market organizers, food and farming organizations, and community groups
- recruiting high quality vendors with a reliable supply and attractive displays
- engaging vendors in promoting the markets and helping them run smoothly
- finding market locations with appropriate facilities, space, customer traffic flow, parking, etc.
- fostering collaborative relationships with our host sites
- creating a positive market experience for our customers by offering live music, kids activities, cooking demos, book signings, knife sharpening, food drives, CSA Days at the market, etc.
- integration with SEL's SNAP/Debit at the Markets program (<http://seacoateatlocal.org/snap/>)
- recruiting local business sponsors to underwrite some of our overhead expenses
- utilizing online tools including: Manage My Market, Mail Chimp, Survey Monkey, and Razoo, Pinterest, and Google Forms.
- Finding new partners and engaging new audiences

SEL Winter Farmers' Market Attendance Counts

Years	Thks	Dec		Xmas	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr	
07-08	1200			1200			738					
08-09	1406	650		500	850		1100		1000			
	R	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	E
09-10	1600	1600	850	1540	1650	2158	1625	1450	1375	2126	1004	
10-11	1943		980	1900	1464	1522	1776	2050	1616	2239	1283	998
11-12	1888	1553	888	1810	1492	2368	1637	2535	2139	2317	1333	867
12-13	1910	1653	1017	2288	1114	2268	snow	2521	1319			
13-14	2018	1412	829	1610	1260	2139	1242	2145	1249	2304	1696	1,003
14-15	2179	1309	812	1762								

R = Rollinsford (green shading); E = Exeter (blue shading)

bright yellow text highlight = maximum count out of all years for that date/location

bright green cell = maximum count out of all dates/years in Rollinsford

bright blue cell = maximum count out of all dates/years in Exeter

bold font = maximum count out of all dates/years/locations

Vendor Counts: All Types (farmers, fishermen, prepared food vendors)

	Thks	Dec		Xmas	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		TOTAL
2009-10	41	35	41	43	35	35	38	42	38	34	36		418
2010-11	45	40		46	38	44	41	45	41	45	39	36	460
2011-12	48	49	40	49	39	46	40	43	41	41	39	36	511
2012-13	46	46	38	47	36	44		42	36	39	34		408
2013-14	50	52	40	50	40	51	41	54	42	56	53	42	571
2014-15	51	51	41	51	40*	51*	51*	39*	52*	40*	39*		506

*projected

Vendor Counts: Farmers Selling Vegetables

	Thks	Dec		Xmas	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		TOTAL
2009-10	16	11	11	11	6	6	4	6	3	6	8	n/a	88
2010-11	19	16	n/a	18	14	13	13	14	11	14	14	9	155
2011-12	20	16	14	16	14	13	15	14	12	14	13	11	172
2012-13	20	20	16	15	15	16	snow	16	12	14	12	n/a	156
2013-14	21	20	18	19	17	16	16	19	16	18	19	18	217
2014-15	22	18	17	20	17*	18*	18*	16*	17*	15*	15*	n/a	193

*projected

Vegetable Crops Sold at Markets

The number of vegetable crops available at our markets has increased gradually each year, with the largest selection typically available in November and December of each winter market season. The number of crops offered for sale in December increased from 37 in 2010 to 50 crops in 2014. The number of farmers selling in December has also increased. The data collected below also shows an increase in the number of crops sold in January and February, between 2011 and 2012.

December	2010	18 farms	37 crops
	2011	16 farms	47 crops
	2014	20 farms	50 crops
January	2011	13 farms	30 crops
	2012	13 farms	35 crops
February	2011	14 farms	26 crops
	2012	14 farms	33 crops

Consumer education

Seacoast Eat Local staff and volunteers provide customers with a range of opportunities to learn about locally available foods in winter. Each winter market day is planned as a distinct event with featured foods, live music, demonstrations, guest nonprofits, and volunteer support.

- **Vegetable of the Day:** One vegetable was featured on each market day, and was promoted in advance of the market in our email newsletter, blog posts, and social media (Carrot Day, Potato Day, etc.). We chose to promote vegetables that were in abundance at our market on that particular market day, communicating closely with farmers about what they expected to have available throughout the winter. Promotional content about Vegetables of the Day included recipes, shopping tips, storage information, fun facts, specific vegetable varieties, and farmers' growing practices. On market day, we distributed recipe cards for the featured foods at Seacoast Eat Local's Market Info Booth. A full array of recipe cards is now available at every market event. Featured vegetables included: beets, carrots, turnips, rutabagas, winter squash, pumpkins, kale, potatoes, onions, cabbage, greens, radishes, Brussels sprouts, and dried beans. Prepared food vendors at the market were also encouraged to utilize the featured vegetable in their product recipes that week.
- **Cooking Demonstrations:** We partnered with local chefs, nutritionists, and master food preservers to offer hands-on cooking demos and vegetable "tastings" featuring the Vegetable of the Day. Demos emphasized basic cooking skills and techniques, accessible to people with all levels of cooking experience. Recipes were generally limited to ingredients that could be purchased at the market.
- **SEL Market Information Booth:** Our volunteers and staff are available to answer customers' questions about the market, specific products they're looking for, food storage tips, recipes, etc. We are especially attentive to first time winter market customers who have many questions, and aren't

sure what to expect. We also provide a Market Map (online and in person at the market) which helps customers find specific vendors and products.

- **Recipe Resources via Pinterest:** Seacoast Eat Local maintains an extensive collection of recipes, organized by vegetable on our Pinterest page. This is an excellent resource for winter vegetable cooking.
<http://www.pinterest.com/seacoateatlocal/>
- **Manage My Market Online Tools:** In 2011, we began using online market management software called Manage My Market (MMM). In addition to streamlining our vendor application process, recordkeeping and invoicing, MMM provides us with three interactive tools which are very useful for consumer education and market outreach:
 - o **Meet Our Vendors:** Market vendor list, including farm profiles, growing practices, products, and market dates.
 - o **Market Map:** Interactive map for each market date, showing vendors' assigned spaces and profile information.
 - o **Product Search Tool:** Customers can search for a specific product and find out which vendors will be selling it at our markets.

Links to MMM tools:

- o <http://seacoateatlocal.org/find-local-food/our-winter-farmers-market/meet-our-vendors/>
- o <http://maps.managemymarket.com/1578>
- o <http://maps.managemymarket.com/1581>
- o <http://managemymarket.com/api/productsearch.aspx?orgid=298>

Other Links:

- Seacoast Eat Local main website: <http://seacoateatlocal.org/>
- SEL's Winter Farmers' Market page: <http://seacoateatlocal.org/find-local-food/our-winter-farmers-market/>
- SEL's Pinterest Recipes: <http://www.pinterest.com/seacoateatlocal/>
- SEL blog: <http://seacoateatlocal.org/blog/>
- SEL's market photographs: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/seacoateatlocal>
- Sample Email Newsletters
 - o <http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=7d23c221cc144a2db97744f5d&id=5e427bc312&e=55b969c1d8>
 - o <http://us1.campaign-archive1.com/?u=7d23c221cc144a2db97744f5d&id=c4e05b59cb&e=55b969c1d8>
 - o <http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=7d23c221cc144a2db97744f5d&id=2b528caa96&e=55b969c1d8>
- Sample Blog Posts:
 - o <http://seacoateatlocal.org/2013/02/featured-food-turnips/>
 - o <http://seacoateatlocal.org/2012/03/featured-at-the-winter-farmers-market-kale-and-greens/>

- <http://seacoastlocal.org/2013/11/4-reasons-you-need-to-try-the-winter-farmers-market-featured-veggie-local-winter-squash/>
- <http://seacoastlocal.org/2013/07/carrots-nutritional-powerhouse/>

Separate Documents:

- Vegetable Crop Availability Spreadsheet
- Recipe Cards
- Poster/Postcards
- Sample Press Release