

Chautauqua Watershed Notes
From the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
September 14, 2008

What's On Your Table Tonight?

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For the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy



Right now, local growers in and around the Chautauqua Watershed are gathering a bountiful harvest of delicious, nutritious fruits and vegetables. Enjoy!

What's on your table tonight? I hope it includes local produce. Western New York is having an exceptional harvest this year. The balance of rain and sun made plants grow and grow. Now it's sweet corn coming out of our ears, bushel upon bushel of red ripe tomatoes, potatoes and squash plus fresh picked apples, peaches, pears and berries for pies and jellies. The best-case scenario is to eat what you grow but for those of you who have neither the space nor time for a garden we encourage you to consume locally grown produce.

One, it is fresher, riper and therefore taste better and is healthier because it has no chemical preservatives or irradiation to extend shelf life. Two, it strengthens the local economy by protecting small farms, local jobs and shops. If everyone converted even a small portion of their grocery budget to local products local farmers could see a substantial increase in profits. Meanwhile, when local farmers provide food we get "food security" (availability of food and access to it). Three, small farms are good for the environment. They tend to practice multiple cropping which means that they grow multiple species and a wide variety of crops, thus mimicking the ecological principle of biodiversity. Biodiversity strengthens all ecosystems including the farm ecosystem. In contrast, mono cropping, growing one crop in a large area, which is the practice of the large corporate farms that ship produce to most large grocery store chains, reduces biodiversity and results in weaker farm ecosystems. A single event such as extreme weather, disease or pest invasion essentially wipes out the entire crop. With multi cropping if one crop fails there are others to compensate – still something to eat. Plus think of the fuel consumption and pollution that occurs when our food has to be shipped from distant places.

There are many places to buy fresh local food now. Farmer's markets in Mayville (Wednesdays and Saturdays), Fredonia (Saturdays), Westfield (Saturdays), and Jamestown (Fridays) bring the food to you. Or you can venture out into the countryside and visit one of the numerous produce stands. The Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau has maps of Amish businesses including produce stands in Northern and Western

Chautauqua and Cattaraugus County, plus listings on pages 38-43 of the Chautauqua County Guide or on their website www.tourchautauqua.com If it's dairy products you're seeking Lapps' Small Dairy on Cassadaga Road, Cassadaga can provide you with certified organic cheddar cheese, flavored cheese curds, yogurt and unpasturized milk. Valley View Cheese Factory, Route 62, Leon makes ricotta cheese from local Amish milk. Meat and eggs from grass-fed livestock are also available throughout the area at places like Parable Farm of Ripley. Even some restaurants serve meals prepared with local ingredients. If it's not indicated on the menu ask if they buy local and try menu items made from local products. And when the wine list comes out check for wine from local wineries. Or you can take the Chautauqua-Lake Erie Wine Trail to taste and purchase local wine (see www.chautauquawinetrail.org). For information on the philosophy of knowing where your food comes from take look at www.slowfoodsusa.com. Eat and enjoy the fruits of your neighbors' (or your own) labors!

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a private, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region. Its urgent focus is to conserve the endangered natural shore lands of Chautauqua Lake, which provide fish and wildlife habitat and pollution filtering functions essential to a healthy lake. Only four miles (10%) of the lake's shoreline remains in a natural, undeveloped condition. The Conservancy is funded primarily through membership donations. Its 2008 annual membership campaign is currently underway. It is presently raising funds to conserve the Chautauqua Lake's most important remaining natural shoreline habitats, undertake programs to address the root causes of the conditions that fuel lake plant growth, and manage its preserves. It is the only local organization conserving lands in perpetuity for these purposes. Please contact the Conservancy at 664-2166 to join for 2008!