

Winter market

JIM HYLAND WILL UNVEIL HIS FROZEN ORGANIC PRODUCE ON FEBRUARY 3 AT DEYO HALL



As mid-Hudson Valley residents, one of the many things we are blessed with is the bountiful local harvest of fruits and veggies. And for the first time in New York State, some of that carefully grown, organic produce is available during the dead of winter. Jim Hyland, owner of Winter Sun Farms, will be unveiling his frozen organic produce on Saturday, February 3 at a one-day winter market to be held at Deyo Hall on Broadhead Avenue (off Huguenot Street) in New Paltz. This is Hyland's first distribution and he has a limited number of winter shares available. At press time, he has sold roughly 50 shares and there are approximately 75 more available to those interested. For \$32.65 a share, customers will enjoy three different varieties of squash puree including roasted butternut, sweet red and green peppers and naturally sweet strawberry coulis. These organic foods are grown by experienced local farmers who run community supported agricultural (CSA) projects.

In December 2005, Hyland applied for a \$59,000 grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The grant was approved in May 2006 and enabled him to run a feasibility survey this past fall by distributing samples and questionnaires at local CSAs and farm markets. In addition, Hyland e-mailed 350 copies of the questionnaire to local residents. "We really got to see how important local produce is to people," he said. "When someone buys something from me, the name of the farm where it's grown is right on the package. It really gives people the opportunity to make a connection with the food on their plate and the farm that grew it."

This, Hyland points out, is different from buying organic products from your local supermarket where the consumer won't necessarily know where that product has come from. And further, the purchase of Winter Sun Farms produce helps to stimulate the local economy by supporting local farmers. "You're getting something that tastes good, and also makes you feel good for helping out your local community," Hyland said. "For every dollar spent on food in the U.S., a very tiny profit goes back to the farmer. We're trying to reverse that."

In the future, Hyland plans that profit-sharing would eventually go back to the farms.

Hyland has already sold quantities of organic squash puree to both SUNY-New Paltz and Vassar College. "It's a good way for those institutions to participate in the local economy, and the winter availability helps them feed their students when fresh produce is not in season," he said.

In the past, Hyland has worked with SUNY-New Paltz's Sustainable Agricultural Club and some of these college students have bought their own winter shares.

Hyland said he would not have been able to actualize his vision without the efforts of Hudson Valley Foodworks, a non-profit company in Poughkeepsie which provides the services of a commercial kitchen along with co-packing. "Co-packing is basically giving them the raw materials, and they produce the packaging for you," he said.

Hyland points out that the production of Winter Sun Farm foods has required 500 job hours by Hudson Valley Foodworks employees. He feels good that local money is being used to provide jobs for local people.

Hyland is excited about the winter market on February 3. Anticipating the selling out of shares, he hopes to see at least "125 people who love local food in one place."

Those local foodies should be interested in the other vendors Hyland has invited. In addition to Winter Sun Farms frozen organic offerings, Taliaferrero Farms of New Paltz will be on hand with local eggs and Gardiner's Four Winds Farms will be selling organic root crops including carrots. Wild Hive Bakery of Clinton Corners will be there with organic flours created from local grains and Kiernan Farms of Gardiner will have organic grass-fed beef. Oliverea Maple will bring sweet syrup and Pika's of Big Indian will offer frozen soups and quiches. Hyland hopes the market will raise awareness that local produce is indeed available in the wintertime. He invites the public to drop by and see what it's all about.

Hyland said that once his winter shares have sold out, Winter Sun Farms will have squash puree and strawberry coulis available for sale at the High Falls Coop. He notes that he's still involved in the feasibility study stage with tentative plans for the next growing season. "We're hoping for even more of a range of produce next year; we're looking at varieties of tomatoes, beets, greens, beans, cabbage and apples," he said.

To reserve your own winter share of the Hudson Valley Harvest, send a check for \$32.65 to: Winter Sun Farms, 195 Huguenot Street, New Paltz, NY 12561. Remember, pick up is from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, February 3 at Deyo Hall off Huguenot Street. You can find out more about Winter Sun Farms by visiting its website at www.WinterSunFarms.com.

-- Lauren Thomas