



February 3, 2010

New Web site helps find local foods year-round

By Lynn Monty, Free Press Staff Writer

Heavy snow covers the ground but local produce can still be found this winter in our region with the help of new local growers guide www.vermontgrowersguide.com. Farmers in Addison, Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle, Rutland, and Washington counties are participating.

We spoke with Web site project manager Jessica Hyman of Burlington on Jan. 19. Hyman, a former Free Press editor, is also a lecturer and community development and applied economics research specialist at the University of Vermont's Center for Rural Studies.

Tell me about the new Web site.

It serves as a resource for people who want to find local food near them and want to learn a little bit about the farmers in their area. The site is set up to be searchable by product — conventionally grown, organic or certified organic — and also by town, county, farm name and sales outlet name.

How does the site work?

If I live in Jericho and it's important for me to get my carrots locally, I can go to the site and search "Jericho" and "carrots," and there will be a list of farms there for me and maps of where they are located. Farms submit their own information. We don't take random lists of farmers and put them up. Farmers have the ability to go in and update their information and keep it current. It's a resource for the producers as well as the consumers.

Who started the site, and why?

The site is a partnership between the Center for Rural Studies at UVM and the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District. It all began with the idea of printing a growers guide for this area. As we started to collect information, we realized having something online would really broaden the impact. We started developing the site and quickly realized we couldn't stop at Chittenden and Washington counties because it's such a great tool.



LYNN MONTY, Free Press

Jessica Hyman of Burlington is the web site project manager for www.vermontgrowersguide.com, a new site designed to connect Vermonters to local foods all year long.

What do you hope to gain?

An increased awareness about how and where our food is grown in the area. People are more conscious now about local foods and we are looking to connect people and farms and to help people understand farming as a viable business, not just a lifestyle.

What local foods are available in the winter?

There are a lot of root crops like potatoes, carrots, turnips and even cabbage and squash, too. There are also prepared foods like pickles and jams. There are a number of winter farmers markets and a lot of stores that sell local crops. People can find out where on the Web site.

What do you do to stay local?

I grow a lot of my own food, and I'm involved with a lot of community gardens. I'm conscious of local products and try to buy local when I can. I frequent farmers markets. I think you need to have a healthy balance between thinking locally with food and community involvement, but you can't be dogmatic about it.

There should be a bigger connection between the local food movement and civic engagement. We need to value the importance of being connected with our community whether it be through buying local food, running for the selectboard, participating in community events or volunteering. These are all important parts of a healthy community. It all fits together.

Additional Facts

More info:

For more information about the Local Growers Guide or to get listed call Jessica Hyman at 656-9897 or e-mail jhyman@uvm.edu or visit www.vermontgrowersguide.com.
