

GARDENER STATE: To market, to market — Jersey Fresh style

Nicholas Polanin, Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station 12:17 p.m. EDT June 1, 2016



(Photo: ~Courtesy of the Keyport Garden Club)

Are you chomping at the bit as much as I am? June is here and all I can think of is getting freshly harvested produce from Jersey farmers!

We've been getting eggs from local growers all throughout the winter after our CSA finished for the season last year, and I'm anxiously waiting to start that up again this year. Plus, I'm also excited to see tents popping up again all over our downtowns as Community Farmers Markets start reopening this year!

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Our Garden State farmers markets offer residents the opportunity to enjoy freshly-picked, Jersey Fresh produce directly from New Jersey farmers, while supporting state agriculture and their local economies at the same time.

A quick online search revealed that Community Farmers Markets are hosted in 65 different locations all across Central Jersey — six in Hunterdon County, 10 in Mercer County, 10 in Middlesex County, 12 in Monmouth County, 10 in Ocean County, nine in Somerset County, and eight in Union County. Some have already opened last month, others this weekend, and still others not until late June and early July. Days, dates, and times of operation vary widely, so check online or with your town for the specifics.

Fortunately for us this is not an exhaustive list, as I know of some markets that aren't listed online with the state. But of course they all should be so the word gets out that these markets and fresh New Jersey-grown produce and farm products are available without traveling all the way out to the farm — with these markets, the farms come to you!

Last year alone there were close to 150 Community Farmers Markets all across the state, so you can enjoy one in Cape May when you're at the shore or up in Sussex County next time you go hiking New Jersey's trails.

Farmers at many of these markets throughout the state also participate in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), which provides vouchers for the purchase of locally-grown fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program administered by the State Department of Health and Senior Services gives these vouchers to qualifying individuals, which are valid through the end of November.

In addition, some farmers can accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program EBT cards, through use of wireless transponders, through the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

For complete information on locations, days and hours of community farmers markets throughout New Jersey, visit <http://jerseyfresh.nj.gov/find/community.html> (<http://jerseyfresh.nj.gov/find/community.html>). There's also a list of public transportation options for many of these market locations available to view or download.

Virtual love affair with Jersey Fresh

Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher wants Jersey Fresh fans to show their Jersey Fresh Love once again this year. Last year, the Department launched its Jersey Fresh Love social media campaign to encourage Jersey Fresh produce fans to share photographs of where they get their New Jersey-grown fruits and vegetables, how the produce is being used, and their favorite farms to visit. Each week, the NJDA team gathered some of their favorite photos into an album on Facebook. People liked, commented and shared their love of the photographs. In addition, Fisher announced that the social media campaign has a few exciting changes this season.

“Jersey Fresh Love was a success last year, with hundreds of fans submitting thousands of photographs from all over New Jersey,” said Fisher. “This year, to show our appreciation to all who participated, as well as say thanks for the ongoing support of local New Jersey farmers, markets, restaurants, wineries, breweries, and products, we are adding a new element to the campaign. In 2016, Jersey Fresh Love will become a contest, and participants can win prizes.”

The Department is again looking for people to share their love of Jersey Fresh through photos – posting images of all things Jersey Fresh, whether it be their favorite fruits, vegetables or dishes; a local farmer, farmers market or roadside stand; a favorite restaurant that serves Jersey Fresh dishes; or a visit to a New Jersey winery, pick-your-own farm or agri-tourism activity. Participants can enter on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, using the hashtag #JerseyFreshLove or uploading images on the new #JerseyFreshLove Contest tab on the Jersey Fresh Facebook page. Also, new this year, people are encouraged to vote for their favorite photos.

“By this time, people are anxiously awaiting their favorite Jersey Fresh fruits and vegetables and looking forward to visiting markets and restaurants to find Jersey Fresh items,” Fisher said. “We hope people will again share their photos from these experiences on their social media channels. Plus, they should encourage friends to get involved and vote for their photos.”

Each week, one winner will be chosen at random to receive a Jersey Fresh apron, reusable shopping bag, and car magnet. At the end of the contest, the one photo submission with the most votes will be awarded the grand prize — a choice of a Jersey Fresh Experience worth up to \$500. The contest runs Wednesday, May 18, through Wednesday, Sept. 14, with voting through Wednesday, Sept. 21.

More details and posted photos awaiting your votes are available through the department’s social media channels at Facebook, www.facebook.com/JerseyFreshOfficial (<http://www.facebook.com/JerseyFreshOfficial>), Twitter @JerseyFreshNJDA, Pinterest at www.pinterest.com/JerseyFreshNJDA/ (<http://www.pinterest.com/JerseyFreshNJDA/>), Instagram @jerseyfreshNJDA, and Tumblr at <http://jerseyfreshofficial.tumblr.com/> (<http://jerseyfreshofficial.tumblr.com/>).

Fifth annual GardenWalk

This weekend, Saturday, June 4, and Sunday, June 5, the Keyport Garden Club will welcome thousands of visitors from all over the tri-state area to enjoy approximately 46 public and private gardens for its 5th annual free Keyport GardenWalk.

Visitors can pick up their complimentary Keyport GardenWalk Garden Guide at the Keyport Waterfront pavilion between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. during KGW weekend. Keyport GardenWalk is a self-guided walking and biking tour. Complimentary 15 minute pedicab rides past several participating gardens will also be offered.

Free GardenTalks are also a part of the weekend’s festivities. On Saturday, June 4, Judy Glattstein, author and New York Botanic Garden lecturer, will be speaking on “Sizzling Summer Bulbs.” On Sunday, June 5, P. Steven Kristoph, nursery owner/Rutgers adjunct instructor, will be speaking on “Great Garden Day Trips for your Hort Bucket List.” The GardenTalks talk place at Keyport Borough Hall, 70 W. Front St. at 9:30 a.m. each day. Registrants are invited to enjoy coffee/muffins starting at 9 a.m. The GardenTalks are free but registration is required as seating is limited. Registration is available by emailing info@keyportgardenwalk.org.



On Saturday, June 4, and Sunday, June 5, The Keyport Garden Club will welcome thousands of visitors from all over the tri-state area to enjoy approximately 46 public and private gardens for its 5th annual free Keyport GardenWalk. (Photo: ~Courtesy of the Keyport Garden Club)

Perennial KGW musicians Vinny Kyne and Friends, Frank Patrouch, Hannah Megill, and the Porch Players at Nora's will share their musical talents with KGW visitors.

Keyport GardenWalk event sponsors include Sea Grass Design and Landscape LLC; NJ Natural Gas; Seasons Matter Inc.; McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter LLC; Drew's Bayshore Bistro; Shadel Environmental; Ceres Victory Gardens LLC; Trick of the Trades-General Contractor; as well as other sponsors and contributors.

For a list of all sponsors and more information on Keyport GardenWalk, visit <http://keyportgardenwalk.org> (<http://keyportgardenwalk.org>) or contact Clare Skeen 732-687-9519.



Nicholas Polanin is associate professor, agricultural agent II, Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension of Somerset County. Email him at polanin@njaes.rutgers.edu.

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Nicholas Polanin is associate professor, agricultural agent II, Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension of Somerset County. (Photo: ~File)

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