

News

Fall 2009

Motherlode Harvest: A Multi-Farm CSA

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a system where local residents purchase local agricultural products through a periodic subscription box program. A multi-farm CSA for the foothill region is up and running! Motherlode Harvest, a spinoff of the non-profit local agricultural marketing organization Farms of Amador, began a weekly subscription produce box on Tuesday, September 22. Subscribers pay \$22 per box and must sign



Motherlode Harvest Weekly Subscription Produce Box

up for at least a 4-week commitment. There were 17 subscribers the first week and by the third week, the participating farms were maxed out with 31 customers and many already on the waiting list. The first boxes included fresh produce from 8 local farms, whose operators have all been working hard to make this multi-farm CSA a

reality. This fresh local produce is in high demand, and although the current participants will better plan their plantings next year, Motherlode Harvest is still looking for other farms in Calaveras, Tuolumne, El Dorado and Amador counties that can supply fresh produce for the boxes.

Please turn to page 3 for frequently asked questions about the Motherlode Harvest CSA and our weekly produce boxes. On pages 4-5, we've included a copy of the GOOD FOOD NEWS that accompanies each box. It features recipes and tips for making the most of our local produce.

Motherlode Farm Guide in the Works

In Spring 2010, Farms of Amador, Calaveras Grown and Farms of Tuolumne are teaming up with the Lodestar to produce a Motherlode Farm Guide. This guide will connect local people and visitors alike to farms, wineries, ranches, orchards, vineyards, farmer's markets, CSAs and farm-stands in the Motherlode Region. It will include listings of all members of Farms of Amador, Calaveras Grown and Farms of Tuolumne free of charge and advertisements from anyone who would like to reach out to a public interested in local agricultural products.

This guide will become a valuable resource for anyone interested in local food, wine, agritourism opportunities or the purchase of agricultural commodities. For example it will help the tourist locate the Farmers' Markets, local wineries and ranches where they can purchase locally raised beef. It will help the local resident find information on Community Supported Agriculture programs in our area and learn more about the neighborhood orchard selling fruit direct from the farm. It will help the grape buyer for a winery find a small local grape producer, and the wine aficionado discover a small local winery that does not have the capitol to advertise in other publications.

To be a part of the guide at no charge, just join your local agricultural marketing organization. We will be seeking advertisers as well, but if you are a small operation looking to expand your customer base, the Motherlode Farm Guide will be just the vehicle for you. In Amador County contact Sean Kriletich at skriletich@ucdavis.edu or (209) 223-6837 or see our membership form on page 7.

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2009 FARMERS' MARKET SEASON

The 2009 Amador Farmers' Market booths boasted a wide variety of vegetables including difficult to grow, early and late season crops, fruit, bread, pie, beef and goat meat, eggs, jams, jellies, curds, savory preserves, honey, herbs, olive oil and body care products. In short all the staples, produced and made available by local growers. Overall, the 2009 Amador Farmers' Market saw a new location for the Sutter Creek Market a number of new vendors and a slight downturn in attendance from last year. This reduced attendance presents a challenge to the market organizers in determining and fixing the cause of the slowdown.

"We had a very strong year in terms of vendors," said market manager Michelle Grondin. "We had new vendors with great products, most of the markets looked really full, and our vendors were consistent in their attendance, all of which are important factors for keeping our customers coming back." Some of the lower customer attendance may have been due to the new location for the Sutter Creek market, which was moved from its long-time location on Eureka Street to the South parking lot to accommodate water pipeline construction. While much more visible and with easier parking, the new lot apparently was too far from the downtown area to allow for the foot traffic that was common in the Eureka St. location.



Produce display at the Farmers' Market

The market's board of directors had expected that this would be a banner year for the market, with more people placing priority on shopping locally, along with the greater media exposure of the benefits of local food. However, the realities of the slowed economy had a negative effect on attendance. Besides having less money available in the county, the directors noted that more people seem to be trying to grow their own food this summer, decreasing their perceived need to go to the market.

Despite the slowdown, the market organizers remain optimistic about next year, and committed to making the market ever better. They hope to harvest even greater participation from local farmers by providing them with a viable outlet for their products. The organizers will also work hard on reaching out to a greater segment of the county's population with the concepts of eating healthier tastier food, enjoying our vibrant local community, and supporting local agriculture. So when the 2010 market season rolls around, why not try out the Farmers' Markets?

The market runs May through October, with markets in Jackson, Sutter Creek, Pine Grove, and Plymouth. For more information, call 209-419-2503, or go to amadorfarmersmarket.com.

FARMS IN AMADOR?

by Ray Stacey, Big Horse & Little Cattle Co., Ione, CA

To those who have migrated from the Bay Area, 'farms in Amador?' has a very haunting sound. For many years "Farms in Berkeley?!" was a radio commercial which made you aware that the agricultural element had long left the Bay Area. The concept was implied that industrial food had taken over and farms were a thing of the past, and sure enough they were.

When I think back many years, I can remember truck farmers who drove through the county selling from the back of their trucks. I can remember grammar school field trips to a dairy in Hillsborough and that Los Gatos and Sunnyvale were prime orchard lands and S&W had canneries in each town.

There has been tremendous progress in development of the entire Bay Area, but it can no longer produce food to make it self-sufficient. The people who produced the food are gone—some made a profit when leaving, others did not. Before these stewards of the land left, they could feed a community. The Bay Area is now the worlds' research and development center. As soon as a new idea is processed, it goes to a foreign country for cheap labor to manufacture. Many Bay Area folks still live on their land, but they believe jobs in the industrial world offer better living standards. We are becoming a nation who depends on industrially produced food and we expect it to come from foreign countries.

Amador County has a chance to reject things that change the elements of our life style and to fall back to what we have lost in our rush for progress. Family farms will become the most desired life style. Health is the most important factor of life and rural living offers better health, and gives people the chance to become stewards of the land. It is most important that this life style be cultured and cherished—it is the backbone of an independent nation. 'Farms in Amador?' I hope so for years to come.

"...rural living offers better health, and gives people the chance to become stewards of the land."



Buying Autumn fruit at the Amador Farmers' Market

MOTHERLODE HARVEST Q & A

How does the multi-farm CSA work?

Every Wednesday, the produce coordinators asks participating farms what they will have for the upcoming Monday. By Friday morning farmers must reply with what they have to offer. The coordinator decides on the produce to be included in the produce box based on what is available that week. On Friday afternoon the coordinator sends out an email or makes calls confirming what each producer will bring on Monday. On Monday afternoon between 4 and 6 p.m. the produce must be delivered packaged and ready for sale to the Golden Country Produce stand on Hwy. 49 in Sutter Hill. All the produce is checked to make sure that it is clean, properly packaged and in excellent condition by the Motherlode Harvest box packers. The producer and the packers then create and sign an invoice for which the producer will be paid at the end of the month. The packers then assemble the boxes for pickup by the customer at the Golden Country Produce stand the following day.



Who can participate?

Anyone producing high quality fresh produce within 100 miles of Jackson, California has the potential to participate in the Motherlode Harvest program. Preference will be given to small-scale farmers from Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado and Tuolumne counties who are using responsible ethics in the production of their products. Currently all the farmers involved are using organic practices, but only one is registered.



How do I sign up?

Contact Sean Kriletich at skriletich@ucdavis.edu. A \$100 membership fee is required to participate. Twenty dollars of this goes to becoming a member of Farms of Amador. If you do not live in Amador Co. you will become an associate member of Farms of Amador by signing up. The membership fee can be paid over the 1st month of participation in cash, produce or some combination of both.



What if I only have small quantities?

Let's say you have 10 lbs of carrots available. You might think that this isn't enough to supply 31 boxes but if another grower has 21 lbs of carrots we can purchase your carrots and theirs, and provide the customers with carrots.

What are the standards for the produce?

After contacting Motherlode Harvest you will be sent a list of our rigorous standards. The produce we put in these boxes is top quality, fresh, delicious and appealing. Only the best of what the foothills has to offer is acceptable. Local produce boxes are a new concept for most of the residents of our area, and to keep our existing customers and attract new ones, we must seek to WOW them.

Can I sell my value-added products or non-produce items?

Yes, but not as part of the box. Your products such as honey, meat, etc. can be added to the list of available add-ons that will be included in the newsletter, which comes with the box each week.

How long will the Motherlode Harvest CSA operate?

Motherlode Harvest completed its first trial period the second week of November. This 8-week trial proved to be a huge success. We will resume in the early spring 2010 and hope to provide year round produce boxes year-round from then on.

If you are a producer of delicious fruits vegetables or other locally produced agricultural products, please contact us to become involved in this unique marketing opportunity. Email skriletich@ucdavis.edu or call (209) 223-6837. Let's work together to create a vibrant local agricultural community!



GOOD FOOD NEWS

Motherlode Harvest

Local Produce and Products

12200 B Airport Road, Jackson, CA 95642

motherlodeharvest@gmail.com



VOLUME 1 NUMBER 2

SPONSORED BY FARMS OF AMADOR

SEPTEMBER 29, 2009

Supporting Local Agriculture and the Local Economy

This week's contributors to the box are:

BUTTE MOUNTAIN FARM-- Owner Carolyn Boyd excels at raising chickens through organic means and sells the eggs at the Amador Farmers' Market. She also grows organic herbs and produce, and makes lovely beeswax candles.

PALOMA POLLINATORS-- This farm outside of Jackson uses permaculture techniques, which involves cooperating with the natural environment to produce the healthiest, most nutritious food, and aims for the lowest possible use of resources.

MAJESTIC OAK FARM & GARDENS-- Nestled in the fertile Jackson Valley, this farm has been working for two years using organic and biosustainable methods, and is currently expanding the garden and a chicken pasture.

FIVE BROTHERS FARM-- Located in Amador City, this farm is owned by a Master Gardener and her sons. New to the Farmers' Market this year, they are producing high-quality vegetables and jams.

BOGGS MARKET FARM-- The Boggs have a fruit orchard and garden in Pine Grove, where they use organic growing methods.

ALWAYS ENOUGH RANCH-- Producing for the last seven years just over the county line in Acampo, AE Ranch raises certified organic produce, naturally-raised goat, grass-fed beef, and free-range chicken eggs. Having studied herbs since 1974, owner Gayla Roberts also makes natural herbal body products.

MIRABELLE FARM-- This vineyard/farm in Fiddletown has a lovely fruit orchard with many heirloom varieties.

WHAT'S IN YOUR BOX:

This week, it's more of our delicious summer favorites, with a hint of fall.

BASIL
LETTUCE
HOT PEPPERS
EGGPLANT
SHALLOTS
SWEET PEPPERS
CHERRY TOMATOES
PEARS
TOMATOES
CORN
RED ONIONS

ADD-ONS ARE AVAILABLE!

Check your box for the list of available add-ons for next week's box and their prices. Please call Customer Coordinator Michelle Grondin at 419-2503 by Friday at 5 pm with your requests. Payment can be made when you pick up your box.



Just about everything in your box can be grilled and thrown together in a fantastic End-of-Summer Salad!

Cut one eggplant in half lengthwise. Slice 1 peeled red onion into 1/4-in. rings. Partially husk 2 ears of corn, leaving the husks attached at the bottom and removing the silks. Brush these 3 vegetables with olive oil, pull the husks back over the corn, then grill all, along with 2 sweet peppers, over a low to medium flame until browned and soft, but still holding their shape. Chop the eggplant and onion, cut the corn kernels off the cob, peel, seed, and chop the peppers, and combine in a large bowl with halved cherry tomatoes, 1 small minced hot pepper, 1/2 bunch chopped basil, and 1/4 lb of lettuce. Add salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with crumbled feta cheese, if desired, and add dressing of choice.



Please help Motherlode Harvest conserve resources by returning your box as clean and dry as possible when you pick up your next box. Thank You!



While you have the grill going, roast some shallots to use as a garnish for grilled meats, or to make a delicious salad dressing.

Roasted Shallot Dressing

Cut the root end off of several shallots. Place the shallots on a piece of aluminum foil large enough to enclose the shallots. Drizzle the shallots with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper, then enclose them in foil packet. Place packet on grill over low to medium flame and roast until shallots are very soft, about 15 to 20 minutes. Let roasted shallots cool, then peel and place in food processor or blender with 2-3 tablespoons of sherry or white wine vinegar, 4-6 tablespoons of olive oil, or to taste, and a pinch each of salt and pepper. Process until smooth.

Here is another nice condiment to try with grilled meats or vegetables.

Fresh Hot Pepper Paste

1 cup chopped cilantro
1 cup chopped parsley
1/4 cup chopped seeded chilies
1/4 cup water
1/4 cup olive oil
1 1/2 tablespoons minced garlic
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon cumin

Combine all ingredients in processor and blend until very finely chopped. (Can be prepared 1 week ahead. Refrigerate in covered container.)



FARMS OF AMADOR DONATES FRUIT TREES

Farms of Amador is dedicated to promoting agriculture in Amador County, and what better way to accomplish this mission but plant fruit trees in our elementary schools and public places. This March, we teamed up with one of our small-farm members who had obtained a very low price on bare-root fruit trees. These trees included almonds, peaches, nectarines, apples, pears and cherries.

Farms of Amador bought the trees and the irrigation supplies, and Michael Spinetta and Sean Kriletich volunteered to put the trees in. The first 23 trees were planted along the fences of the Plymouth Elementary school with a plan to espalier them for esthetics and ease of harvest (espalier is a form of pruning where trees are trained to grow flat against a wall, fence or trellis). Students at the Plymouth Elementary School will be able to watch these trees grow, and within a few years pluck the fruit right off the tree or eat it in their school lunches. This will work towards creating a respect for and knowledge of where our food comes from in future generations of Amador county citizens. The children who grow up watching these trees grow and eating their fruits are more likely to be interested in local agriculture and all that the farms and gardens of Amador bring to our community.

The second round of 12 trees went in along the south fence of the field at Plymouth Elementary and to the southwest of the Amador Co. Fair Office. In the future, these trees should be coming into production just about fair time, giving fairgoers a glimpse of yet another opportunity for Amador County agriculture.

WILLIAMSON ACT

by Heather Anderson, County of Amador

The Williamson Act (officially known as the California Land Conservation Act) preserves agricultural and open space lands by discouraging premature and unnecessary development. Statewide, nearly 17 million of the State's approximately 30 million acres of farm and ranch land are protected under the Williamson Act. Approximately 94,000 acres of Amador County's farm and ranch lands, scattered throughout the western portion (west of Dew Drop) of the County, are protected by Williamson Act contracts. This equates to approximately 25% of all land in Amador County or approximately 34% of the *privately* owned land in the County.

Landowners who participate in the Williamson Act Program receive reduced property tax assessments in return for enrollment. Likewise, in return for participating in the program, local governments receive a partial subvention of foregone property tax revenues from the State. In a typical year, Amador County receives approximately \$115,000 in subvention monies; however, this year amendments to the State's Budget Act reduced subvention payments to \$1,000 statewide, essentially suspending subvention payments to the counties. Despite these cuts the Williamson Act Program is still in place both locally and statewide, though some counties more significantly impacted by the reduced subvention payments have either implemented, or are considering, changes ranging the gamut from not accepting any new contracts to nonrenewal of all contracts.

At this time there are no plans to change our County program and Amador County intends to continue to utilize the Williamson Act Program as the primary means of preserving agricultural lands. As part of the County's General Plan Update the County is considering policies that encourage enrollment of properties into the Williamson Act and support the continuation of existing contracts. If this position changes, program participants will be notified.

NOON
LUNCH
&
DINNER

See
article
on
page 8



Above: Happy diners in the Gulletts' walnut grove

Left: Touring Susan Bragstad's Amador Olive Oil operation

Farms of Amador

“Premium Agricultural Products”

JOIN OR RENEW NOW
to be eligible for
FREE inclusion
in our
2010 Motherlode Farm Guide
(see page 1 for details)

Farms of Amador Membership Form

Farms of Amador has restructured and is actively working on new and innovative ways of increasing the viability of Amador County Agriculture. The cost to join is just \$20/year.

Name _____

Company/Farm Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

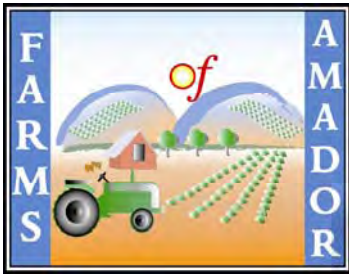
Email _____

Agricultural Products:

Fee: \$20 for Regular Membership (please make checks payable to Farms of Amador)

Please return form and payment to: Farms of Amador, 12200-B Airport Rd, Jackson, CA 95642

Please note that out-of-county farms will become supporting members.



12200 B Airport Rd.
Jackson, CA 95642

**Fall 2009
Newsletter**

2009 Farm Tour and Dinner Raises Funds for Farms of Amador and Amador Farmers' Market

This year's Farm Tour and Dinner was a great success with 125 people attending. Farms of Amador and Amador Farmers' Market sponsored the event to help raise awareness of our local farms and agricultural products. The farms visited were Sobon Winery, Vino Noceto Winery, the Manner's Blessings Farm, Susan Bragstad's Amador Olive Oil Farm, Carolyn Boyd's Butte Mountain Farm, and Alice Kaiser's Casa de la Pradera Farm.

The August dinner was held under the Gullett's walnut trees next to their Vino Noceto Winery. Along with the superb dinner by Amador Catering, Herb Boxhorn provided his smooth jazz/folk music. The auction and raffle organized by Katherine Venturelli brought in substantial funds, along with wine sales.

With the success of this event, we will continue to visit more local farms in the future. We'll keep you posted. Thanks to the committee who put this event together — Michelle Grondin, Susan Bragstad, and Virginia Manner — almost \$2,000 was raised for both groups to use to promote and market local agriculture.



Socializing at the 2009 Farm Tour & Dinner

**More Farm Tour
photos on page 6!**

FOA Website Moves to FarmsofAmador.com

Please note that the Farms of Amador website has moved to farmsofamador.com. The FOA board is in the process of updating the website to reflect our current activities and membership. FOA membership entitles you to a web page for your farm, ranch, vineyard winery or business — this is a page you can update yourself, or it can be a link to your pre-existing website. Twenty dollars a year is quite a deal for a web presence! Even if you already have a website, the more links to your site, the better your search engine rankings will be. If you would like to retain your web presence on farmsofamador.com, please renew your membership by December 31, 2009 (see form on page 7). If you have any suggestions for our new site, please send them to skriletich@ucdavis.edu.