

## Headed for the Holidays... How To Put A Local Spin on the Meat Platter

By Olivia Schmidt, University of Maine at Farmington Intern

Think those fresh vegetables from this summer's market are the only thing locally grown that just tastes better? Livestock raised on area farms offer another tasty local choice. Buying meat can seem more complicated for the consumer, but it doesn't have to be.

Small farms frequently raise livestock that's primarily grass-fed right on some of the grassy hills that surround our communities. Grass-fed meat is lower in fat content and is raised using sustainable agriculture methods that use less energy and sustain the health of the soil.

Another advantage to buying locally raised meat and dairy is getting to know the people raising the food for your table. This harvest season when we give thanks for the bounty that feeds us, our appreciation for the quality of the food we eat can be enhanced if we know a bit more about the soil and toil-land and people, that made it possible.

In western Maine, you can purchase a wide variety of meat products including poultry, beef ranging from Black Angus to Scottish Highland, pork, lamb, goat and even specialty meats such as bison and ostrich. And don't forget the cheese and eggs. Many local farms carry fresh eggs and western Maine has some wonderful creameries as well.



### Here are some things to expect when shopping for local animal products:

- Butchers shops, farmers markets, specialty foods stores, coops, and farms may carry them. Some producers even mail them. You can purchase meat, dairy and eggs through Community Supported Agriculture shares offered by some farms. And don't overlook local grocers, who are increasingly carrying products from Maine farms. Certified organic milk from Maine dairy farms is sold to Horizon Organic and Organic Valley, which you can find on the shelf in many grocery stores.

- Small farmers often sell in large quantities, for example, a farmer may sell "a half a cow" or two dozen chickens. The customer will typically purchase the livestock in advance and be responsible for picking it up from the butcher or slaughterhouse. Individual farmers can explain the process they use. Plan in advance, as orders for different types of meat have seasonal deadlines.

- The customer can often request the types of meat cuts they want, for example, steaks, hamburger, or roast, but this isn't always the case.

- At a farmers market or farm store, cheese and meat is sometimes cut on the spot, in which case you need to have it sliced and weighed before knowing how much

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### Grocers Selling Locally Raised Meat and Dairy

**Bob's Farm and Garden**  
*Dover-Foxcroft*

**Edmund's Market**  
*Phillips*

**Fare Share Market**  
*Norway*

**Good Food Store**  
*Bethel*

**Mosher's Seafood 'N More**  
*Farmington*

**Spice of Life**  
*Skowhegan*

**Uncles Dean Good Groceries**  
*Waterville*

**Whitewater Farm**  
*New Sharon*

[An incomplete list]

*(Left) Highland Cattle: A hardy breed well-suited to Maine's harsh winters. Custom lean beef packages are available year-round from The Highlands, a diversified farm operated by Michael Vermette and Charlotte Hillas in Saint Albans, Maine. (photo of Highland Cattle in Limerick, Maine)*



# WESTERN MOUNTAINS ALLIANCE

## Mission Statement

The Western Mountains Alliance works to improve quality of life in western Maine by strengthening regional identity, supporting sustainable development, providing forums for regional dialogue, and building capacity for change.

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## Here at the Alliance...

### New Forums Promote Dialogue with Western Maine Legislators

In June, WMA and the Somerset Economic Development Corporation launched the first in a series of legislative forums to bring together business leaders and state legislators that represent Somerset County. Within a few months, plans were underway to develop a similar series in Oxford County in partnership with the Western Maine Development Council.

For 20-plus years, the Western Mountains Alliance has coordinated a free public forum series in Franklin County called the "Western Maine Legislative Caucus Series" which educates the community and legislators about issues of importance to the region. The series regularly attracts 100 attendees to its 7 a.m. forums. Now, economic development leaders in Somerset and Oxford Counties are replicating similar forums locally. Discussion of a Piscataquis County Forum is also underway.

Each forum features speakers who are knowledgeable about the chosen topic: the high cost of energy, workforce issues, health care reform, renewable energy strategies, regulatory predictability, and more. The presentations are followed by a moderated dialogue between presenters, the audience, and State Legislators in attendance at the forum.

### Upcoming Forums are scheduled for:

**November 21, 7 a.m.** at UMF on Maine's Energy Policy, contact WMA at 778-3885 for more information.

**December 12, 7:30 a.m.** at the Madison American Legion Hall in conjunction with the Somerset Economic Development Corporation's Annual Meeting, on State Tax Policy. Contact SEDC at 474-0166 for more information.

If you have a suggestion for a future caucus topic, please contact Tanya Swain at 778-3885 or [tswain@westernmountainsalliance.org](mailto:tswain@westernmountainsalliance.org).

### Marketing Opportunity for Historic Farms

Are you operating a farm that is more than 50-years-old? The Western Mountains Alliance is looking for 12 farms to feature in a wall calendar celebrating the resilience and diversity of Maine agriculture. Participating farms will receive publicity through the calendar and must be located in Somerset, Piscataquis, Oxford, Franklin or northern Androscoggin County. Can you provide a high resolution digital photograph and

*"We believe that together we can form an alliance among business leaders, economic developers, chamber of commerce directors and State Legislators that, over time, can make a meaningful difference in the business attitude of State Government."*

*— Tanya Swain, Western Mountains Alliance and Jim Batey, Somerset County Economic Development Council*

a brief description of the farm's history and current activity? Please give us a call at 778-3885 to learn more.

### Reaching Your Customer in the New Marketplace: Buying Clubs, Distributors and Online Farmers Markets

On Saturday, November 15, farmers and farm advocates are invited to a conference at Kennebec Valley Community College in Fairfield on connecting with consumers in the new marketplace.

Abby Holm, Local Foods Anywhere, will conduct a hands-on workshop illustrating how to create a farmers market website modeled on Local Foods Plymouth (see Local Foods Canterbury for an example). Greg Franklin, Gregory S. Franklin Associates, LLC, will discuss Word of Mouth marketing and will facilitate a consumer panel and a farmer panel to explore expanding market opportunities including buying clubs, email lists, and distributors. The consumer panel will talk about what they are looking for in local foods and why they are buying, or why they are not.

Registration is \$30 for the entire day which includes a local foods lunch catered by Apollo's Bistro of Waterville. Please contact Tricia Cook at 207-778-3885



or [cook@westernmountainsalliance.org](mailto:cook@westernmountainsalliance.org). The workshop is sponsored by Heart of Maine Resource, Conservation and Development and Western Mountains Alliance with support from Maine Department of Agriculture and Maine's Farm Service Agency.

November 2008

Dear Friend:

Here at the Western Mountains Alliance, our focus is local: Finding the opportunities for western Maine communities to build on the unique natural and human capital our region has available to support economic and community development.

For example, over 40 emerging community leaders have participated in the Lead Western Maine Program, graduating to start projects such as a community diabetes education program in Oxford County and Maine's Paper and Heritage Museum in Livermore Falls. Our Legislative Caucus Series provides the public with diverse perspectives on topics such as wind power development and tax reform. Ninety-eight percent of respondents to a recent evaluation of the series indicated that they changed their mind on an issue as a result of information presented at a caucus event. And, our program to support local agriculture – the "Eat Smart Eat Local" initiative – has contributed to increasing sales of locally produced foods at farms, farmstands and major grocery stores in the program's target area.

In June, the Western Mountains Alliance Board of Directors voted on a three-year plan to focus WMA's programs on local food systems and helping communities adapt to rising energy costs. This year, we are:

- ❖ Helping area farmers grow their businesses by promoting farms in local food directory publications for Oxford, Franklin and Somerset Counties, by connecting institutional buyers to local produce, and by developing a web-based farmers market.
- ❖ Promoting energy conservation and new technology by bringing financing and technical information to the region on renewable energy and efficiency products, and by developing resources to assist communities in adapting to rising energy costs.
- ❖ Providing the public with balanced information on important rural issues by expanding the Western Maine Legislative Caucus Series into Oxford and Piscataquis Counties in partnership with local economic development entities.

As we near the close of 2008, please consider making a membership gift to the Western Mountains Alliance. We need your participation to continue our work and this year your gift counts twice...With thanks to a generous donor, WMA is raising funds to meet an \$80,000 matching grant goal.

You can learn more about WMA through this edition of the Advocate or by visiting [www.westernmountainsalliance.org](http://www.westernmountainsalliance.org). Please consider becoming part of the Western Mountains Alliance and helping to grow a sustainable future for western Maine.

Best regards,

Jim Batey, Chair  
Western Mountains Alliance Board of Directors

WMA is a 501c3. All donations are tax-deductible. Contact us for a copy of our 2006 Annual Report and/or the recently published: Celebrating 20 Years: A Report on Western Mountains Alliance's Impact in Western Maine.

## Did you know you can designate your gift?

Do you feel strongly about renewable energy? Appreciate the local food directories?  
Feel we need to build leaders in our region?

You can designate your gift to support specific projects or program areas at WMA by noting your interest area on your check, or by contacting the Western Mountains Alliance. For more information, contact Tricia Cook at [tcook@westernmountainsalliance.org](mailto:tcook@westernmountainsalliance.org) or visit [www.westernmountainsalliance.org](http://www.westernmountainsalliance.org).

*Thank you for your support!*

# Farm Sales for the Busy Shopper

Do you want to support local farms and eat more organic or naturally-raised foods, but don't have the extra time or gas money to drive to area farms to buy direct? There are other options in western Maine.

Small grocers, natural food stores and coops are increasingly making products from local farms available on the shelf or through pre-orders. (See the partial list on page 5.) Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is another option in which the customer pre-buys a share of the harvest (a CSA) in exchange for a weekly or monthly delivery of food to one central location, based on available products of the season and the particular farm.

A community partnership, the Oxford Hills Food Cooperative, is one new ven-

ture with online direct orders and weekly deliveries to your home or workplace within a 15 mile radius of Norway. Thirteen farms offer their products, including pies, cheese, eggs, bread, and winter crops such as: beets, squash and potatoes on the web-based "store" [www.oxfordhillsfoodcoop.org](http://www.oxfordhillsfoodcoop.org). There is no minimum order size and you can pay online or in cash. The Oxford Hills Food Cooperative also offers CSA shares that combine the products of all 13 farms.

Another option is to form a "buying club" with friends, coworkers or neighbors. You buy the food your club desires in full case lots, then split up the order using your own elbow grease when it is delivered to a central location. In Rangeley, Gina Lamarche has first hand experience linking local

farms with members of a buying club. A few words of advice: you'll need to get organized so the jobs of ordering, contacting suppliers, writing checks, and distributing the order are well managed. But it can be worth the savings of buying in bulk.

Crown of Maine Cooperative is a statewide distributor providing food from Maine farms to buying clubs. They have useful step-by-step instructions on how to form a buying club on their website [www.crownofmainecoop.com](http://www.crownofmainecoop.com)

Lamarche now operates another option for Rangeley area buyers that falls somewhere in between a CSA and a buying club. Each week, Lamarche travels to area farms that are her established suppliers. She buys enough quality organically or naturally grown products to fill baskets for thirty to fifty pre-registered customers and sends them an email with the choices. "The big thing," says Lamarche, "is that we save time for farmers. It's hard to have 50 things to do on the farm in a day and have 25 different customers dropping by. It's easier with one person coming by to shop for everyone."

On the weekly pick-up day, customers fill their \$20 baskets (plus \$1 for Lamarche's travel costs). Too busy to stop by for "first pick"? Lamarche delivers. She is also looking forward to web-based innovations that promise a streamlined pre-ordering system. You can learn more about Lamarche's experiences at the November 15th conference, Reaching Your Customer in the New Marketplace (See page 2 for details). ■



The Maine Alternative Agriculture Association (MAAA) received funding recently to renovate the Starks Grange No. 75 in Somerset County. They plan to build a commercial kitchen, to process value-added products and to provide CSAs from area farms. Paula Day of MAAA stands with her husband Ed (left), Michael Aube of USDA and representatives from Senators Snowe and Collins offices at a recent open house.

## Collaboration

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through this program save more money through the improvements than the loan payments homeowners have to make.

Farms interested in learning more about energy efficiency and renewables, are invited to a workshop on farm energy audits currently in the planning for the Hardy Farm in Farmington on November 21 at 10:30 a.m. The workshop is the second of two events WMA has co-sponsored

on farm energy audits with Maine Rural Partners Farm Energy Partners Network. A presentation from the first workshop at Grassland Farm in Skowhegan is available on WMA's website at [www.westernmountainsalliance.org](http://www.westernmountainsalliance.org).

Energy audits involve a process where a professional auditor identifies areas where a farm, other type business or home can realize energy savings through changes to processes, equipment or building upgrades, such as insulation. Businesses may be able eligible for assistance to upgrade

equipment through Efficiency Maine. Since 2003, Efficiency Maine has paid cash incentives to more than 980 Maine businesses to help them purchase and install electric energy saving equipment, saving Maine businesses more than 56 million kilowatts annually.

Maine farms, agricultural-related businesses and other businesses may receive up to \$50,000 per year from Efficiency Maine by implementing measures to reduce energy costs. For more information, visit [www.energymaine.com](http://www.energymaine.com). ■

## Here at the Alliance

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### Wicked Good Market: Online and On the Farm

Western Mountains Alliance recently received funding through the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to pilot an online farmers market, based on the successful Local Foods Plymouth model in New Hampshire. The goals of the project are to connect new consumers with western Maine farmers, to create efficient, cost effective ways for farmers to sell their products and to increase the capacity of farmers to sell online and use technology for marketing. The project is focused on farms in Franklin and Somerset counties and hopes to increase summer sales for area farms by 15%.

Farm stand and on-farm retail sales are on the rise, with an over 30% increase in sales between 1997 and 2002. (Source: U.S. Census) The “eat local” movement



*Cape Cod Hill students raise interest in local food.*

is changing consumer behavior, with some small Maine farms reporting an inability to keep up with the demand for quality products such as grass-fed meats and organic cheeses. The wicked Good Market project wants to continue to expand the customer base for locally grown and raised food.

The project will create a website for online sales and organize pick up/delivery sites. For information about how to sell your farm products on the Wicked Good Market website, please contact Tricia Cook at [tcCook@westernmountainsalliance.org](mailto:tcCook@westernmountainsalliance.org) or 207-778-3885. ■

## Where to buy locally raised meat, cheese and dairy year-round in Western Maine

Western Mountains Alliance, with partners from across the region, spread the word this July of more than 235 local farms and farm markets in western Maine that are selling a wide variety of farm products direct to consumers or wholesale to schools, restaurants and institutions. Booklets listing places to Eat Smart Eat Local were published for each of Somerset, Franklin and Oxford Counties, thanks to the generous volunteerism of farmers, organizational partners and UMF students and to the financial contributions of project sponsors. The popular free booklets may be downloaded from our website:

[www.westernmountainsalliance.org](http://www.westernmountainsalliance.org)

WMA owes the inspiration for the grass-roots localvore shoppers guides to the late Mabel Dennison of Temple, who designed the first directory in 2001 and did her research by driving around the region to visit with area farmers.



Please contact the Western Mountains Alliance at [info@westernmountainsalliance.org](mailto:info@westernmountainsalliance.org) or 778-3885 if you would like to sponsor the 2009 edition or would like to list your farm in the directory.

### Shopping Locally

*Continued from page 1*

it costs. Meat is not required to be packaged in any particular way; a portion might come in shrink wrap, or it might be waiting to be wrapped in paper on the spot.

- Some farms sell raw milk which is unhomogenized, so all the cream floats to the top. Raw milk must also be labeled as unpasteurized, and cheese made with raw milk must be labeled as such— if sold at the store. Milk products sold directly from the farm do not have to label “raw milk” products, so ask your farmer.

Information on dozens of local farmers is available through local food directories for Franklin, Somerset and Oxford Counties on the Western Mountains Alliance website as well as:

[www.mofga.org](http://www.mofga.org)  
[www.mainefoods.net](http://www.mainefoods.net)  
[www.getrealmaine.org](http://www.getrealmaine.org)



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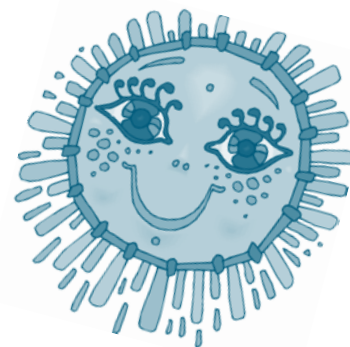
## In Collaboration: \$aving Energy - \$aving Cash

Reducing your energy costs doesn't have to mean a cold house or making a significant financial investment in insulation. While insulation is one of the most effective ways to reduce heating costs, small investments such as caulking windows, doors and pipes, and installing weather stripping can reduce your energy usage by as much as 10 percent according to Efficiency Maine, a statewide program offering resources and information pertaining to energy conservation and renewable energy.

With the average Maine household expected to spend \$2,400 this winter on heating costs, a minor investment could save a household around \$240. In many communities around the region, local groups are organizing to help spread the word about energy conservation and encourage homeowners and businesses to think about making improvements that could save them money this winter, and in the long term. In Franklin County, an Energy Resource Team comprised of several area organiza-

tions including the Western Mountains Alliance is developing energy forums throughout Franklin County to provide information to residents who are concerned about keeping their homes and families warm this winter. The Team sponsored a public forum in Wilton on home energy audits on October 4. A second forum with presentations on federal fuel assistance, home energy audits, and fire safety was held October 29 in Phillips. Pending funding, WMA plans to help the Energy Resource Team coordinate a third forum in Stratton and work with other partners to offer similar workshops in Somerset and Piscataquis County.

Other initiatives are responding to both the growing concern about the affordability of heating fuel and to the opportunity to promote wise energy conservation practices. Households meeting low income criteria may be eligible for federal heating assistance through Western Maine Community Action (WMCA). WMCA is also facilitating home energy audits and com-



bined grants/low-interest loans for weatherization projects. For more information, call 1-800-645-9636.

For assistance with conservation efforts, MaineHousing offers a Home Energy Loan Program (HELP) that provides low interest rate loans of up to \$30,000 to low- and moderate-income homeowners to finance a wide variety of energy-related improvements to their homes. For program details and a list of HELP lenders visit MaineHousing's website at [www.mainehousing.org](http://www.mainehousing.org), or call 1-877-544-3271. Many projects funded

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