

## New farms sprouting at Chatham Mills Farmers' Market

By Adrienne Bashista

Saturday, April 13 is the first day of the Chatham Mills Farmers' Market in Pittsboro, and the Market is pleased to welcome two new regular vendors: Wanderlust Farm and Fatty Owl Farm! The Chatham Mills Farmers' Market is located on the lawn of Historic Chatham Mills, and is open from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturdays through November 26. Sixteen vendors have signed up to be part of the market this year: ten regular and six visiting, and demonstrations, lectures, and musical guests will be part of each market day.

### WANDERLUST FARM

Farmers are typically tied to the land they farm, so while "wanderlust" implies a wish to escape to far-off lands it was actually during an escape that the idea of the farm started. The name is a nod to the farm's beginnings.

Kim Sevy and Steve Chase, the owners of Wanderlust Farm, met at mile 0 of the Appalachian trail, Springer Mountain, Georgia, in 2011. They hiked the entire trail together and decided along the way that once they completed the hike they'd start a farm. Steve had had the idea in the back of his head since 2008, when he'd hiked the trail before with a couple who started a farm after finishing the 2181 miles, and since Kim, a landscape architect by trade, knew plants, it was a natural fit.

One of the most difficult things to deal with on that epic journey was finding fresh whole foods to eat. Once back in the real world, they determined to "opt-out" as much as possible from the industrial processed food system and to



Steve "Chaco" Chase and Kim "Sketcher" Sevy of Wanderlust Farm

have real food always on hand. It was an easy transition to make the decision to grow all of their own.

Their small, chemical and pesticide-free farm now has goats, chickens, rabbits and a 2500 square foot home veggie, herb and flower garden. They are now in the process of making a 5000 square foot market garden and 12x32 poly tunnel greenhouse. They will be bringing eggs, vegetables, herbs, teas, and cut flowers to the market and are experimenting with beekeeping, making goat milk soap and cheese and spinning fibers from their angora rabbits and mohair goats.

### FATTY OWL FARM

Fatty Owl Farm, located in Pittsboro, is owned by Dan Shields and Mary DeMare. They specialize in rabbits – meat and hides – but also hope to eventually bring chicken eggs, broilers, and worm castings to market, as well as products created from the rabbit pelts.

Mary grew up working on farms in upstate New York and her work in the co-op world furthered her interest in all things local: food, economy, and community. She managed the Chatham Marketplace from the time of its opening until late 2011, and now works for Abundance Foundation. Dan grew up in a family that always had large gardens and he loved seeing things grow. For the last seven years farming has been his passion.

The rabbits they're raising will be processed on site at their 3-acre farm in Pittsboro. This is part of their philosophy of raising the animals; everything starts and ends at the farm. They see the animals born, see them live, then see how it dies. On-site processing also gives them access to entire animal. Not only can they access the meat, but also the hide and organs like the liver, normally discarded when processed off-site, can be harvested and used. Even the offal can be composted and used for fertilizer.

The first couple of markets they attend they'll be showing a video and talking about processing the rabbits. By the end of April or early May they'll have hides available and then meat. All meat for sale at the market will have been processed the day before and sold fresh.

*One of Adrienne Bashista's many hats is manager of the Chatham Mills Farmers' Market. You can contact her at [cmfmanager@gmail.com](mailto:cmfmanager@gmail.com)*

## FARM TO FORK

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answers to the questions can organic and local food feed the world and, are local and organic food affordable are Yes, and Yes. There is currently enough food to feed the world, if we would only use the plant crops fed to livestock to feed more people. There is also growing evidence that crop yields of organic crops equal or exceed conventional crops in many cases. In terms of affordability, people will need to change how they shop and cook—eating less meat and prepared foods, and buying in season are key strategies to make local and organic food affordable.

Esta Cohen comes at the feeding the world question differently.

"After 9-11, we realized how vulnerable our food supply is," she said. "For four days, no containers ships, 18 wheelers – Everything shut down. Food security is also a homeland security issue. We don't need to feed the world. Why not just feed ourselves."

Eastern Carolina Organics (ECO) a farmer owned local food broker based in Durham is addressing the pricing gap. Pooling diverse harvests from several regions, it distributes wholesale organic farm produce to retailers, restaurants and buying clubs and returns 80 percent of sales back to the farmers.

In close knit communities consumers know their farmers and trust the food is sustainably grown. However, certification can help consumers to easily identify farm products grown, raised, or made in the Piedmont Region. Piedmont Grown offers a user friendly certification and recertification program to local framers who can use the certification and the Piedmont Grown brand and logo as part of their marketing efforts.

The Abundance Foundation's annual Chatham Chef Challenge farm to school program is a collaboration among "celebrity" chefs, parents, school staff and local farmers to bring healthier, fresher foods to students. The chefs create four recipes from local ingredients which are cooked by the cafeteria staff and served to 8,000 Chatham County students on the Chef Challenge Days—April 19, April 26, May 3, and May 10. The students then rate the lunches and the favorites become part of the school lunch menu.

What Retailers and Consumers Can Do? The 10 percent Solution

What would be the payback to farmers if all North Carolina residents spent 10 percent of their food dollars on local foods? The 10% Campaign advocates just that. North Carolinians spend about \$35 billion a year on food. If each person spent

10 percent—\$1.05 per day—locally, about \$3.5 billion would flow back to the local food economy.

An initiative of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, the 10% Campaign asks consumers, organizations, agencies, and businesses to log their local food purchases and send weekly email updates to the 10% Campaign. The group then updates its website to show how much money has been spent since the start of the campaign.

Local governments, universities, grocery store chains, restaurants, food service providers, food distributors, hundreds of farmers, and thousands of consumers are involved in the NC 10% program. Lowes Food recently announced that between May–August 2012, the company sourced over 20 percent of its total produce from within North Carolina. Last October, the NC 10% Campaign reached its \$25 Million milestone in local food purchases.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Eat fresher, seasonal, whole foods: All year long, there is a diversity of fruit and vegetables that are unique where you live.
- Join a CSA: CSAs are a fantastic way to eat affordable and healthy food. Find a CSA near you through the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association website <http://localfood.carolinafarmstewards.org/browse.php>
- Shop at the Farmers Market: Chatham County has five markets and Orange County has six. There is one nearly every day of the week.
- Take a Farm Tour: The Carolina Stewardship Farm Tour every April includes farmers from all over the Triangle.
- Organic vs. Local: Buy both when possible.
- When You Must Buy Processed Foods: Try to get these from independent, local sources as these are less likely to include preservatives and additives.
- Join the NC 10% Campaign. Log in <http://www.nc10percent.com/> and begin.

### PLANNING FOR FARMLAND PRESERVATION

As the demands for residential and industrial development grow, one way to preserve the rural landscape is to keep our farms. Farming remains a strong economic sector in both Chatham and Orange County. It more than pays its way in local government revenues as compared to residential development, and generates farm related employment, sales, expenditures and businesses.

Preserving prime farmland is essential to our food security, economic stability and environmental health and safety. The Orange County Farmland Protection Plan calls for the integration of economic

development with farmland protection; land use policies that protect agriculture; and management of residential growth in farming communities – guidelines that are also relevant to Chatham County.

As Chatham County begins its land use planning process, it should be directed by best planning principals to develop a land use plan that balances economic and community growth with the necessity for preserving Chatham County's environmental, agricultural and natural resources.

*Deepa Sanyal, a Chatham resident, is a Community Planner.*

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THE TACK ROOM

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