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Sam's gets cut

By Carol Peppe Hewitt

I have decided not to renew my Sam's membership. Over the last few years I have bought less and less at Sam's Club, unable to justify giving my money to this company whose business practices collide with my moral sensibilities. But, the pull of cheaper prices for big chunks of Brie for our Kiln Openings, my source for hundreds of big paper cups I can't buy in Pittsboro for the Shakori Hills Festival Coffee Barn, cheaper razor blades in such quantity that the package lasts a couple of years ... and all the other seemingly indispensable items I buy there ... instills a fear that I might regret cutting this golden cord to the Walton conglomerate. How about the 60 gallons of milk I buy for the festival? What other store (except maybe Wal-Mart) has that kind of quantity on hand any day of the week?

But I have been cutting back, nibbling at the cord. Last Kiln Opening I bought less Brie, but from my beloved local coop, Chatham Marketplace. Same cost, better product, and a few folks got a little lower calorie intake. All good.

At a tasting table one day at the Marketplace I met the folks from Homeland Creamery who offered to deliver milk right to the refrigerators at the festival exactly when I needed it, for only about a dollar more a gallon. That saves me at least three hours of driving to the Sam's with the van the day before the festival to buy milk, a job I always dreaded.

Hugely better product, supports the local economy, delightful people to work with (turned out the delivery man and his wife are the folks who bring their daughters' Girl Scouts troop to the festival each spring and fall) and the cord weakened some more.

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Fundraising party for Mardi Gras at Chatham Mills

By Chris Jude

The Mardi Gras tradition may date back to an ancient pagan festival in Rome, but the festival we know as Mardi Gras has been happening in New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama since the early 1700's. The masquerade balls associated with Mardi Gras were traditionally put on by mystic societies who's memberships were secret.

Here in Chatham County a little known mystic society, the Chatham County Glitter Society, has been organizing its own Mardi Gras Carnival since 2008. Originally the ball was intended to benefit two local non-profits, The Abundance Foundation and Chatham Arts. The first ball was a big success with great live music, performances from the ladies of W.I.N.G.S, elaborate and entertaining costumes and dancing being a great cure to the mid-winter blues.

This year Pittsboro's Mardi Gras is being presented by the Chatham Marketplace, and is benefitting three great local non-profits. The Abundance Foundation, Family Violence and Rape Crisis Center and Chatham Animal Rescue will be benefitting from the ticket sales and are participating in the festivities. The Chatham County Glitter Society is taking it up a notch and is cramming as much fun and entertainment into the Carnival as possible. The music is



Let the good times roll, as they did at last year's Mardi Gras in Pittsboro. PHOTO BY JESSICA LOBDELL

all local and will feature old-time from The WeHutty Mudpuppies, honky-tonk from John Howie Jr. and the Sweethearts, and electric folk from Katharine Whalen's Lucky. Chatham Marketplace will provide food and a cash bar. Some new attractions this year will be tarot readings, jugglers, and puppets from Paperhand Puppets. Of course photographer Jessica Benton Lobdell will be running her popular photo-booth and the evening will feature a performance by Chatham's own W.I.N.G.S.

The event is billed as the first

great party of 2010, and is being held as usual at the historic Chatham Mills in Pittsboro. Tickets this year have come down in price, even as this year will feature more music. Tickets are available in advance from Chatham Marketplace for \$20 or at the door for \$25. Tickets are also available online at www.chatham-marketplace.coop/mardigras.

Chris Jude is a project manager at Piedmont Biofuels and has been working to create innovative entertainment options for Pittsboro residents since 2007.

Chatham at heart of "locavore" revolt

By Dee Reid

When I arrived in Chatham more than three decades ago, what surprised me most was that everyone seemed to be growing food. In 1978 all of my rural neighbors were engaged in either commercial agriculture (beef, dairy, poultry) or backyard gardening (vegetables galore).

Long before the term locavore existed, or anyone knew about their carbon footprint, we were enjoying fresh local fare. We just called it dinner.

Growing food was an important part of any local conversation. I once got scolded by a police chief because I forgot to inquire about his garden peas before discussing a crime report.

My Silk Hope landlord drove a dairy truck and tended a huge garden. When I built a house in Hickory Mountain township, I lived next to Billie and Jay Shambley, who had a herd of sheep and a pick-your own broccoli farm. They showed me how to plant a modest vegetable bed.

Just down our dirt road lived Bill Dow, one of the pioneers who seeded our local food shed. A born organizer,

Bill once got our whole neighborhood to raise a cow together. He helped launch the Carrboro Farmer's Market in 1978, a real game-changer — the first in our region and now considered one of the best in the nation. Bill became the first certified organic farmer in North Carolina. He's mentored countless interns, farmers and activists, and now makes a decent living selling at the markets, delivering farm fresh food to about 20 restaurants, and partnering with the Mid-Chatham Farmers' Alliance, one of the most successful local Community

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