

Seasonal Eating

SUPPORTING URBAN AGRICULTURE THROUGH FARMERS' MARKETS

MAGGIE LEE

AS THIS ISSUE OF *BIODYNAMICS* demonstrates, organic and biodynamic farms, gardens, and ornamental plant producers are growing in the midst of suburbs and cities. Thriving home gardens, community gardens, smaller intensive farms, and community supported agriculture (CSA) can be creative, pro-active solutions in these challenging urban environments. These endeavors offer meaningful and healthy alternatives helping to balance what may be lacking in many urban settings. The areas are generally fast-paced, crowded, with lots of noisy traffic, excess built environment, less wild nature, and concentrated distribution of goods without much direct marketing.

Over the last thirty years, however, these more manipulated environments have seen a movement emerge. There is a growing presence of farmers' markets—now over 3,000 markets across our nation! They offer diverse selections of quality multi-cultural choices, where the seller is the grower. Gardeners and farmers sell goods reflecting the seasonal bounties of their locales, while participating in and supporting a cooperative venture. These dynamic and colorful marketplaces are affirmative demonstrations of people's choices to come to know and trust the source of their foods while spending time interacting with the growers. And they also serve as ways for farmers to network and exchange, strengthen their ability to sustain themselves, and protect

and keep vital their land, air, and water quality.

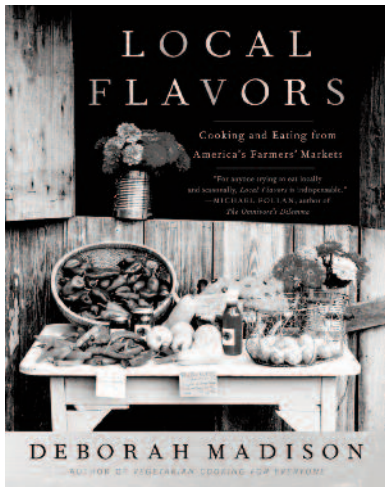
These markets are people-paced, pleasurable, and refreshing festivities of which one simply feels good to be part. We might start our visit embracing an old friend, petting a rabbit, or watching children tapping their feet to the playing of a lively accordion. We can try a taste of something delicious or stop by demonstrations on how to prepare local treasures of mache, callaloo, Nero kale, Charentais melons, Black Krin tomatoes, Corno di Toro peppers, roasted Italian or native peppers, local honey, blueberries, Angelique figs, or Fuyu persimmons!

In 2002, Deborah Madison, the innovative forerunner of cookbooks aimed toward shopping and cooking from local and seasonal foods, wrote *Local Flavors: Cooking and Eating from America's Farmers' Markets*. This well-researched and engaging book received the James Beard award and quotes from famous biodynamic gardener Alan Chadwick: "Food is really cooked in the garden. It's merely finished in the kitchen."

Deborah's joy and passion is felt through her delightful recollections of visiting, purchasing, and eating from farmers' markets across the country. She reflects a genuine and loving interest in people and their grown and produced regional specialties. In the introduction she quotes Richard McCarthy in New Orleans: "Foods say what's best about our region." These regional differences are what make cultures vital. *Local Flavors* gifts Deborah's intimate sensitivity of ingredients, while demonstrating



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her cosmopolitan panache for preparation and recipes.

She brings special attention to farmers' markets as harmonious, celebratory, educational centers through which children can “learn good eating habits by developing a taste for truly fresh, delicious foods while they are young, which will inform their food choices and affect their health

over a lifetime.” This may also include visiting gardens and farms to pick strawberries, smell a fragrant rose, gather eggs, and look at bee hives and taste their honey. In the epilogue she writes, “We need to use our markets deeply if farmers are to continue to farm and we are to continue to eat well in the deepest sense, being nourished by our immediate landscape and community.”

Engage and participate locally in order to feel, think, and connect globally. It makes sense for the future to choose and bring change by co-evolving with our planet, Gaia.

Maggie Lee is proprietor of Terra Flora, a garden design-build landscape firm in Santa Fe, New Mexico. For more information and additional published articles, visit the Terra Flora website at gardengaia.com. The accompanying photos are by Maggie's sister, Lauri Gaffin.



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Excerpts from the April section of **Louise's Leaves: A Cook's Journal Around the Calendar with Local Garden Vegetable Produce**, by Louise Frazier

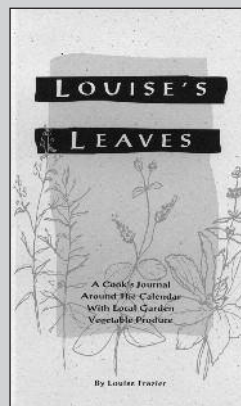
The Bitter Herbs

Taking our cue from Mother Nature, the bitter herbs—sour, stronger flavored—are featured in the special dishes of Spring. Cultivated or gathered wild, these green harbingers of Spring have been recognized from ancient times as health-giving gifts. The bitter herbs of Spring are vital for our cleansing and revitalization to transition from Winter to warm weather. First noticeable are the thin green spikes of tiny wild onions pushing up everywhere and the appearance of water cress along meadow rivulets and Spring streams.

Gratefully we sprinkle fresh snips of baby onion chives as broadly as they grow—on salads, soups, sauces, crepes, and sandwiches—mixing them into spreads and dips. Even children can enjoy their mild flavor! In Northern Germany chives are considered the most important kitchen herb and are mixed into pancake batter for a tasty Spring Supper.

Kale's Back

As the snow recedes in the northern part of the country, hearty kale that has wintered-over from last season's planting appears bright and green as it leafs out for Spring picking. Strong in flavor that borders on the bitter, and packed with vitamins and iron, kale can fortify us through the vulnerability of our body's seasonal transition from cold (and colds) to warmth.



A wonderful complement for a CSA share, this book is a celebration of local harvest and the four seasons, based on the author's years of experience running a gourmet vegetarian restaurant. A warmly written inspiration for culinary adventures with local produce. This is a staff favorite!

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