

BUY PHOTO REPRINTS ONLINE

Great rates start here. 



Member FDIC/Member DIF

SUBSCRIBE TO THE GAZETTE ONLINE OR IN PRINT

**GAZETTENET.com**  
Daily Hampshire Gazette - Established 1786

Amherst Bulletin   The Recorder   Valley Advocate   Pioneer Valley   Many Hands   Hampshire Life

Sign out   Account   Trouble finding something?   Contact us   Classifieds

Local News   State/Region   U.S./World   Obituaries   Sports   Business   Schools   Colleges   Politics   Opinion   Entertainment   Health   Living   Sci/Tech

Blogs

## Delivering on a dream

### Sunderland CSA farm to provide home deliveries

By **RICHIE DAVIS**  
Gazette Contributing Writer

Email this page   Printer-friendly version  

Sunday, April 12, 2009

SUNDERLAND - At first blush, the story of how Caroline Pam and Tim Wilcox fell in love with food, then with each other, then started The Kitchen Garden farm, seems pure Hollywood.

But the married couple's seven-acre farm, where they beckon customers with "vegetables with taste" is more of a down-to-earth indie film that's a hit at a long list of top-notch area restaurants.

With 1½ years experience at the South Silver Lane farm, they're launching a subscriber-based community-supported agriculture (CSA) operation, hoping to attract 75 palate-impassioned subscribers.

Those subscribers can leave their passions at home, though. Unlike most other subscriber operations, this farm delivers. Literally. In fact, it's believed to be the area's only exclusively home-delivered CSA.

Pam, 31, a Queens, N.Y., native, found her zeal for food while taking a Parisian semester away from her University of Chicago degree in English, visiting farmers markets and trying an in-home French cooking class. After writing restaurant reviews for the Valley Advocate, she attended the French Culinary Institute in New York and then began doing cooking demonstrations at the city's busy farmers markets.

At the Union Square market, she replaced Wilcox, a Hampshire College student from Oneonta, N.Y., who left for a summer working in Italy on a Tuscan sheep farm and an Abruzzo olive grove. When he returned, the two met, he returned to finish his degree in the political and cultural aspects of marketing Italian agricultural products, and she worked for Hadley's Food Bank Farm.

Their first two years as The Kitchen Farm were spent on rented land in Hadley - beginning with one acre, then two. When they moved to Sunderland in the fall of 2007, they doubled production to four acres, selling at the farmers markets in Springfield and Greenfield.

Gradually, they went from just the two of them with hoes and a roto-tiller to bringing in mechanical cultivation last year. Now they have four tractors, mostly 1940s and 1950s, and plan to hire five workers.

Customers at Springfield's, then Greenfield's farmers markets may not have been quite as colorful as



Pioneer valley.com is Search.



#### Popular stories

- [Bicyclist killed in crash ID'd; vehicle located](#)
- [Dead man's acquaintance held after body is discovered in Northampton wetlands](#)
- [Two names for defendant](#)
- [Shredder truck catches fire, sets woods ablaze](#)
- [Jeanne McGrath, Florence resident](#)

New York's year-round stalls, but market shoppers here have appreciated the couple's 250 varieties of vegetables - and tips they've offered on how to store and prepare them.

"Part of what's so fulfilling for us is the conversations that happen," said Pam. "Somebody comes back to us and says, 'I bought your fennel, and I caramelized it. It was wonderful! I can't believe my husband actually ate it.'"

Customers regale them with enthusiastic reactions to seeing zucchini blossoms like their grandmothers used to make, or crowder peas like they used to get when they lived in Texas.

Pam and Wilcox added a CSA component last year, delivering 13 shares to Baystate Franklin Medical Center employees. This year, expanding their operation from four to all seven acres - including two hoop greenhouses - they're launching a CSA whose customers will get their weekly shares delivered by Northampton-based Valley GreenFeast from the start of June through October - with a new Web site featuring a separate page for every vegetable along with recipes and a Kitchen Garden blog.

That will have to substitute for the social action for which CSAs are famous, sharing their enthusiasm in person.

Until now, the Kitchen Garden's business has been split about evenly between farmers markets and restaurants.

Work with restaurants

The couple share the same culinary excitement with chefs from The Blue Heron in Sunderland, and Tabella, Chez Albert and other regional eateries.

A meeting with Hope & Olive chef Maggie Zaaccara in Greenfield last fall helped to plan their plantings around the menu - pattypan squash, lemon cucumbers, Japanese baby turnips.

"We count chefs as friends instead of just clients," said Pam. "There's a real back-and-forth: 'We'll have shell beans next week; here's what we love to do with them,' and we want to hear what they'll do with them."

That's how Hope & Olive's baby carrots with truffle oil on the bar menu happened: "They know what it's going to look like on the plate, so we can hand-pick for them. We had four weeks where we picked the smallest ones and they served them whole," Wilcox said. "We feel what we're really good at is the information piece: This is what we love, this is why we produce it, this is how you use it, this is why it's so great."

He added, "The important thing is to communicate to our customers, to share our passion."

The couple, with one 14-month-old daughter on the farm and a second baby on the way, also have events at the farm so they can meet their customers.

With Warner Farm right around the corner, Kitchen Garden plans to tap into its specialty crops - strawberries, asparagus and corn - as a bonus for its CSA customers, who may range from as far away as northern Connecticut and who know them from Springfield's Tuesday market and have few CSA alternatives.

On the Web: [www.kitchengardenfarm.com](http://www.kitchengardenfarm.com)

Filed Under: [business](#) [local](#) [sunderland](#)

## Comments

Mon, 04/13/2009 - 15:16 — [faomasta](#)

### They're terrific

Everything about The Kitchen Garden is superb. Tim and Caroline are a joy. They know their produce, and they know how to cook it. They offer variety and the quality is excellent. It is a treat to see their display and more of a treat to enjoy what they grow. Whatever you purchase at a farmer's market is so fresh it lasts for a long time. The Springfield market is on Tuesdays, May through October, 12:30-6 in the parking lot of Trinity Church which is right next to Forest Park on Sumner Avenue. Greenfield is on Saturday mornings.

[reply](#)

**Post new comment**

**Your name:**

[tvannah](#)

**Subject:**

**Comment: \***

Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.

Allowed HTML tags: <a> <b> <i> <strong> <em> <code> <cite> <ul> <ol> <li> <img> <div>

Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

[More information about formatting options](#)



[Local News](#) [State/Region](#) [U.S./World](#) [Obituaries](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Schools](#) [Colleges](#) [Politics](#) [Opinion](#) [Entertainment](#) [Health](#) [Living](#) [Sci/Tech](#) [Blogs](#)

[Copyright Notice](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help Center](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Subscribe to the Gazette](#) | [Advertising](#)

Daily Hampshire Gazette © 2008 All rights reserved