

Direct Farm Marketing and Promotional Opportunity

New Richmond School District Interested in Buying Locally Grown:

Strawberries or Raspberries for Summer Fruits & Vegetables Sept. – Dec. 2009

From: Ruth Hilfiker, UW-Extension Commercial Horticulture Educator
for St. Croix and Pierce Counties & Farm-to-School Local Foods Procurement Specialist

The New Richmond School District would like to procure locally grown fruits and vegetables to serve at their schools. The advantage in selling to the school or other institutions is the marketing costs, especially labor are relatively low compared to farmers' markets. If you have extra produce later in the fall, you may offer to sell it to the District with only one weeks notice ahead of the delivery. Quality product is required but a few blemishes or grade B products are ok. Selling to schools can also be a great promotional opportunity for your small farm business.

2008 Farm-to-School pilot project a success

In the fall of 2008, the District participated in a Farm-to-School pilot project through the WI Dept. of Ag and the AmeriCorps Service. Ten locally grown fruits and vegetables were purchased from six local growers. 550 kids in the Middle School were served local produce on Wednesdays each week for 8 weeks on "Local Veggie and Fruit Day." The students were enthusiastic about trying new and fresh fruits and vegetables such that Karen Brummer, the nutrition supervisor would like to continue buying local in 2009. The goal of the Farm-to-School pilot program was

and continues to be to increase sales from local farms and increase the consumption and diversity of fresh fruits and vegetables eaten by students.

Since last fall, I (Ruth) have been a part of the New Richmond Farm-to-School pilot project as the Local Food Procurement Specialist with the AmeriCorps Service. My work with the School District will end at the end of Aug. 2009. We've learned how to set up the procurement process, prepare locally grown fruits and vegetables, and what works and what doesn't. I am grateful to the growers who sold to the Farm-to-School Program this past fall. **This summer I will be setting up farm tours with students in a community education class. If your farm may be available for a tour please give me a call at my home at 715-246-3178.**

How large of quantities does the School need?

Growers can supply just one fruit or vegetable for one day at one or all of the schools or several times during the season. The elementary schools have 1,000 students, 550 at the Middle School, and 875 at the High School. One serving to the 550 students in 2008 was equal to: 25 lbs tomatoes; 25 lbs of

colored bell peppers; 4, 40 lbs boxes of apples; 10 lbs of lettuce mixed with 2.5 lbs of beet and Swiss chard greens; 50 lbs of potatoes; 20 lbs of butternut squash. If you can supply one of these quantities or multiples of these quantities for the whole District of 1, 525 students you can sell to the District.

What does the District want to purchase?

In June: strawberries or raspberries for summer school

Sept. – Dec.: tomatoes for slicing, colored bell peppers, salad greens, butternut squash, red potatoes, summer squash, sweet corn (one time event), and apples

Other ideas: If you grow other interesting vegetables or fruits the students may like to try, just propose it to the nutrition supervisor. Keep in mind that the produce must be relatively easy to process. For example, acorn squash is just too hard to cut and bake in the kitchens. The school cannot process cabbage or carrots at this time.

How is the produce served by the School?

As raw and unprocessed as possible. This past fall I helped prepare and serve to the 550 students foods from local produce including: sliced colored bell peppers and tomatoes with Jane's Crazy Salt; watermelon slices, 6 varieties of apples at an "Apple Tasting Event", homemade vegetable soup with herbs, salad greens with vinaigrette dressing,

baked potatoes, butternut squash with a cranberry sauce,

How do you sell to the District?

It is relatively simple. Send a one time or weekly estimated product availability list this spring or fall to: Karen Brummer, Nutrition Supervisor, New Richmond School District, 701 East 11th St., New Richmond, WI 54017; or call her at 715-243-1259 or karenb@newrichmond.K12.wi.us .

Delivery is required to school the day of use or two days before. Wednesdays are the most likely day of product use.

If you wish to sell several times during the fall season a simple agreement can be developed. Prices will be agreed upon by the grower and Karen. After you express your interest in selling you will receive a "Standards for Procurement" sheet that explains when and how to deliver. I have enclosed an example product availability list that can be used for selling to institutions or restaurants. If you would like a copy of a blank product availability Excel spread sheet just e-mail me at the UW-Extension, ruthh@co.saint-croix.wi.us

The District, restaurants, and direct market farmers are looking at using a new website to manage and promote there products. You may want to check it out at www.greenleafmarket.com