



# Hunterdon Land Trust

PROTECTING THE PLACES YOU LOVE

## **Are All Farmers' Markets Created Equal?**

This summer, NJ.com readers voted to name The Hunterdon Land Trust Farmers' Market as Hunterdon County's favorite market. With so many farmers' markets springing up around the region, how does the Hunterdon Land Trust continue to provide the best of what the public craves? We believe the secret lies in remaining true to our mission of promoting fresh, local products grown by our friends and neighbors who will reinvest their earnings in this community.

The Hunterdon Land Trust, whose mission is to preserve the natural resources and rural character of Hunterdon, believes that helping local farmers earn a living will promote a strong rural economy that supports the preservation of our agricultural heritage. When farmers profit from stewarding prime agricultural soils and keeping the bucolic landscapes in productive use, we preserve not only our source of local food but also the character of this unique county. In order to help farmers prosper, the Hunterdon Land Trust started a producers'-only farmers' market in 2007. The market, located on the iconic Dvoor Farm on the Route 12 circle in Flemington, has since grown to 19 vendors selling a variety of meats, cheeses, breads, honey, wine, live plants, produce, and more.

The Hunterdon Land Trust farmers' market remains unique in that an overwhelming majority of its products are locally-derived. Vendors are not bringing in citrus from Florida or bananas from South America. In a producers-only farmers' market, the vendors offer products they have grown or derivatives they have created from farm-fresh ingredients.

The venue of this producers'-only market also offers a strong sense of community. In addition to enjoying the local musical talent, shoppers can learn from chef demonstrations how to prepare ingredients, they can brush up on the nutritional value of market products, learn how to compost remnants, or expand their health quest by joining a yoga workshop, herb walk, or hike. Market visitors can connect with the historic legacy of Dvoor Farm, real farmers, and each other.

These more intimate connections remind us that we are part of a broader community with a proud past and our choices can make a difference. Consumers are becoming more aware of how their purchases support their health, Hunterdon's landscapes, the quality of the environment, and our local economy. More than half of our vendors rely solely on their agricultural enterprises to support their families, therefore it is critical that these producers can earn a living by participating in farmers' markets. While farmers selling to conventional food networks earn just \$0.19 from each retail food dollar according to the American Farm Bureau, producers selling

directly to consumers at our farmers' market receive 100% of those food dollars. The Hunterdon Land Trust Farmers' Market further increases local revenue as shoppers visit nearby businesses; in 2012 alone, the total economic impact of the market was \$2.3 million.

Consumers are more educated than ever but trying to navigate an increasingly complex global food production system in which it is difficult to always know where a product came from, how it was treated, whether it was genetically modified, how it was transported, or how old it is. Without such information, its nutritional value, flavor, safety, and impacts of its production cannot be evaluated against consumer demand.

As shoppers in an overwhelming food system, we demand authenticity - Real Food with Real Flavor grown by Real Farmers. Our farmers' market customers know they are getting what they want. Shopping at our farmers' market removes the uncertainty, and buyers can trust that they truly know their food because they know their farmers – and these farmers, both the families who have been farming for generations as well as the first-generation entrepreneurs, know their products. Shoppers can make informed choices by asking the producers directly how the product was grown as well as how it can be best enjoyed.

So savor those more nutritious and delectable local foods knowing they have traveled a short distance to your table and that your dollars will be reinvested in our community. Rest easy as the music wafts across the Dvoor Farm because your investment in your local farmers and your health will also pay dividends in preserving the rural character of the county. And enjoy your Sunday drive knowing all your favorites can be found at the Hunterdon Land Trust farmers' market.

Join us every Sunday from 9-1 through November 24<sup>th</sup>. Winter market hours are 11-1 every third Sunday of the month from December through April. Enjoy some of our upcoming events at the market: Learn how to make a “one-pot meal” on October 13<sup>th</sup>; Wild Baby Rescue Center will educate children about wild animals on November 3<sup>rd</sup>; and Chef Joan from BEX Kitchen will demonstrate seasonal cooking on November 10<sup>th</sup>. Check online for the full schedule at [www.hunterdonlandtrust.org](http://www.hunterdonlandtrust.org).

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