

SPECIALTY FOODS BOSTON

PROUD TO SUPPLY NEW ENGLAND'S BEST CHEFS SINCE 1989

news and highlights

May 5, 2006

Whenever we run low on inspiration, we need look no further than the side of a Starbucks cup. This morning's Americano brought us words of wisdom from Mario Batali, who in discussing the importance of sustainable farming said, "I guarantee that if you know the name of the person who picks your carrots and peas, you will feel better and so will your grandchildren." We found this especially appropriate in light of the fact that Jim Ward, Ted Dobson and Eero Ruuttila, three of our most important local growers, all called in the past 24 hours to let us know that they were starting or on the verge of starting their seasons. Native Mesclun, Edible Flowers, Herbs, Green Garlic, Stinging Nettles and Pea Tendrils are either available now or days away from starting.

As our local growers enjoy a beautiful New England Spring, California is in the midst of one of their coldest and wettest Springs on record. These adverse conditions will affect us in many ways over the next couple of months and will result in supply shortages and quality problems. It will also lead to the premature end of some seasons and a slow and sluggish beginning to others, including summer fruits and little tomatoes. It will also mean higher prices, because things are growing so slowly and because the rain makes it so difficult to harvest and to plant seed for the next successive harvest. For some items, the effect will be temporary and they should get right back on track when the weather improves; for others a considerable percentage of the crop will be lost.

Availability of Fresh Morels continues to be light, and indications are that it will be a poor crop and the price will remain well above average throughout the season. When we have to, we are supplementing with imported Morels, which are somewhat less expensive but not as nice, and for other alternatives we are also bringing in a limited quantity of Mousseron, Bluefoot and Black Trumpet. The good news is that Oregon Porcini should be starting soon, and early indications are that it will be a good crop.

This is also the time of year when pastry chefs are often heard to ask, "What about us? Where's all our fun, new stuff?" Be patient ... summer is still months off. We'll start to see some early varieties of Peaches, Apricots and Cherries in early May, but you're better off waiting. In the meantime, Rhubarb has shifted from hothouse to field-grown, resulting in better color and flavor. Champagne, aka Ataulfo Mangoes are improving after a rocky start.

highlights & new items

Native Fiddleheads
Fresh Wild Ramps
Blue Sky Farm Spring Onions
French White Asparagus
Fresh Morels
Knoll Farm Green Garlic & Cardoon
Knoll Farm Pea Tendrils & Fig Leaves
Fresh Green Almonds
Fresh Virginia Sweet Peas
Fresh Fava Beans and Fava Leaves
Fresh Lavender & Chocolate Mint
Real Vidalia Onions
Oregon Field-Grown Rhubarb
Ataulfo/Champagne Mangoes

137 NEWMARKET SQUARE BOSTON, MA, 02118
PHONE 617.427.3200 FAX 617.427.3400 EXPRESS ORDER LINE 617.427.3232

available by pre-order

Squash Blossoms
Shiso (Red or Green)

Stinging Nettles
Onion Sprouts

Fresh Wasabi Root
Honshimeji Mushrooms

Fresh Hearts of Palm
Arugula Flowers

done/ending/gapping

Vidalia Salad Onions
Yellowfoot Mushrooms

Cara-Cara Oranges
Hedgehog Mushrooms

Blood Oranges
Clementines

Blue Sky Mesclun
Jim Cook Parsnips

produce market report

Allium -- Nobody does Green Garlic better than Knoll Farm, and the quality is superb right now - tender, intense flavored, consistently sized, and very clean. Real Vidalia Onions have started, which unfortunately means that Vidalia Salad Onions are finished, although we a limited quantity of very nice Baby Spring Onions from Blue Sky Farm. Excellent quality Ramps from Michigan are plentiful and should remain so until the end of May. Also Cipollinis, both whole and peeled in gallons, three colors of whole pearl onions and peeled white pearls in gallons.

Artichokes -- Now that weather in Castroville is calming down, we are seeing better supply and quality. Best value is in the medium size range, 30's and 36's; larger sizes and Babies are considerably more expensive. We are also receiving a limited quantity of long stem heirloom Artichokes from Knoll Farm; crop is much smaller than last year. Also from Knoll, consider the lowly Cardoon, often referred to as the artichoke's ugly cousin.

Asparagus -- Excellent quality 28# Asparagus coming from both California(Stockton area-best of the season) and Washington(just getting started), as well as 11# cases from Peru. As always, we urge you to take the double cases, which are considerably nicer and a better value. Weekly arrivals of Jumbo (22cm) White Asparagus from France, and plenty of Peruvian White Asparagus as well; quality is fine. Wild French Asparagus expected to start in one or two weeks.

Beans and Peas -- Availability of English Peas has been a little bumpy as we move around from crop to crop. Georgia is now finished - we expect a new arrival from North Carolina this weekend, and when they finish we will move up to Virginia, but these transitions are rarely seamless, and we are filling in with California Peas as necessary. New crop Fava Beans from Mexico are trickling in; quality is very nice but supplies are light. Fresh Cranberry Beans and Yellow Wax Beans are hit or miss, Chinese Long Beans are readily available. Dragon Tongue Beans require a pre-order; Fresh Garbanzo Beans and Romano Beans are gapping. Pousse-Pied are cultivated from Mexico; they are very good.

Berries -- Strawberries from California look good and are prices are reasonable. Not so true for Raspberries and Blackberries, through ... both are making the transition to Summer growing areas - supplies are expected to very light for the next few weeks and prices will reflect this. Blueberries are much more affordable; we will switch over to full pints at the end of May. In the freezer, we have Cranberries, Red Currants, Black Currants, Huckleberries, Lingonberries and Boysenberries.

Citrus -- The whole citrus deal is nearing the end ... all of our Blood Oranges are Italian - they are good, but not great, and will only be around for a few more weeks. Meyer Lemons are winding down,

137 NEWMARKET SQUARE BOSTON, MA 02118
PHONE 617.427.3200 FAX 617.427.3400 EXPRESS ORDER LINE 617.427.3232

but seem to be fairly available. Seville Oranges and Star Ruby Grapefruits are almost finished; Kumquats and Honey Tangerines are fairly available. Cara-Cara Pink Navels, Satsuma Mandarins, Gold Nugget Mandarins, Cocktail Grapefruits, Pummelos and Oroblancos are all done for the season.

Lettuces & Greens -- Blue Sky Mesclun will only be available for another week or two, then we wait for Equinox to start. Market Mesclun, Baby Arugula & Baby Spinach are transitioning from the winter to the summer growing areas - this shouldn't have much effect on supply or price, but there may be some minor quality fluctuations. Also Tuscan/Black/Dino Kale, Young Beet Greens, Ultra Baby Bok Choy (finger size), Red Endive, Radicchio Trevisano, Rainbow Swiss Chard (aka Bright Lights). Micro Greens of all kinds with a day's notice.

Mushrooms -- Fresh Oregon Morels are having a terrible year, and it's unclear how much it will improve, if at all. Supplies are much lighter and prices are much higher than they should be at this point in the season. We are supplementing with imported Morels from Turkey as needed, but we much prefer the Oregon product. Yellowfoots and Hedgehogs are done for the season, as are domestic Black Trumpets, although we have a limited quantity of French Black Trumpets, Mousseron and Bluefoot. Nice cultivated Maitake Mushrooms, as well as Honshimeji with a pre-order.

Roots -- Jim Cook Chantenay Carrots and Sunchokes are available but nearing the end, but Jim's crop of Spring-Dug Parsnips was small and they are already sold out. From California, Baby Turnips, Baby Carrots (Red, Orange, Yellow & Round), Baby Fennel and Baby Beets in three colors. French Breakfast, Watermelon and Black Spanish Radishes, Large Chioggia & Gold Beets, Salsify & Parsley Root. Plenty of Celery, Taro, Yucca & Lotus Roots. Burdock Root with a pre-order.

Spring Greens & Vegetables -- Knoll Farm Green Garlic is fantastic - tender, clean & delicious. Also from Knoll, Mixed Wild Rapini, Cardoon, Pea Tendrils, Fig Leaves & Fava Leaves are all readily available. Plenty of Native Fiddleheads; Native Stinging Nettle with a pre-order ... Wild Ramps from Michigan should be available through the end of May.

Summer Fruits -- Most growers are saying that the season will start a week or two late, and that the cold, wet Spring will reduce the volume, especially for early varieties. We expect to see some early Peaches, White Peaches and Nectarines next week, but they will certainly be far from "best of the season". Apricots and Cherries should follow about a week later, with Plums bringing up the rear.

Tomatoes -- All little tomatoes are Del Cabo, half-pints from Mexico. Availability looks to be very tight for the next few weeks, and prices will reflect this. Ugly Tomatoes are hit-or-miss, but mostly miss.

Tropicals & Misc. Fruits -- Mexican Champagne Mangoes got off to a rough start, but should get better and more consistent soon as new growing area open up. Most of our Rhubarb is now field-grown from Oregon and very, very nice. Nice imported Galia and Charentais Melons from the Dominican Republic. Tommy Atkins Mangoes, Starfruit & Key Limes are readily available. Cactus Pears, Passion Fruit and Florida Guava are hit-or-miss. All Chilean Summer fruits are finished with the exception of Plums. Pomegranates are finished, but we have excellent Honeycrisp Farm Pomegranate Juice.

coming in late may/early june

Equinox Farm Mesclun and Baby Arugula ... Knoll Farm Heirloom Artichokes Native Ward's Farm Rhubarb ... Native Pea Tendrils, Green Garlic, French Breakfast Radishes, Spring Onions and Chive Blossoms ... Fresh Lemon Verbena ... French Wild Asparagus ... Full Pint Blueberries

137 NEWMARKET SQUARE BOSTON, MA 02118
PHONE 617.427.3200 FAX 617.427.3400 EXPRESS ORDER LINE 617.427.3232