

Look at your local magazine rack and count the number of food-related magazines that are there for the taking. The restaurant industry and the culinary hardware suppliers should be thanking us farmers from the bottom of their cash registers that along with increased consumption of quality food items has come an increased interest in food preparation (of course, some folks only like to read about such things) and dining out (as opposed to *eating out*, which infers less of a culinary experience).

I may be wrong, but it also seems that there is a new generation of farmers who are much more comfortable with direct markets and the public. They are also more comfortable with the idea of competition. We have seen a significant increase in the number and size of farmers' markets nationwide in the last year or so. Hopefully the new attitude is "whatever helps my neighbor also helps me." There is an air of cooperation between farms that is more than a neighborly helping hand. We are beginning to see what might be called *co-promotion*—an end to exclusivity in the areas of competition. If my corn sales pick up yours will also, assuming similar quality parameters. (There are, of course, still those folks who believe that what is theirs is theirs and what is yours should be theirs, but their numbers are dwindling.) This is how it must be going forward in Massachusetts.

Smaller-scale niche farmers are probably going to be more successful in the long run because they will ferret out new markets, not be reliant on a single distributor (or processor) and not be at the mercy of, for instance, pricing parameters set in California or Mexico. There is plenty of room in the marketplace for good producers who are also self-advocates invested in the quality of their product and willing to be their own on-farm marketing machine.

After a few transitional years when some farmers felt that they had to offer tourist or recreational programs to remain in business, it is now beginning to look like growers can get back to the business of farming food and leave the recreational marketing to Water World and Six Flags. However, farming food successfully nowadays has also come to mean that market selection is on a par with crop selection and tomorrow's success stories will have to work the markets as carefully as they work their fields and greenhouses.

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Pumpkin Chutney

by Elizabeth Gawthrop Riely

One 6-pound pumpkin, peeled, seeded and cubed
(about 12 cups; 3 pounds cubed)

Salt

2 cups cider vinegar (at least 5% acidity)

2 cups firmly packed light brown sugar

1½ cups chopped onion

1 cup dried cranberries or sultanas

½ large red bell pepper, seeded and diced

1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced

½ ounce fresh ginger root, peeled and minced or grated

One 2-inch stick cinnamon

1 Tbsp. mustard seed

12 allspice berries

Put the pumpkin cubes in a big bowl, sprinkle heavily with salt and toss to distribute it. Cover the bowl and let sit overnight to draw out the moisture.

When you are ready to proceed, drain the pumpkin, rinse the cubes thoroughly in fresh water and drain again. Put the pumpkin in a large heavy-bottomed pot with the rest of the ingredients. Bring the liquid to a boil and over low heat, simmer uncovered for about two hours, stirring from time to time. Watch the pot toward the end so the bottom doesn't scorch. When the syrup is thick, discard the cinnamon stick.

Ladle the chutney into warm half-pint jars. Screw on the tops and sterilize them in a hot water bath, or simply refrigerate them. Let the chutney mature for a few weeks before opening.

Makes about eight half-pint jars.



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