



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

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### **Massachusetts Agriculture Officials Urge Residents to Celebrate Local Flavor This Holiday Season**

*From turkeys and Christmas trees to cranberries and oysters, opportunities  
abound to support Massachusetts agriculture by “going locally grown”*

BOSTON – With the winter holiday season just around the bend, Massachusetts agricultural officials are urging consumers to “go locally grown” this year – celebrating with Massachusetts grown and produced foods, beverages and gifts.

“It’s no secret that food raised on local farms is fresher and tastes better, but that’s just one in a whole list of reasons to go locally grown this holiday season,” Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Commissioner Doug Petersen said. “Buying Massachusetts products strengthens the connection between consumers and their food, requires burning less fuel to get food from farms to our tables, and provides a perfect opportunity for citizens to support their neighbors – Massachusetts farmers – and keep revenue in-state during challenging economic times.”

Roast turkey is the centerpiece of many holiday tables, and “fresh dressed” locally-raised birds are available from 19 turkey farms across the state. Some growers offer turkey roasted to order, complete with gravy and stuffing. Massachusetts farmers produce approximately 18,000 turkeys annually, valued at \$2.7 million, including the sale of whole turkeys, gravies, turkey pies, and other related products. For information about where to purchase Massachusetts-grown turkeys, visit: <http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/turkey.htm>.

While buying a Massachusetts turkey is the obvious first step toward making this a locally-grown holiday season, Bay State growers and producers offer an array of other foods to complete holiday menus. Here are some suggestions:

#### **Appetizers:**

- Eighteen farms around the state produce more than 600,000 pounds of farmstead cheeses, as well as barrel churned butter. Approximately 24,500 gallons of milk from

more than 400 cows and 180 goats go into making local varieties of Camembert, Blue, Cheddar, Gouda, Chevre and other cheeses. For a list of cheese producers and their products, see [www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/cheese.htm](http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/cheese.htm).

- Massachusetts aquaculturists offer consumers locally-raised oysters, quahogs, and other fresh shellfish for holiday festivities. Ask local retailers about the availability of Massachusetts-farmed shellfish.

### **Beverages:**

- Apple cider was the standard drink in Colonial America, a fact that makes cider – cold or mulled - a natural addition to the Thanksgiving table. Consumed in greater quantities than any other fruit juice until around 1930, cider has recently regained much of its popularity, with American consumers now drinking, on average, the equivalent of 13.2 pounds of apples in cider or juice form annually. Local cider sources can be found at [www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/cider.htm](http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/cider.htm).
- Toast the holidays with wine made with Massachusetts-grown grapes and other fruit. There are 26 wineries located across the state, producing about 200,000 gallons of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Blanc, and Pinot Gris and other varieties annually. Wines made with fruit such as cranberries, apples, raspberries, strawberries, and pears add unique local flavor. For information on Massachusetts wineries go to [www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/wineries.htm](http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/wineries.htm).

### **Vegetables and Fruits:**

- Cranberries are a mainstay of the Massachusetts agricultural sector – and the main ingredient in traditional holiday staples such as relishes, sauces and breads. Massachusetts is the nation’s second largest producer of cranberries, one of three commercially-grown fruits native to North America (others are Concord grapes and blueberries). Cranberries were first cultivated on Cape Cod in 1816, and the cranberry industry now supports some 5,500 jobs in Massachusetts, according to the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association. US Department of Agriculture data indicate the crop contributes about \$71 million to the state’s economy. For more information, go to <http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/index.htm> and click on “cranberries.”
- Massachusetts-grown winter squash is still abundant at roadside stands across the Commonwealth. For locations of farm stands offering varieties such as butternut, acorn, delicata, sweet dumpling and other popular winter varieties – as well as local root vegetables such as turnips, potatoes, and carrots, visit <http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown> and click on “farm stands/farm markets.”

### **Desserts**

- Visiting a farm stand (see link above) can also yield the ingredients for traditional holiday pies such as apple, pumpkin and squash. Some stands also sell pies already baked and ready to serve.
- Top off locally-grown pies with ice cream or frozen yogurt made by Massachusetts dairy farmers. A number of farms in various regions of the state sell ice cream and frozen yogurt (as well as milk, cream and butter) direct to consumers. For a list, go to [www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/dairies.htm](http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/dairies.htm).

### **Decorations:**

- In addition to late-season vegetables and fruits, Massachusetts farms and farm stands offer a variety of “fall ornamentals” for sale at this time of year. Among choices for

Thanksgiving are Massachusetts-grown Indian corn, sheaves of corn stalks, miniature pumpkins and gourds.

- Now is the time to start planning a trip to a Massachusetts Christmas tree farm, where families can choose from ready-cut trees or harvest their own. Massachusetts Christmas tree plantations help preserve open space, and often provide habitat for local wildlife. Some farms sell out in early December, so call ahead to confirm the availability of trees. For more information, visit <http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/index.htm> and click on Christmas trees.
- Many Massachusetts Christmas tree farms also offer wreaths, swags, and centerpieces made from locally-grown evergreens.
- Massachusetts growers produce half a million poinsettia plants annually. These harbingers of the holiday season are available in traditional red, as well as white, pink, and bi-color, from local independent garden centers, farm stands and florists.

### **Gifts:**

- Consider purchasing holiday gifts that promote local agriculture. A unique choice is a gift certificate for an “Ag Tag,” a specialty license plate that supports agricultural organizations throughout Massachusetts to help ensure sustainable agriculture for the future. For the holiday season, DAR will waive the \$10 administrative fee associated with reserving a specific plate number between 600 and 1,600 and will send gift givers or recipients an attractive gift certificate. It costs \$40 to reserve an Ag Tag, plus a \$20 plate switching fee. For details, visit [www.mass.gov/agr/agtag](http://www.mass.gov/agr/agtag).
- Give the 2009 Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar, featuring photos illustrating Bay State farming selected through an annual photo contest. Calendars cost \$10 and proceeds benefit Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom, a non-profit organization that works with teachers to develop classroom materials. Visit the DAR web site to view the calendar and for ordering information: [http://www.mass.gov/agr/events/images/08\\_cover\\_back\\_cover\\_large\\_size.htm](http://www.mass.gov/agr/events/images/08_cover_back_cover_large_size.htm). Published by Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom, Inc, in cooperation with the DAR and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the calendar features a winning photograph each month, plus several honorable mention winners in selected places.
- The Massachusetts Specialty Foods Association offers “The Flavors of Massachusetts” gift baskets. Available in several sizes, assortments include Massachusetts sparkling cider, fruit jams and jellies, honey, maple syrup, cranberry chutney and candies, and more. To view baskets, visit [www.mass.gov/massgrown](http://www.mass.gov/massgrown) and click on “specialty products.”

Finally, for a collection of Massachusetts-inspired recipes endorsed by DAR staff, visit [http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/holiday\\_recipes.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/holiday_recipes.pdf). Enjoy!

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