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CT NOFA AWARDED \$73,000 GRANT FROM USDA FOR WINTER FOOD PROGRAM



CT NOFA (the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut) was awarded over \$73,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop a program specifically for specialty crops in Connecticut. Titled “*Winter Food: Growing, Storing, Marketing and Cooking Specialty Crops for the Cold Season*”, this program will focus on increasing the availability, sales and consumption of locally-grown, organic and sustainable fruits, vegetables and herbs in the winter and on educating farmers in the best practices for growing, storing and marketing winter crops.

Numbers of winter CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture farms which sell shares) and winter farmers’ markets continue to increase in Connecticut. This growing market opportunity suggests that education for fruit and vegetable producers can help them expand their markets throughout the winter. Some growers have already created ways; including simple season extension tunnels, root cellars, minimal processing and proper storage locations. With the help of CT NOFA, farmers will learn about best practices, successful and exciting varieties and practical storage facilities that other farmers are using. This will enable them to extend their selling season. To achieve this goal, CT NOFA will reach over 60 Connecticut farms through three conferences and four on-farm workshops, with at least 15 farms creating new, or improving existing, systems for winter food specialty crops.

As interest in local and sustainable eating grows, CT NOFA also plans to educate consumers on the availability of specialty crops during the winter months. CT NOFA will promote Winter Food by distributing recipes and stories to encourage home storage and consumption of Connecticut-grown winter food. CT NOFA will create a Winter Food display for outreach events and press releases to highlight success stories. Additionally, the CT NOFA website (www.ctnofa.org), its e-newsletter *Gleanings*, online social media pages, and the annual CT NOFA *Farm and Food Guide* will all have sections dedicated to the Winter Food program. Through these efforts, CT NOFA will reach out to over 2,000 consumers in Connecticut each month.

CT NOFA will also be conducting a survey of Connecticut farmers to determine a baseline of which farms produce winter food and how they are successful in marketing it. If you are a farmer in Connecticut (conventional or organic) or would like to share the survey with someone, please visit the CT NOFA homepage to find the link for the “Winter Food Growers’ Survey”.

Even though it may be winter, there are still plenty of great recipes for soups, stews, and other delicious meals using “winter foods”. Here’s a recipe from the CT NOFA cookbook “Eating Well”, submitted by Heather Crawford.

Toasted Barley with Winter Veggies

2 T. Olive Oil	1 tsp. Dried Sage
1 ½ cups Pearl Barley	1 tsp. Thyme
1 med. Onion (diced)	1 pinch Saffron (optional)
1 cup Celery (sliced)	2 cups Vegetable Broth
1 cup Carrots (diced)	1 ½ cups Diced or Stewed Tomatoes
1 cup Parsnips (diced)	

Roast veggies in oven at 450 for 10-15 minutes. Put oil in deep skillet over medium high heat. When hot, add barley and cook, stirring occasionally until barley is toasted to a light or medium brown (about 10 minutes). Place roasted veggies on top of barley and sprinkle with herbs and seasonings. Pour broth and tomatoes over the top all at once. Stir and bring to a boil. Turn heat to low and cover. Cook for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until all liquid is absorbed and the barley is tender. Barley should be moist but with no visible liquid.

Note: This is a vegan meal. Try it before you knock it - you may be surprised!

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