



The University of Georgia

College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development



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MarketMaker simplifies locally grown search

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Tired of eating carrots from California and shrimp from Singapore? A new Web site from the University of Georgia can help you in your search for locally grown foods.

UGA's Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development (CAED) recently rolled out Georgia MarketMaker (www.marketmaker.uga.edu), an interactive site that has one of the most extensive lists of state-produced food information in the country.

"We'd like to see it evolve into a locally grown food network," CAED marketing analyst Kent Wolfe said. "Our goal is to try to help producers sell their products and help to provide a market for Georgia's farmers."

It's about local food feeding local people, although if an out-of-state resident gets a hankering for Vidalia onions, wild Georgia shrimp or a handful of pecans, there's plenty to go around.

White tablecloth restaurants in Savannah are getting ready to serve locally produced items, and they're looking for meats, vegetables, fruits and beverages grown or produced in southeast Georgia. "MarketMaker allows producers to sell directly to consumers and make more money," Wolfe said.

The locally grown trend isn't just a concept consumers are embracing in Georgia. Survey results released by the National Restaurant Association in December of 2006 show that chefs curb diners' cravings with locally grown produce, organics and bite-size desserts. These top the "what's hot" list, followed by bottled water, flatbread and specialty sandwiches.

Funded by the OneGeorgia Authority, UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), Cooperative Extension and CAED, the Web site is targeted to consumers, producers and food businesses – whether a restaurant in Atlanta or a packer in Valdosta. Over 32,000 food businesses – from vegetable growers to grocery store chains – are currently listed in Georgia's system.

MarketMaker simplifies locally grown search (continued)

The Web site works like this: Say you are looking for locally produced butter for your biscuits or cream for your coffee. A quick search of MarketMaker would turn up Sparkman's Dairy in Moultrie.

If you're looking for a diverse taste of Georgia, a few keystrokes will bring up goat cheese from Thornberry Village Homestead in Jasper, muscadine wine from Still Pond Vineyard in Arlington or organic popcorn from Revival Gardens Organic Produce in Dahlonega.

"It's a unique resource for connecting consumers with the food supply chain." Sharon Kane, a CAES food business development specialist.

Kane and Wolfe helped bring MarketMaker to Georgia. University of Illinois Extension originally created the program in 2004. Current states in the national system are Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, Georgia and New York. Michigan, Indiana and Mississippi are slated to come online soon.

"Georgia businesses and producers can also search those states for produce and other farm products," Kane said.

For more information about MarketMaker, call (706) 542-1861, e-mail gamarket@uga.edu or visit www.marketmaker.uga.edu.

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