

HOLIDAY MARKET CATCH



Venturing away from the market, much as we love it, we sometimes drive to Corvallis, and we never, ever take I-5. Why? Because on Hwy 99W, just after the bridge reconstruction and just before you hit that long 50 mph stretch outside of Corvallis proper, lies just about the yummiest place in all of Oregon: **Hazelnut Hill**.

Proprietors Sally and Robert Hilles have been running the company for over 20 years since the timber industry crash prompted them to sell their mill and start raising hazelnuts instead. Oregon grows almost 100 percent of U.S.-based hazelnuts (other hazelnuts mostly come from Turkey), and the Hilles duo have been able to thrive selling

their tasty treats alongside six varieties of apple, dried berries (sometimes covered in chocolate) and Umpqua ice cream (available at the store). The center of the business, of course, comes from the nuts.

But they don't simply harvest hazelnuts (not that it's "simple" — Sally Hilles explains that during harvest season, they employ 20 people and work a lot of early mornings and late nights). They roast the nuts, make them into candy (the **Dark Chocolate Hazelnuts** with Guittard chocolate coating that rich nut meat ... wow), get spicy with them (according to one employee, it's possible to eat the **Hot & Spicy Hazelnuts** all day long) and create hazelnut **Pancake/Waffle Mix**, **Hazelnut Butter** and **Hazelnut Flour**. Really, there's no need to go a single meal without the products of Hazelnut Hill (which are also available online at www.hazelnuthill.com).

If you're a specific kind of locavore, you probably harvested, froze, canned, dried and bottled all kinds of treats of your own over the summer months. Consider setting up a **local food exchange**; maybe your friends specialized in plum chutney while you focused on tomato sauce. A holiday trade shares the bounty of our valley, mountains and coasts while building community.

But you can also build community by sharing your income with some of our area's many local food producers. And hey, being a locavore? It's the new in thing. Just ask the folks at the dictionary. ■

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