

# MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local  
restaurant review

## Find fresh food at local farmers markets

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Even if it were an option, I wouldn't want to eat out every night of the week. Cooking is a holistic practice — grounding, calming and with infinite potential for growth.

Admittedly, I'm an amateur at the very best. But from June through September, when I'm shopping at the many regional farmers markets, the outcomes of my culinary dabbings increase exponentially. That's because our abundant, regional produce is simply world class. And when that's the case you don't need to do much — if any — coaxing. Good food speaks for itself.

Of course, you needn't cook to enjoy the markets. There's a veritable quandary on offer from food carts and vendors. You'll find bakeries, cheesemakers, distillers and more — start-ups and families alike, offering wonderful, local delights.

As of late, though, my most profound eating pleasure has been the most elemental. Since the markets started last month I've been devouring box after box of berries. There's no food I've eaten more of, yet still desire. (Seriously, I'm going to buy more tomorrow.) Strawberries, blueberries, marionberries, raspberries, blackberries, you name it — I can't get enough of God's perfect, fresh little supernovas. The digging, the supple squeeze, the pop and gush of juice. A tart one gives way to sweet, then back again, again and again. Effervescent moments of escape that reassure: Yes, life's pleasures are indeed this simple to achieve.

The recent rekindling of the love affair figures: It's seasonal, and I can't buy berries at the grocery store. Forget that they come from God-knows-where, coursing with genetic modifications to protect from a myriad of maladies (including, apparently, flavor and freshness). Indeed, these bulbous grocery store berries, bloated, bland, mealy



R-Evolution Gardens sells nutrient-rich produce at the Manzanita Farmers Market.

and somehow never spoiling, might as well be a different species.

The farmers market variation, though, are heavenly. I get most of mine from A & B Farms, whose presence is stalwart at multiple markets. And since there's practically a market for every day of the week, you can keep the supply stocked — it's important, because some berries only last a day or two. (Blueberries last the longest, then blackberries, strawberries, marionberries and raspberries.)

Veggies, on the other hand, aren't quite so fleeting. Carrots, onions, beets and potatoes have more appealing shelf lives. Greens go a little quicker but still ought to last the better part of a week. The farms offering good veggies are many, and they vary from market to market. At just about every stop — from Manzanita to Astoria — you'll find the venerable Kingfisher Farm. Based in Nehalem, Kingfisher is one of the longest-running farms on the North Coast. Kingfisher is known for its salad mixes, which can be found at numerous local restaurants, including Fort George, the Wayfarer and Blackbird, as well as Portland luminaries Higgins and Paley's Place.

Younger but of comparable quality are R-evolution Gardens (grown in Nehalem and found at the Manzanita Farmers Market) and 46 North (grown south of Astoria and sold at Astoria's River People Farmers Market on Thursdays). Each offers a smorgasbord of organic, nutrient-rich produce.

I've written previously of Skamokawa Farmstead Creamery's fantastic chevre, and I do so again. If you think you don't like goat cheese, I beseech you: Try Skamokawa's. When sampling, ask for the "cheesecake." You'll find Skamokawa at numerous markets. At a recent Manzanita market I came across cheesemakers new to the North Coast scene. Their offerings — sheep's cheese from Black Sheep Creamery in Adna, Washington, and goat from Fraga Farmstead — were promising. Find a bakery booth, grab a fresh baguette — and, of course, some berries — and you've got a killer picnic in the making.

Of course, the markets all have food carts with fully prepared dishes. A new addition this year is Roll and Bowl, which you'll find at the Cannon Beach, Manzanita and Astoria markets. Roll and Bowl of-



Produce from Kingfisher Farm.



A veggie sushi roll by Roll and Bowl food cart.

fers sushi, ramen bowls, and a few other odds and ends. I'm most fond of the sushi. Sushi begins with the rice, and Roll and Bowl's is right on. Chef Brian has been doing sushi for over a decade and has studied under four master chefs. I was most fond of the understated, vegetarian Nehalem Valley Roll (\$8). While I'm used to top notch, farm-fresh produce in other venues, sushi offered a new stage. The local greens, burdock root, avocado, carrots, snap peas, cucumber and sunchoke were exquisitely crisp and pure.

"We're looking to showcase all the great produce around here," said Brian. "It's not hard to do."

Roll and Bowl's smoked salmon roll is more familiar, though the thin lemon slice makes it twinkle. I'm hopeful that the food cart will soon add raw fish. With the fresh produce it could be something new and wonderful.

As for the ramen, be sure to add the tender pork loin and consider the egg. Otherwise you might find the bowl a bit lonely. With the lovely presentation, real wasabi and fancy plates, Roll and Bowl is off to a splendid start. It's not hard to envision the cart becoming a brick-and-mortar place down the line.

There are other great carts,

### MARKET GUIDE

#### SUNDAY: Astoria

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
12th Street, between Marine Drive and Exchange Street

#### TUESDAY: Cannon Beach

1 to 5 p.m.  
163 E. Gower Ave.

#### WEDNESDAY: Seaside

3 to 7 p.m.  
1315 Broadway

#### THURSDAY: Astoria

3 to 7 p.m.  
1343 Duane St.

#### FRIDAY: Manzanita

5 to 8 p.m.  
467 Laneda Ave.

#### FRIDAY: Long Beach, Wash.

3 to 6 p.m.  
212 S. Pacific Ave., Veteran's Field

#### SATURDAY: Ilwaco, Wash.

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
On the waterfront at the Port of Ilwaco

which I will get to in due time. But for now I would be remiss not to mention Lance's Farm Vittles, which offers some absolutely astonishing beef, pork and lamb. Lance prides himself in doing things properly. Unlike so many farmers touting "grass-fed" beef, Lance's are grass finished. (He avoids switching to grain at the last minute to briefly, unhealthily fatten the animal just before slaughter. He also avoids hormones and antibiotics.) His meats are at once deeply rich and inherently clean. Throughout this summer at the markets I plan to fill my freezer full enough of Lance's meat to make it through the better part of winter. Like the berries, much of the grocery store variations just can't hold a candle to this kind of quality.

So make the most of the farmers markets while they're here because you're going to miss them when October rolls around. I know my cooking will.