

THE CULTIVATOR

SEASON 19

NEWS OF THE WALTHAM FARMERS' MARKET

2009

Free Concerts at the Waltham Farmers' Market

June 20: Main & Beal Blues Band.

July 11: Mike Williams & Friends.

Jazz and blues.

July 18: Moody Street String Band.

Celtic, Scots and Yankee traditional music.

Rain date October 17.

August 1: Riverview Chamber

Players. Classical.

August 15: Steve Taddeo & His Swing

Senders. Big Band. Rain date August 22.

August 29: Joe Pete & Ruth

Rappaport. Acoustic duo. Rain date

September 12.

September 19: Outrageous Fortune.

Vintage jazz, blues and rags. Rain date

October 24.

October 10: None of the Above. Vocal

harmonies.

Sponsored by **Watertown Savings**

Bank, Café on the Common,

Benjamin Franklin Bank Charitable

Foundation, Waltham Cultural

Council, RTN Federal Credit Union,

Elephant Walk, Waltham

Community Foundation. Please

support our generous sponsors!

All concerts begin at 11 a.m.



Mai Yang, a young Hmong-American farmer at Flats Mentor Farm.

Young, Hmong, and Having Fun Farming

Mai Yang has farming in her blood. The granddaughter and daughter of Hmong farmers from Laos, she was born in Thailand, and moved to the farm-filled city of Chico, California, when she was five.

When her family moved to Massachusetts for better educational opportunities, they learned about an unusual farm in Lancaster, not far from their home in Fitchburg. Other Hmong farmers had been farming on land at Flats Mentor Farm for more than two decades and the Yang family soon joined them, growing food for themselves.

The Hmong farmers at Flats Mentor are not the only immigrant farmers cultivating the land there. Originally a dairy farm owned by the Moreira family, themselves immigrants from Portugal, Maria Moreira now heads what could be called a farm "incubator," leasing land to approximately 50 "micro-farmers," who are seriously growing their own food, as well as nine small-scale commercial farmers. During the winter of 2005 several people originally from Kenya and Liberia

asked Moreira if they could have land at her farm to grow crops popular in their cultures to meet a growing market demand. Like many of the Hmong farmers, the African

MORE ►

Nineteenth Season Opens June 13

The market runs **every Saturday, June 13 to November 7, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**, rain or shine, in the **Sovereign Bank parking lot**, at the corner of Main and Moody Streets, across from Waltham Common. The site is wheelchair-accessible and can be reached by car from Main or Charles Streets.

For the latest market news, go to www.waltham-community.org/FarmersMarket.html, where you can also sign up for special event emails. Look for us on Facebook too!

Please support the market and our vendors—by shopping at the market, bringing friends, volunteering and/or making a donation.

Call (781) 894-0357 or 899-6230 or email wfm@waltham-community.org for more information.

2009 Vendors

Dick's Market Garden, produce/plants • **Hanson Farm**, produce • **Warren Farm & Sugarhouse**, maple products • **Flats Mentor Farm**, Asian produce • **Bart's Farm**, produce • **Silvermine Farm**, organic produce • **Smith's Country Cheese**, cheese, hamburger, eggs • **Burn-shirt Valley Farm**, pork • **Mamadou's Artisan Bakery**, breads • **Zachary Dean's Coffee Bean Co.**, coffee • **Country Desserts**, pastries • **Deborah's Kitchen**, fruit spreads • **MsCellaneous**, dressings/sauces • **TT Bud's**, popcorn • **Donna Dee's Designs**, soaps/lotions • **Nature Photography** • **Marsha Greenstein Designs**, jewelry • **Back Pages**, books • **The Shooter Dog**, dog treats • **Hand Sewn Handbags** • **Heirloom Seedlings** • **Josh Hill**, hand-blown glass • **Macro-Mediterranean Holistic Nutrition**, vegan deliveries • **Produce Bags** • **InMaterial**, portholders

PARTICIPANTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

farmers were refugees, coming from agrarian backgrounds. Flats Mentor now hosts an annual festival where the farmers share their cultural traditions and foods.

With the support of Heifer International, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, USDA, among others, the farmers at FMF have evolved from growing enough for their immediate and extended families to selling their produce at farmers' markets in and around Boston. The number of farmers selling at markets has increased each year from six farmers' markets in 2005 to over 30 in 2008.

In 2008, at age 21, Mai Yang decided to expand the family plot and become a commercial farmer, cultivating 1¼ acres. This year, she's already expanded to two acres. In addition to the Waltham market, she sells at the Wayland, Lynn and Andover markets, as well as wholesaling her specialty produce to Russo's in Watertown.

Mai plants Asian and Latino crops in order to serve niche ethnic markets as well as more adventurous cooks of all nationalities. "At the Lynn market, where there are a lot of Latinos, we sell a lot of peppers and amaranth," she notes, adding that her Waltham customers are more willing than others to try new things.

Among the crops she'll be bringing to market this year are water spinach, bok choy, beans, pea tendrils, scallions, mint, rosemary, cilantro, parsley, chives and Italian and sweet Thai basil.

Her farm days begin at 4 a.m. and she spends all day every day planting and weeding, with the help of her siblings and the guidance of her parents. Further "guidance" comes from other Hmong farmers, who, she good-naturedly says, use their status as her elders to wag their fingers at her when she does something non-traditional and caution, "Don't do that!"

But she has learned a lot from the other farmers and from the farm managers, who help with plowing, irrigation and marketing. Two years ago, she and her family did all their farming by hand, much as they'd done in Thailand. Now there is machinery and more conventional American methods, such as planting in straight rows. The farm is not organic but Mai uses minimal chemicals on her crops.

She spent time in China over the winter as part of her studies in international business at Fitchburg State, but also took time to do research on farms and markets there, which she found impressive and lush. She brought back seeds to try growing specialty crops.

(In addition to her academic life, Mai also manages to find time to work part-time in medical billing at a hospital.)

The spirit of cooperation is strong on the farm, with farmers pitching in on irrigation projects, sharing a greenhouse and refrigerator truck, and swapping crops they may need when going to market. Mai frequently acts as a translator for those who don't speak English.

One of her challenges was to learn how to set prices. In California, her family only sold their produce wholesale and prices were set by the buyers. Now she has to figure out not only what it costs to grow each crop but also what the market will bear.

A tiny woman, she is dwarfed by the huge van she's learned to drive in order to bring her crops to markets. The rest of the family stays behind in the field, spending so much time there that they've even set up a barbeque so they can grill food and not have to leave for meals. Mai is proud that she is able to provide jobs for her siblings and can help support her family.

"Some days I think, 'Why do I do this?'" she admits, then adds with one of her frequent bursts of happy laughter, "But it's fun. That's why."



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead

2008 Season Thank You's

Thank you to our wonderful **vendors**, who make the market what it is. Thanks to the many performers, who add yet another incentive to attend the market. Thanks to our concert sponsors, **Park Lodge Hotel Group, Watertown Savings Bank, Waltham Tourism Council, Waltham Community Foundation** and **First Parish Church Unitarian Universalist**. Thanks to **Lou Karger**, who generously hosts the market on his property. Thanks to our market master, **Angie Emberley**, and her volunteer assistant, **Tom Emberley**; to **Jim O'Brien**, who helps set up the market. Thanks to **Mass Farmers' Markets**, for insurance and advice and their support of markets generally. Finally, thanks to our **loyal customers**, who have kept the market going strong for so many years!

—**Sue Burkart, Jennifer Rose, Marc Rudnick, Scott Shurr, Janey Lewis Solis and Dan Taylor, 2008 Waltham Farmers' Market committee**

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