

# Massachusetts Agriculture Officials Encourage Consumers to "Gift Local" this Year

BOSTON – Monday, December 17, 2012 – With the holiday season underway, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) officials are encouraging consumers to “gift local” this year – by choosing from the wide variety of local food, farm and ornamental items found right here in Massachusetts.

“Massachusetts growers and specialty food producers offer an exciting range of seasonal items, perfect for holiday gift giving and decorating,” said DAR Commissioner Greg Watson. “Opportunities abound to support Massachusetts food and agriculture.”

DAR is offering a number of gift ideas for those looking to support local agriculture and small food businesses.

Sign up that special person for their own CSA (community-supported agriculture) share. Visit DAR's [MassGrown and Fresher CSA webpage](#) to find local CSA farms.

Also check out DAR's ["Buy Local" webpage](#). "Buy Local" organizations are a great way to meet farmers, fishermen and specialty food producers; and to find items for “local gifting,” wherever you reside in the Commonwealth. Get linked to the eight statewide groups: Cape Cod Buy Fresh Buy Local, Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), Berkshire Grown, Island Grown, Northeast Harvest, Sustainable Business Network (SBN), Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP) and Sustainable Nantucket.

Go to DAR's [Local Holiday Food Buying Guide](#) for beautiful “Flavors of Massachusetts” gift baskets.

The baskets are crafted by Pemberton Farms in Cambridge for the Massachusetts Specialty Foods Association (MSFA) and feature member products. Assortments include Massachusetts sparkling cider, fruit jams and jellies, honey, maple syrup, cranberry chutney and candies, and more.

“Pemberton Farms is fortunate to have the privilege of basket and gift assembly representing the MSFA and its very talented members who create and manufacture the wonderfully delicious products featured in the Mass baskets,” said Tom Saidnaway, owner of Pemberton Farms.

Ten percent of all profits support the MSFA, a statewide non-profit organization that promotes and supports the specialty food industry in Massachusetts. Click on [www.msfa.net](http://www.msfa.net) for links to member products and see the wonderful options for holiday “local gifting.”

The guide also has information on local winter farmers’ markets, locally produced turkey, wine and cheeses. There are 23 farms around the state that produce more than 600,000 pounds of farmstead cheeses madewith milk from more than 400 cows and 180 goats for Camembert, Blue, Cheddar, Gouda, Chevre and other artisan cheeses.

Toast the holidays with wine made with Massachusetts-grown grapes and other fruit,

from wineries producing Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and other varieties. Wines made with fruit such as cranberries, apples, raspberries, strawberries, and pears add unique local flavor.

Apple cider, which can be served cold or mulled, is a natural addition to the holiday table. Check the [MassGrown and Fresher map](#) to find local cider at farm stands across the state.

Visit your local nursery and farm stand to find poinsettias, holly, wreaths and other colorful plants and decorations. Massachusetts growers produce half a million poinsettia plants annually. These harbingers of the holiday season are available from local independent garden centers, farm stands and florists in traditional red, white, pink and bi-color.

Gather your family and plan a trip to a Massachusetts Christmas tree farm, to choose ready-cut trees or harvest your own. Christmas tree plantations help preserve open space and often provide habitat for local wildlife. Call ahead to confirm availability. Also look for Massachusetts-made wreaths, swags, and centerpieces made from locally-grown evergreens. For more information, go to the [MassGrown and Fresher map](#).

Give the [2013 Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar](#), featuring photos illustrating Bay State farming. All photos were taken by winners from the annual competition. Calendars cost \$10 and proceeds benefit Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom, a non-profit organization that works with teachers to develop classroom materials. Published by Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom, Inc, in cooperation with the DAR and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the calendar features a winning photograph each month, plus several honorable mention winners in selected places. Contact Debi Hogan at [debi.hogan@earthlink.net](mailto:debi.hogan@earthlink.net) for more information.

DAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – DAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit DAR's website at [www.mass.gov/agr](http://www.mass.gov/agr), and/or follow us at [www.twitter.com/MDARCommish](http://www.twitter.com/MDARCommish) and [www.twitter.com/MassGrown](http://www.twitter.com/MassGrown)??

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