

# Life in LAMORINDA

## Keeping it Real:

### The Moraga Farmer's Market Brings the Best of Local, Sustainable, Organic Produce to our Doorsteps

By Cathy Tyson

**Y**ou are what you eat; and you are where you spend money to eat these days as well. This is the first year the Moraga Farmer's Market will be open year round. Eighty farmers will be represented throughout

is not considered sustainable because of the amount of fossil fuel used in shipping and trucking them to Northern California.

It just makes economic and environmental sense. "Food that travels a shorter

Internationally-grown produce has even more concerns. DDT is banned here in the United States, but in Mexico it's still widely used and there are virtually no labor laws, according to Ms. Hayden. Then that food is trucked

truly be sustainable; all of the tractors and 8 of the 10 trucks on the farm are powered by biodiesel from used cooking oil. For the past few years Happy Boy, along with a number of other farmers has been providing UC Santa

have a family farm in Orosi, southeast of Fresno, my Dad's been doing it since he was a kid," says Aoyana. "My Dad brings the stuff up to market on Fridays, then I work selling it on Saturday and Sunday. Oranges will go out of season in a couple of months - tomatoes, cucumbers and squash will start up in April and May. Then we'll have stone fruit throughout the summer." When asked if he is going to continue in the family business, Brian says he's not sure. "I'm going to school right now, Delta College in Stockton. I did this all through middle school and high school plus summer breaks, gotta help the family."

In addition to traditional produce, there is a wonderful bakery vendor, Beckmann's Old World Bakery, selling a variety of fresh breads and rolls. They specialize in sourdough and European breads such as the Vienna raisin twist. The relatively small Santa Cruz bakery started by Peter Beckmann a native of Germany, produces about 10,000 to 17,000 loaves daily. For Derek Shore, it can be a fairly long day, around 11 hours, depending on the market. By the time he leaves at 5:30 in the

son, Oroweat breads are produced by Bimbo Bakeries, headquartered in Fort Worth Texas. Bimbo is part of Mexico's Grupo Bimbo, one of the world's largest baking companies with operations in 14 countries throughout Europe and the Americas. They literally produce millions of loaves a day through their various brands, including Thomas', Entenmann's, Milton's, Bohemian Hearth, Oroweat, Boboli, Tia Rosa and more.

Moraga resident Sherri Cary thinks it's important to support local growers and buy organic whenever possible. She usually buys a variety of things. "I buy staples, but I love to try new things, this winter my favorites were baby beets and a wonderful micro-green called peppergrass. I can't wait to barbecue fresh oysters now that the weather is warm." Like many Market shoppers, she thinks it's important to buy local. "If we don't support local businesses, they will no longer be in business. Also it's wonderful to have an opportunity to show our kids vegetables that were pulled from the soil hours before, and fruit that may not be perfect, but has



A sunny Sunday at the Farmer's Market

the season, bringing everything from oranges, to organic lettuces, to corn, to orchids, to nuts, to freshly baked breads to snow pea leaves and much more. All this, plus Kettlecorn at the corner of Moraga Road and Moraga Way every Sunday from 9:00 to 1:00, with convenient parking.

Gail Hayden, Director of the California Farmer's Markets Association, says the popularity of local farmer's markets has just exploded, because people want to know the source of their food. Locavores, the Slow Food Movement, and the concept of sustainable food haven't hurt either. A Locavore, a word created by a group from San Francisco, is a person who eats food that is harvested within a 100-mile radius of their home. Slow Food is a non-profit, eco-gastronomic organization founded to counteract fast food and fast life and to recognize the connection between plate and planet. Sustainable food comes from sustainable agriculture, which doesn't rely on a substantial use of petroleum. For example, shipping cherries from South America in December

distance is not only for ecologically-minded people, it just tastes better," says Ms. Hayden. "The peach you buy in a large grocery store is owned by six different people before it gets to you. First it's picked, then a handler sorts its for exact size and grade, next it goes to a warehouse for the packer, then a produce broker for distribution, then Safeway buys it and brings it to a warehouse in Tracy, where it finally gets loaded onto a truck one last time and it ends up in Moraga."

For chain grocery stores, produce has to be picked when it's not ripe so it won't spoil while it's being shipped to Chicago or New York. But at the Farmer's Market it's not unusual for an item to pick that same day. In a few months, corn from Brentwood will be arriving. It's picked at 5:00 in the morning; usually by 7:00 it's filled into a hopper-trailer and by 9:00 it's on sale at the market. That corn is at the peak of ripeness, sweet, delicious and locally-produced. Every dollar spent on that corn goes directly to the farmer, and at four ears for a dollar, it's a great deal too.

to the U.S. with no systemic residue check, which basically allows vegetables that couldn't be grown here to be sold here.

#### Happy Boys and Old World Bread

Happy Boy Farms is a huge success story and a regular on the Farmer's Market circuit. Throughout the week they sell at 35 Markets and deliver directly to a number of upscale Silicon Valley restaurants and UC Santa Cruz. Year round crops include spring salad mix, beets, broccoli, cauliflower and carrots. In the summertime, many varieties of heirloom tomatoes, specialty eggplant, herbs, bell peppers, and specialty cucumbers and melons are available. Owners Greg and Toku Beccio have been farming organically since 1988, before it was the phenomenon it is today. They sold their original business, Riverside Farms after it had mushroomed to over 1,000 acres. The new smaller farm made Beccio a "Happy Boy." Today they farm about 167 acres in Watsonville, San Juan Bautista, Gilroy, Hollister, and Chowchilla. Happy Boy strives to



The Happy Boy Farm booth is never without a customer or five

Cruz with their organic produce. With a \$4.5 million dollar food budget, the school wants to be a leader in the farm-to-college movement. Bringing fresh, local produce to the school's five dining halls and Terra Fresca restaurant helps the local economy and local farmers.

Another popular vendor is Brian Aoyana. Last week he was selling oranges, blood oranges, and tangerines. "We

morning the bread is wrapped, stacked and ready to go. "The flour we use for the vast majority of our breads is organic. No preservatives at all, which means it won't last quite as long in the cupboard, but it tastes even better."

Financially, buying local is a good thing, agrees Shore. "If you buy it here, you know you're buying it from the person who made it. Keeps the money local." By compari-

more flavor than anything they've had before. We are lucky to have a choice other than produce that is covered in wax or shipped from cold storage. I'm thrilled the Farmer's Market has come to Moraga."

Cathy Tyson can be found at the Farmer's Market almost every Sunday. Look for her in the Kettle Corn line first.

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