WHOLESALE AT A SMALL SCALE
LOCAL FOOD ON THE MENU

The Kitchen Garden, Sunderland and Hadley MA
Caroline Pam
NOFA Mass Conference 8/12/12
BRAND IDENTITY

• Farm name or slogan
• Differentiation
• Personality
"The Kitchen Garden" not original, but communicates cooking

Slogans can add to culinary identity

"Vegetables with Taste"
3 OUTLETS FOR PRODUCE

• Farmers’ Markets
• Wholesale to restaurants and retail stores
• C.S.A. Farm Shares
DIFFERENTIATION

- Differentiate your farm from other farms and/or other produce sources
- Product line
- Presentation
- Quality
- Service
- Information/education
- Price
PERSONALITY

• Sell yourself, your experience, your knowledge, your dedication
• Self-presentation defines how you are seen
• Small local businesses are all about personal relationships
FARMERS’ MARKETS

• Be there to communicate with your customers
• Be attentive, cultivate relationships, ask what people are planning to cook with your vegetables
• Be prepared with answers to common questions
• Know what products sell in your area
WHOLESALE

• Why wholesale? (efficient, often good price, move profitable items in quantity, move excess)
• Know your buyer personally
• Know their preferences and price thresholds
• Know how produce is used
• Constant communication (price lists, phone calls)
• Product presentation
STRATEGIZING

• Deciding What To Grow
• Setting Prices
• Certified Organic or not?
DECIDING WHAT TO GROW

- Know your markets
- Grow more of things that sell the best
- Specialty items can be good signature products
- Variety selection (color, flavor, size)
- Determine profitability of various crops
SETTING PRICES

• Price to your customers (know what they spend for similar items)

• Know what quality level you are going for and price accordingly

• Hold your ground (don’t lower prices if you have excess—find other buyers)

• Use incentives, bulk discounts
COMMUNICATION

- **Collect Emails** – be proactive
- **Samples** – introduction, new products
- **Know the buyer** – who to call?
- **Timing** – 2-4pm usually good, ask for preferences
- **Weekly price list email** – give enough lead time
- **Newsletter** – the better they know you and your farm the stronger the relationship
- **Tell a story** – make their job easy, details sell
CONSISTENCY

- Be Reliable and Responsive
- Maintain Quality
- Create Trust
- Solicit Feedback – good shelf life, uniform size, well packed, well washed
- Label seconds and price accordingly
- Make good on damaged or sub-par product
- Offer the same product line as much as seasonally possible
RESOURCES

MOFGA Price Reports:

Rodale Organic Price Reports:
http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/Organic-Price-Report

USDA Organic Price Report:

UVM Extension webinars and reports:
http://www.uvm.edu/farmpricing/pricing-resources
http://www.uvm.edu/newfarmer/?Page=webinars/webinar_recordings.html&SM=webinars/sub-menu.html#marketing_webinars

“Postal Tote” with Logo - MDI Plastics:

Produce shipping – bags, boxes, etc.
http://www.globebag.com/

Wholesale Success: A Farmer’s Guide to Selling, Postharvest Handling and Packing Produce, edited by Jim Slama
http://www.familyfarmed.org/wholesale-success/