

# Summertime Farmers Markers

## **Attleboro**

721 Park St, Saturday 9am - 1pm, runs June 15 - Oct 26

## **Barrington**

Congregational Church, 461 County Rd, Saturday 9am - noon, runs thru Oct 26

Haines State Park, Wednesday 2 - 6pm, runs thru Oct 30

## **Blackstone**

Daniels Farmstead, 286 Mendon Street, Sunday 11am - 3pm, runs July 7 - Oct 6

## **Bristol**

Colt State Park, Hope St And Asylum Rd, Friday 2 - 6pm, runs thru Oct 25

## **Burrville**

Stillwater Mill Complex, Saturday 9am - 12:30pm, runs thru Oct 26

## **Charlestown**

4150 Old Post Rd, Friday 9:30am - 1pm, runs June 21 - Aug 30

## **Cranston**

Whole Foods Market, 151 Sockanosset Cross Road, Tuesday 3 - 7pm, runs thru oct 22

Pastore Complex, 1511 Pontiac Ave, Friday 11am - 2pm, runs July 26 - Sept 20

Pawtuxet Village, 60 Rhodes Place, Saturday 9am - noon, runs thru Nov 23

## **East Greenwich**

Academy Field, Church St & Rector St, Monday 3 - 6pm, runs thru Oct 7

## **Exeter**

Exeter Public Library, 773 Ten Rod Road, Wednesday 3 - 6:30pm, runs thru Oct 2

## **Fall River**

Downtown, 100 South Main Street, Tuesday 5:30 - 8:00pm, runs June 18 - Oct 1

Kennedy Park, Broadway & Bradford Ave, Saturday 7am - 1pm, runs thru Nov 30

Ruggles Park, Pine St, Wednesday 9am - 3pm, runs thru Nov 27

### **Greenville**

St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Route 44, Monday 3 - 6pm, runs thru Oct 7

### **Johnston**

Memorial Park, 1583 Hartford Ave, Monday 2 - 6pm, runs July 29 - Oct 28

### **Lincoln**

Blackstone River State Park, Interstate 295 North, Tuesday 2pm - 6pm, runs July 23 - Oct 29

### **Middletown**

Newport Vineyards & Winery, 909 East Main Road, Saturday 9am - 1pm, runs thru Oct 26

### **Narragansett**

Fishermen's Memorial State Park, 1011 Point Judith Road, Sunday 9am - 1pm, runs thru Oct 27

### **New Bedford**

Brooklawn Park, Ashley Blvd & Brooklawn St, Monday 2 - 6pm, runs July 8 - Oct 28

Clasky Common, Pleasant St & Pearl St, Saturday 9am - 1pm, runs July 13 - Nov 2

Downtown, Pleasant St & Williams St, Thursday 2 - 6pm, runs July 11 - Oct 24

### **Newport**

Aquednek Growers Society, Memorial Blvd And Chapel St, Wednesday 2 - 6pm, runs thru Oct 30

State Pier 9, Long Wharf At Washington St, Friday 2 - 6pm, runs July 26 - Oct 25

### **North Providence**

Governor John Notte, Jr. Park, 1675 Douglas Avenue, Friday 3:30 - 6pm, Runs July 12 - Sept 13

### **Pawtucket**

Slater Park, Armistice Blvd, Sunday noon - 3pm, runs July 7 - Oct 27

### **Providence**

Alternative Market, 1111 North Main Street, Saturday 10am - 2pm, runs thru Oct 26

Armory, Parade St And Hudson St, Thursday 3:30 - 7pm, runs thru Oct 31

Algonquin House, 807 Broad St, Sunday 8:30am - noon, runs July 6 - Oct 26

Hope St Lippit Park, 1059 Hope Street, Wednesday 3pm - 6pm, Saturday 9am - 1pm, runs thru Oct 30

Kennedy Plaza, Washington St, Thursday 3 - 6pm, runs June 18 - Oct 29

Neutaconkanut Park, 700 Plainfield St, Monday 3pm - 6pm, runs July 8 - Oct 28

RI Department of Health, 3 Capitol Hill, Thursday 11am - 2pm, runs July 25 - Sept 26

Whole Foods, 601 North Main St, Monday 3 - 7pm, runs thru Oct 21

### **Richmond**

Richmond Town Hall, Route 138, Saturday 9am - 12:30pm, runs thru Nov 2

### **Scituate**

Village Green, West Greenville Rd And Silk Lane, Saturday 9am - noon, runs thru Oct 5

### **South Kingstown**

URI East Farm, 2095 Kingstown Rd, Saturday 8:30am - noon, runs thru Oct 26

### **Tiverton**

Sandywoods Center for the Arts, 43 Muse Way, Thursday 4 - 7pm, runs thru Oct 31

### **Wakefield**

Marina Park, 2 Salt Pond Rd, Tuesday 2 - 6pm, runs thru Oct 29

### **Warwick**

Goddard State Park, 345 Ives Rd, Friday 9am - 1pm, runs thru Oct 25

### **Westerly**

Pawcatuck Market, Commerce Street, Thursday 10am - 2pm, runs June 20 - Oct 17

### **West Warwick**

Thundermist Health Center, 186 Providence Street, Thursday 3 - 6pm, runs July 11 - Oct 31

### **Wickford**

Wickford Village Town Parking Lot, 63 Brown St, Thursday 3 - 7pm, runs thru Sept 26

### **Woonsocket**

Thundermist Health Center, 450 Clinton St, Thursday 3:30 - 6:30pm, runs July 9 - Oct 29

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# The Quest for the Ultimate Meal on Wheels: Food truck crawl



I live in East Greenwich, where the food truck is virtually non-existent. I say “virtually” because there is a hot dog guy who sits across from the cemetery most days. We also have the occasional Del’s lemonade truck that passes through, but other than that, nothing.

Being huge fans of the food truck trend, my husband and I decided to celebrate our wedding anniversary a little differently this year by embarking on a quest to find, and taste, the cuisine of Rhode Island’s food trucks.

The preparations for our big day were grueling to say the least. After all, how does one find a restaurant with a constantly changing address? I started at [foodtrucksin.com](http://foodtrucksin.com), which gave me a fair list of some great trucks, but could not provide a schedule or menu. This further heightened the secrecy element of our impending journey. I found out that most trucks have a Facebook page and post their whereabouts regularly, so I liked each truck’s page, and signed up for their Twitter feeds. And I waited ...

I woke up Saturday expecting my phone to be buzzing with tweets about food truck locations. Sadly, it remained quiet; likewise, my Facebook page. Where were all the freaking food trucks going to be that day? Finally, in the late morning, the folks at Plouf Plouf Gastronomie posted their location: The Beer and Ballet festival on Hope Street. Now that sounded promising.

We left home around 3 pm, and our first stop was the ATM to arm ourselves with a big wad of cash (who knew most of them take credit cards?). When we arrived at Hope Street, we were greeted by not one, not two, but a glut of food trucks with various and sundry cargo: sandwiches on pretzels, French gourmet, vegan ice cream, international sandwiches, tacos, and of course, hot dogs.

I felt grateful for this find, but a bit dismayed. Imagine if Frodo, after leaving the Shire on his quest to destroy the ring, arrived at his first stop only to discover a large box saying, “Safely place dangerous but alluring ring here for destruction.” I’m sure he would have felt relieved, but slightly deprived of the journey ahead, right? Yeah, that’s sort of how I felt. Of course it didn’t stop me from stuffing my face with inappropriate amounts of food and beer, but I did feel like I cheated, sort of.

Enough about me - let’s talk about the food. I desperately wanted to try the beef short rib sandwich and jalapeno poppers at Noble Knots, but the line - oh, the line! So we ambled over to the Acacia Café and ordered a banh mi: pork marinated in Vietnamese spices on a crunchy French roll topped with a tangy yogurt sauce, greens, cucumbers and red onion- so delicious, and apparently popular, as we scored the last order. Next we hit Plouf Plouf, where the menu was exhaustive and exciting, but the prices rivaled Pot au Feu. Nonetheless, I couldn’t resist trying the truffled macaroni and cheese. When it arrived, I felt a bit disappointed as it looked slightly like it came from a blue box. The taste, however, was exquisite: a blend of several different cheeses topped with rich, delightful truffle oil.

Time for a beer and music break where we enjoyed a Newport Storm Ale and some mighty fine tunes by the Rice Cakes. Before hitting the road, we stopped at Poco Loco for a street taco. I ordered the popular PBJ - a mouthwatering combination of pork, beans and jalapenos with a sweet chili barbeque sauce. I treasured every morsel, but truly fell in love with my husband’s selection, the Southwest: chorizo, potato, corn salsa, southwest sour cream, red onion and jack cheese. It tasted like the best hangover breakfast ever.

It was too early to head home, but we were too full to do much other than sit in a dark, cool movie theater. We left the confines of the city and headed to Showcase to see the new Star Trek movie. Since this article is about food trucks, I'll steer away from a movie critique, except for this shout out to the film's make-up team: please tone down Captain Kirk's lip gloss. Those pink shiny lips distracted me from the plot (other than that, great film).

After the movie ended, I felt those familiar pangs of hunger, so we ventured to the corner of George and Thayer, where I heard the food trucks like to hang. The hunt was back on! As we cruised down Thayer, I heard the comforting hum of a generator – a sure sign of an impending discovery. Soon we saw a small crowd of people gathered around a brightly lit truck emblazoned with the letters FuGo (short for Fusion Gourmet). I felt a rush of excitement, like a butterfly hunter who's potentially just stumbled upon the rare pussy cat swallow-tail (if you know what I'm talking about, you're clearly over 40).

FuGo ended up being quite a find indeed. The menu lived up to the truck's name: tacos and burritos with an international flair. We opted for the plus one combo: two tacos, a side and a drink for a mere \$10. My taco overflowed with miso-glazed tofu, carrots, cojita cheese and cabbage, all topped with jalapeno cream salsa. My husband salivated over his Korean braised beef taco with kimchi and mango slaw. Our side dish consisted of steak and salsa eggrolls, which were crispy and tangy, filled with tender steak and a mild salsa. Even the iced tea was scrumptious: blueberry white tea, unsweetened, with fresh blueberries floating on top.

While chatting with the chef, we learned that this was FuGo's premiere night. After a year of planning and menu-testing they finally hit the road. The service was a bit slow, but hey, it was their first night and they apologized profusely. Plus, they were super friendly, the food was delicious and the prices more than reasonable. We wished them well and I promised to help spread the word about their wonderful new venture.

After wiping the salsa from our chins, we hopped back in the car and headed to downtown Providence to see if the oldest, most infamous food truck was parked in its usual place. Sure enough – there it was in all its glory: Haven Bros. We debated stopping for a hot dog and a burger, but decided that we were neither hungry nor drunk enough for the experience, so we passed. It reminded us, though, that whether the food truck phenomenon is merely a trend that will soon pass, or a new way of eating that will endure the test of time, there are some food institutions that will never die. For that we are thankful. In the meantime, we'll relish our trendy meals on wheels.

If you DO want that Star Treck critique, watch for yourself on Motif TV Scan the QR code or go to [motifri.com](http://motifri.com)

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## Urban Farming: We're not in Kansas Any more

 The newest buzz words in environmentalism and local food are urban farming, but what exactly is it? According to Jessica Knapp, outreach director for the Southside Community Land Trust (SCLT), based in Providence, the basic definition is simple: growing food in an urban area. And that covers a broad spectrum of activities. For Camille Morrison-Pfeiffer, a self described farm activist, it means growing fruit trees, berries and vegetables, and keeping chickens, ducks and pheasants on her half-acre lot. "One of the things that I emphasize is growing food everywhere,

vertically outside of buildings, on roofs - there are so many ways to grow food. We really should be more connected to our food. Our food shouldn't just come from [the grocery store]."

For others, like Knapp, it means working with community gardens and making use of what you have. "[It's] a unique opportunity for high-yield growing and an opportunity to get the most bang for your buck." That can start with something as simple as a tomato plant on the porch. "Everyone has a tiny piece of land, even if it's only a patio. And you can have a relationship with some little piece of nature or food," notes Morrison-Pfeiffer.

Like any endeavor, there are struggles. For one, land is an issue since it is in high demand and can be difficult for new farmers to afford, says Knapp. There also can be issues with lead in the soil, which could be a health hazard, Knapp cautions. Urban farmers also can face restrictions from local ordinances regarding keeping chickens or bees or taking part in other activities that are considered farming.

That's where places like the SCLT come in. "Growing food is a practice that requires a lot of support," says Knapp. The organization has three goals: to provide access to land, access to education and access to resources. To that end, the organization offers workshops, supplies compost to its members and works with the community to find available land. It also can help with things like soil testing. On August 10, the SCLT will have its Open Garden Day, which will provide opportunities to visit multiple sites throughout the city to see what's going on in urban farms.

There's also the Providence Community Growers Network, of which Morrison-Pfeiffer is a board member through the SCLT that, as described on its website, "provides access to gardening resources, education and community building for its members, helping gardeners in Providence grow more food." But the idea has broader support, too. Both Knapp and Morrison-Pfeiffer praise the city of Providence and the mayor's office for their efforts with urban farming initiatives. "The good news is that Providence has seen a lot of support and [we've seen] the community getting excited about growing their own food," says Knapp. She says the mayor's office has been working in partnership with the SCLT to convert unused city land to urban farming areas.

"Providence is pretty progressive," says Morrison-Pfeiffer. "It's the old way changing. They wanted to make everything nice and streamlined [back in the 1950s] and now we have to get back to our human roots as animals. We live on the earth that is alive." Even with the work involved, both Knapp and Morrison-Pfeiffer are enthusiastic about the benefits of urban farming. "It increases access to healthy fruit and vegetables for areas that don't always have access to healthy food," says Knapp, also noting that even small community garden plots bring people together, increasing neighborhood awareness and pride. Farming also helps repair damaged soil, improves the land and provides space for storm water retention, she says.

For Morrison-Pfeiffer, it's also about protecting our environment. What she doesn't want is for people to expand food production into the last green, wild spaces. "Ultimately, it's about our future if we still want to have a planet we can enjoy. We have to stop poisoning the land and killing the birds, the butterflies and the bees. What's simpler than picking a fresh tomato from a pot outside and eating it? We have to change if we want to have an earth we can stand." All that for the price of a pot or two on your porch seems like a pretty good bargain.

For more information on the SCLT, go to [southsideclt.org/](http://southsideclt.org/) or check out Morrison-Pfeiffer's Facebook group "p.e.c.k." (People Encouraging Chicken Keeping) for updates on the world of urban chickens.

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# The New Kid on the Food Block



What happens when four friends get together and hatch a plan to bring more local organic food to the Providence area? You get the Alternative Farmers Market, Rhode Island's newest farmers market, which opens May 18 at 10am in the Miriam Hospital Lot at 1111 North Main Street.

Jacob Brier, Richard Suls, Rachael McCaskill and Dani Sahner Brier, the four entrepreneurs behind this new event, all share the same passion: to bring the community together around local food.

This group shares an obvious camaraderie, which is apparent as they debate about how they met. "In any case, we've know each other a long time," says Jacob, laughing as they can't quite agree about their childhoods. It's that spirit that trickles over as they talk about their project. In typical Rhode Island fashion, they describe the location as "where the Rhode Island Auditorium used to stand."

Jacob notes, "Rachel and I had a farmers market business. We more or less heard from farmers that there were not enough markets, not enough opportunity in Providence. As a customer, I've been going to the Hope Street Market since it was at Hope High School. So I've seen it grow from about half a dozen farmers to the 40+ farmers that it is today. And it feels like it hit an equilibrium. So what we wanted to do was create something that utilized an old site in the area and would allow new farmers access to the Providence area on a Saturday."

"Rachael and I are on the board of a farmers market out of Harmony. It's in its second year and this kind of materialized because of that market in a way. We are friends with the individuals who created that market and I saw the amount of work it took to create that and saw the need for it so we sat down and kind of powwowed and put it together," says Jacobs. "We're familiar with each others' strengths so we kind of broke it up by what everyone could do best."

One of the first things they had to tackle was where it was going to be. "We wanted somewhere along the North Main Street area and we identified almost right away that the arena lot. Most weekends, it's

vacant. The hospital was a big fan. They work hard to be a good neighbor to the community and they see this as a good way to promote local culture and really partner with the neighborhood and they were really excited about this," says Jacob.

And now, after approximately six months of planning and hard work, the market is finally set to open.

Jacob says, "Right off the bat we have music. We're going to have workshops, which is different from some markets but not all of them. We'll have artists there." McCaskill details some of the upcoming events: "We have Providence Community Acupuncture coming three times this summer. They are going to do some acupuncture on people and give out information about that. We'll have Indy Cycle, which does electronic waste, so they'll be there a few times to pick up old computers and other electronics and recycle them properly." Jacob also says that they are working in partnership with North Main Street Merchant's Association and the Summit Neighborhood Association to offer more workshops, such as composting and beekeeping.

They also hope that this market will be unique because of the farmers involved. "I feel the farmers markets are really an opportunity to meet the people growing their food and to make a connection and create a relationship over that. And these farmers are mostly those that haven't had that opportunity so far because the other markets are so full. We wanted to give people who might not have an opportunity to meet the farmers because there's a line of people behind them. Just the ability for more people to meet the people who are raising their food or raising the animals or growing the plants and vegetables," notes Jacobs.

Rachael says, "I hope that we can enrich the lives of the community around us. Having good local food and having art available and workshops and having things that people can connect with." Richard agrees. "The hope is to create kind of a small weekly festival featuring food, art, and music," he says. "Really a community environment where people can come - families, young adults, seniors, really anyone - can come find vendors, farmers that fill their food needs or they can shop for art and other products of interest. They can really experience some of the culture."

And perhaps the most important benefit: "There will be convenient parking. You can drive right up, pull in, do your shopping, cruise, maybe visit of the workshops, get in your car and head off to the next spot on your Saturday," says Jacob.

If you're looking for something fresh this month, come down and check out the market, which is open Saturdays from May 18-October 26, from 10am-2pm. [provaltmarket.com](http://provaltmarket.com).

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# A Locally Made Medicine that Goes Down Easy



Just a spoon full of sugar helps the ... wait, scratch that ... just a spoonful of honey and that *is* the medicine. As it turns out, according to Mary Blue of Farmacy Herbs in Providence, RI, honey has medicinal value.

"It's super antibacterial," says Blue. "The bees pollinate local plants, collecting pollen and all sorts of chemical constituents from them. Those constituents are medicinal, and it's all going into the honey."

According to Blue, just two to three teaspoons of local honey a day can ward off seasonal allergies. "Bees pollinate the local plants that [people are] allergic to, so you're getting a little bit of that plant matter in the honey. Then your body creates the antibodies it needs to develop a resistance to those allergens."

Honey is also anti-inflammatory, so it's good for sore throats and respiratory issues, and it can be used topically for cuts and scrapes. "Sometimes people use it cosmetically as a honey face mask. It's antibacterial and very moisturizing for your skin," she says.

You can use honey in different preparations. "If you have a sore throat, you can have a little bit of honey in water with lemon or some herbal tea." Farmacy Herbs also makes a honey salve with beeswax and calendula oil for topical use. Honey infusions with herbs and other plant matter are also possible. "We'll do a peppermint honey or a rose honey - that's really, really tasty."

Blue says honey has a long history of human use. "It's been around forever - I think they found honey in the graves of the Egyptians and it hasn't gone bad, which is amazing," says Blue, also noting that there are cave drawings depicting humans going into hives.

It's important, Blue stresses, to use local honey from a reliable source. "You want those local plants that the bees are pollinating to be in the honey so that your body creates the antibodies it needs." Several larger honey companies have been found to have high levels of pesticides and sometimes are adulterated with simple syrup. So local honey, where you know the source, is best.

The honey season this year has yet to gear up so you currently won't find honey on Farmacy's shelves, but the bees will be back to work as soon as the flowers start blooming. Honey should be back in stock in early May. Then you can go stock up and start using honey in one of Blue's favorite ways: with chocolate!

“I like making little truffles. I’ll use cocoa powder, honey, a couple of different kinds of herbs, nuts and coconut and I roll them up into little truffle balls,” says Blue.

Sounds like sweet medicine to me.

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## Eat and Drink and Drink and Eat at the First Eat Drink Rhode Island Festival



Did you know that *Travel and Leisure* magazine rated Providence the best foodie city in America? Yes, pick up your jaw because it’s true. We’ve always known that, unless you’re going to Naples, you can’t beat Rhode Island’s Italian cuisine (take that North End!). Also, let’s not forget that Rhode Island is the only place in the country, perhaps even the world, where you can access such culinary delights as the hot weiner, clam cakes, pizza strips, Del’s lemonade, and coffee milk. Why is this tiny state so damn special? As a native Rhode Islander who’s been all over the globe, I’ve often asked myself this question. Perhaps I can have it answered next month at the Eat Drink RI Festival.

Dave Dadekian, founder of EatDrinkRI.com, put this festival together to pay homage to all the wonderful edibles - and drinkables - the Ocean State has to offer. This three-day festival, which takes place April 19 through April 21, is the first of its kind in Rhode Island, making it all the more enticing. Farmers, chefs, bartenders, and food producers from Southern New England are teaming up to give attendees a sampling of all that’s local and seasonal.

The weekend kicks off with a Food Truck Benefit - all proceeds to go directly to the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. Eleven food trucks will offer samples of the tastiest street food, washed down with samples from Narragansett Brewery and Jonathan Edwards Winery. Live entertainment will make this event one hell of a street party. Day Two starts with a series of free demonstrations, ending with the Grand Tasting at the Biltmore, where some of Rhode Island’s most noteworthy chefs are teaming up with local farmers to give attendees a unique spin on farm-to-table cuisine while they try wines, beers, and spirits from New England and beyond. The festival wraps up on Sunday with the inevitable hangover brunch at Gracie’s.

If you're up for an entire weekend of eating and drinking (and who isn't, right?) then break out the credit card and go for the festival all-inclusive, which will set you back a mere \$200. If you're really feeling fancy, spend an extra \$25 for the VIP treatment, which gets you an extra hour of imbibing at the Grand Tasting, as well as more time at the food trucks.

Go get your tickets ([http://eatdrinkri.com/festival/events\\_tickets](http://eatdrinkri.com/festival/events_tickets)) and keep Rhode Island on the global food map. And if you can't make the festival, salute Eat Drink RI by enjoying a cold 'Gansett and a gagger.

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## Chickens!



Spring is in the air. Time for the birds and the bees to be up and about again. But if you're a local "chicken parent" like Freya Hainley of North Smithfield, you won't have to wait for the Bunny to bring you eggs this year. Welcome to the world of backyard chicken keeping, a truly local, and environmentally friendly trend.

Hainley started raising her "mother cluckers" after her former egg supplier moved; when she switched to store bought eggs, her family accused her of making rotten egg omelets, such was the difference in taste. The hefty price tag of organic, free range eggs annoyed her. "You shouldn't have to pay for something that is less work - it's very unfair." So two years ago she hatched a plan and bought her own flock - currently one Rhode Island Red and two Red Stars from [mypetchicken.com](http://mypetchicken.com).

Mature chickens lay approximately one egg per day, providing Hainley with plenty of "friendship currency" - fresh eggs with golden orange yolks that can make you very popular. "There really is a difference," she says. Fresh, organic eggs produce scrambled eggs that are more "custardy". "Store eggs might be three weeks old - you can smell the ammonia when you use them."

But Hainley clearly gets more than just food from the birds. "They are like free entertainment. They are always doing these amazing little antics and then you get the bonus of having breakfast from these sweet little creatures," she says. She finds it rewarding for her kids as well. "It's made a big impact in our lives. There's nothing nicer than watching your kids reach for an egg as a snack after school rather than junk food."

And she says, her kids had an understanding of where their food comes from at an early age. Chickens will lay for about four years, after which, due to medical issues, it's more humane to put them down.

“We treat our chickens well until the day they get brought to the butcher,” but even then nothing is wasted, as Hainley makes good use of the whole bird, from the feathers on in. Home chickens are also an environmental boon. They improve the soil, eat the protein food scraps that can’t be composted, and naturally help control the tick population in the backyard. “Our garden has definitely gotten more perky after the chickens,” Hainley laughs. And they are space efficient, too, requiring only two square feet per bird, although Hainley has deluxe accommodations for her flock with a 10’x5’ run attached to their coop.

Before you fly out to buy your own chicks, Hainley says it’s important to check your local laws to make sure you don’t run into problems, and to communicate with your neighbors. “There are a lot of misconceptions about chickens - [people] think they are dirty and noisy and they are neither.” It’s also important to research different breeds to ensure that you and your chickens will be happy with the conditions available. Her favorite book, *Chick Days: An Absolute Beginner’s Guide to Raising Chickens from Hatching to Laying* Jenna Woginrich, is great for kids and adults. The chicken breeders, too, will be able to help you select the best breeds for your flock.

Now you won’t even need the Easter Bunny to hide those eggs!

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## Where Else Would You Find 10,000 Cupcakes?



**By Kim Kinzie**

When I grew up in the ‘70s, the cupcake was sort of a joke, a baked good with a serious identity crisis, unsure whether to be a muffin or a cake. When it made its rare appearance, it was typically doused with sickeningly sweet frosting that mostly acted as the glue for some ridiculous adornment - an Easter bunny, a shamrock, an American flag. The cupcake was a treat that only a child could endure, and even kids often gave them a pass, albeit after grabbing the adornment and licking off the frosting. No adult without an eating disorder would have touched one with a 10-foot pole. Boy has the cupcake changed. The cupcake has become a culinary phenomenon - the baker’s equivalent of bacon, if you will. Sweet shops exclusively dedicated to the baking and selling of cupcakes are found in most towns in America. The Food Network airs shows about cupcakes. And here in Little Rhody, we even have a cupcake challenge.

On Sunday, March 10, RI Food Fights is hosting its 2nd Annual Great Cupcake Championship. RI Food Fights, through its founder Jim Nellis, engages local foodies in tasting competitions. Maybe you were lucky enough to attend their ice cream event last summer in Wayland Square? If so, you know their throw-downs are not to be missed. The Cupcake Championship, which is sadly sold out, will be held at Fete in Providence from 1-4pm. Twenty entrants will each bring 500 cupcakes for the lucky 900+ participants to sample and wash down with copious amounts of coffee, milk and soda, all generously donated by Fertile Underground Grocery, Yacht Club Soda and Monroe Dairy. The entrants come from all walks of food-life: restaurants, bakeries, cupcake shops and even a few people crazy enough to bake 500 cupcakes on their own. Prizes donated by Whole Foods, King Arthur Flour and Ahlers Designs will be awarded to first and second place winners, as well as the people's choice winner.

Last year's event was a huge success, especially for the Duck and Bunny, which took home the coveted title of "Best Cupcake in Rhode Island" for their Bunny Carrot Cupcake. This is not surprising news to me as I had a Meg Ryan When Harry Met Sally moment after trying their hot chocolate cupcake with a bacon-wrapped date chaser. It was over a year ago and I'm still fantasizing about it.

If you missed out on getting a ticket, may I suggest standing outside of Fete at 4:01pm to watch the parade of over-sugared, highly caffeinated adults searching desperately for something salty and thirst-quenching. Or better yet, join RI Food Fights for their next event on April 28, where the timeless, yet not-so-trendy donut will be paired up with its best friend, coffee, for a food fight certain to end with a big dose of plop, plop, fizz, fizz. Tickets can be purchased at [www.rifoodfights.com](http://www.rifoodfights.com).

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## Sweet On Honey: The Lives Of Kept Bees

What's the latest buzz on the newest local hobby? Beekeeping. Just ask Chuck Wood, co-owner of the newly opened Wood's Beekeeping Supply and Academy in Lincoln. "It is the number one fad in this world right now - rooftop hives. It's huge," says Wood. A beekeeper since the 70's and past president of the Rhode Island Beekeeper's Association (RIBA), Wood's passion is clear. "[Beekeeping] became the best thing I ever did."

Right now, the life of a bee is a quiet one. "They don't hibernate. They eat their honey and that's how they get warm," says Wood, noting that bees can handle the winter just fine if there's enough food. "Right now, they are starting to have babies in their hive, even in this cold weather, and they're using the honey up." In the middle to the end of February, he may supplement his bees with granulated sugar because when the weather dips below 50 degrees, they can't take syrup down. He'll also feed the hive with a pollen substitute to encourage the growth of the baby bees.



It's the perfect time to jump into the world of beekeeping. The RIBA provides beginner level instruction and sessions have just started. "We get packaged bees in for new beekeepers in April every year," notes Wood. "Now is the time to start thinking of it. Time flies, so you do want to do it ahead." Wood himself will lead advanced level courses and public demonstrations starting in April. He will also offer a hive tending service for a monthly fee, for those who would like the bees, but not, perhaps, the bee stings.

Woods says all you need is a little outdoor space, less than the size of a small table. "It's incredible how many people have rooftop hives," he says. From backyards to rooftops to small balconies, it seems bees can be kept almost anywhere. "And people who have hives in cities usually make more honey than we do out in the country, don't know why," says Woods, "And I'm even talking NYC. They do wonderful there. Way up on rooftops. Lots of restaurants have them up there so they can get the honey." Even with one hive, Woods says you can get between 40 and 100 pounds of honey per season.

Intrigued? To find out more, contact RIBA at [ribeekeeper.org](http://ribeekeeper.org) or check out Wood's Beekeeping Supply and Academy at [woodsbees.com](http://woodsbees.com).

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## **Give Me Liberty...or Give me Fresh Squeased**

In a world where sandwiches are held together with drink umbrellas and OJ flows straight from the fruit to the glass, bacon-heads and health freaks alike can live and dine together in harmony.



Liberty Elm Diner's brunch-utopia pulls in more regulars than Sunday mass. What it exactly keeps people coming back is debatable . . . the warm welcoming service . . . the locally grown ingredients you ask? Do patrons come for the feel of a renovated 1936 dining car, or to shoot the breeze with the tattoo-covered bus boys? Whatever it may be, one thing is certain — once you try one of the Liberty's fresh-squeezed juices, you'll find yourself spending more time on Elmwood Ave in Providence.

After my recent visit to the Liberty Elm, I can personally verify this fact (not opinion). I sat down with Diane, AKA Tink, Liberty's counter queen and sweetheart on a Wednesday afternoon to get the dish on the Omega — the machine behind the legendary juice menu.

"I've got a twist for you," Tink began between sips of coffee, "our Omega is broken."

My heart began to sink but was rehabilitated with a hopeful, "But..." preceded by a heavy gulp of coffee.



The machine was recently and generously replaced by a pair of concerned regulars. After catching wind that the Omega faltered, they donated a Jack LaLanne to the diner. If the name seems familiar, you probably spend time on the QVC channel. The act of charity was brought about by both love and

addiction. Kinda the way a hooked drug user might do favors for their dealer. And their habits are well fed with options such as cranberry-apple-pineapple, carrot-apple-beet with parsley, liquidas and lemon-lime juice ranging from only \$1.50 to \$5.

The moment had finally arrived—it was time to see what all the talk was really about. Overwhelmed by options, I settled with a recommendation from the staff, their most popular, “the combo.” The mix of beets, carrots, an apple and ginger, invented by owner Carol (AKA Kip), is “the prettiest,” according to Tink.

“And, it’s so good for you” chimed in a voice from the kitchen. As she casually tossed a whole apple into the juicer, I got the low-down.

“The staff favorite right now is apple ginger,” Tink said. “And by staff, I mean myself.”

When my juice was done, it was more than apparent why it was considered the prettiest. The hypnotic swirls of pink and deep orange appropriately enough formed to the shape of a heart at the top of the glass — made with love, of course.

It was the deliciousness of a chocolate cake with the healthiness of a bowl of steamed brussel sprouts. I felt the way Popeye might after gulping down a can of spinach.

Tink graciously transferred my drink into a biodegradable plastic cup for the ride home.

I can confidently say that I’ll be back for more, especially after seeing entrée after entrée ready in the kitchen window.