



*Nick Cannalunga, Jr. is pictured with Rick Melone of Clearview Farms in Sterling, MA.*

# Supporting Local Growers

Wagon Wheel Nursery and Farmstand looks to area growers for fresh produce and a farmers market experience all year long

Autumn always seems to bring with it a new appreciation for nature's bounty. We watch as the trees transform and treat us to a beautiful array of colorful bright red and yellow leaves. Cool crisp air and autumn's harvest means fresh local produce and a colorful selection of delicious apples, hearty mums and bright orange pumpkins. Nowhere is this more evident than at Wagon Wheel Nursery and Farmstand on Waltham Street in Lexington.

Every day, Nick Cannalunga, Jr. and his brother, Larry, Co-Owners of Wagon Wheel Nursery & Farmstand in Lexington are thinking about their next order. Offering the best quality products at the best price is their mission. To achieve this goal, they turn to their local growers first. Their mission is to keep their product as local as possible when available. Started as a tree nursery in 1952 by Nick Cannalunga, Sr., Wagon Wheel has always stocked native trees, shrubs and plants. "There has always been a philosophy to do business with our neighbors first" says Larry, who mainly operates the garden center and tree nursery. Unlike some of the larger box stores, we have the luxury of hand-picking our plants from greenhouses located in Woburn, Walpole, Sudbury and Townsend. We are not

only keeping our business local, but we have personal relationships with our growers allowing us the choice of the best inventory around.

Massachusetts is blessed with a rich heritage of farming. We are so fortunate to have this resource, but with our hectic lives, sometimes we forget the value of our gift. Just ask David Rota of Rota-Spring Farm. His family has been in the farming business since 1911. Wagon Wheel calls on Rota for all kinds of vegetables including tomatoes, squash, pumpkins and more. No doubt about it, the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture has done a commendable job of promoting their slogan, "Massachusetts Grown... and Fresher!" Their purpose is to keep our local farms thriving.

What does this mean to consumers? Local produce is safer, healthier and economically wise. But offering the best local produce is not without extra effort and challenges. It's not a one-stop shop. It means dealing with lots of different growers, negotiating, coordinating pick up or delivery, developing relationships and picking and choosing what product to buy from each farm. "It's not like just going to the market and dealing with one middle man for a multitude of items. We go to the farms directly, find the

best that they offer and bring it to our customers at Wagon Wheel", says Nick.

Gary Wilkins, of Gary's Farmstand in Littleton, MA is another local Farmer that Wagon Wheel enjoys doing business with. During peak season, you can find Gary hauling around his corn deliveries himself in his white pick-up truck. He and Wagon Wheel have a great rapport and mutual respect for each other's business.

Rick and Diane Melone, owners of Clearview Farms in Sterling, MA also take pride in their industry. While they also run a farmstand on their farm, they do wholesaling and go to Farmer's Markets on a regular basis. Rick attests, "People want to know where their food is coming from." Farmer Rick grows virtually everything – apples, peaches, vegetables, tomatoes, pumpkins, squash. Like nearly 80% of Massachusetts farms (according to the 2007 US Census of Agriculture), Clearview Farms is a family business. Rick and Diane, their 4 children and two employees grow, mow, maintain, pick, and deliver everything themselves. Their two Jamaican employees live on the farm from May to October as part of the H2/A program which started during WWII. "These workers are like family", says Rick. For Rick, farming

*“During peak season, it’s like a farmer’s market here every day. No question about it – when you shop at Wagon Wheel, you should be proud that you are supporting our local farmers.”*

- Nick Cannalunga, Jr.



is a year-round job. Things may slow down a bit in January and February, but there is always something that needs to be done to get ready for the season to begin again.

Fortunately, Wagon Wheel has been able to adapt and continue to buy locally even in the winter months. With the addition of the Deli, fresh seafood can be purchased from local docks all year round. Other year-round products like local cheeses, breads, cookies and pies are purchased from wholesalers in Medford, Brookline, Lynnfield and Winchendon, to name just a few. Wagon Wheel has been carrying Lizzy’s homemade ice cream with roots in Waltham for years. A new item, Chilly Cow frozen custard, of Arlington is becoming very popular too. One of Wagon Wheel’s staple items is the Honey and Syrup from Butternut Mountain Farm in Maine. “We are always open to trying new local products.” Larry admits, “We believe in local entrepreneurship. If a product will keep customers coming back, we will gladly give it exposure on our shelves.”

In the fall, Wagon Wheel welcomes the arrival of pumpkins, mums, gourds, apples, pears and particularly winter squash. “When new customers enter our store after shopping in large grocery stores their whole life, they are amazed at what is not only available but also that a lot of it is native to Massachusetts.” Nick continues, “During peak season, it’s like a farmer’s market here every day. No question about it – when you shop at Wagon Wheel, you should be proud that you are supporting our local farmers.”

**Locally grown pumpkins, apples, and a variety of other healthy and delicious produce are featured at Wagon Wheel Nursery and Farmstand**



Wagon Wheel is located at 927 Waltham Street in Lexington or, visit them on the web at [www.WagonWheelFarmstand.com](http://www.WagonWheelFarmstand.com).