



## For some farmers, going organic worth the effort

BY JULIA BAYLY  
BDN STAFF

MONROE — When Tim Devin and Anna Weinberg decided to buy Chase Stream Farm in Monroe, they knew they wanted to produce and sell certified organic crops.

"We bought the land in February, and we've been farming for about three weeks," Devin said last week. "We really wanted to carry on with the organic vegetable production that had been going on for 10 years on this farm before we bought it."

Anyone can practice organic growing by avoiding chemical pesticides and relying on natural soil and plant enhancers, but to

claim a product "certified organic," a grower has to pass a U.S. Department of Agriculture certification process. In Maine, that certification comes from the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association's Certification Services, which works to ensure the state's certified organic farmers comply with the USDA's organic certification regulations.

"When a farmer or producer or [food] processor applies for [organic] certification, we look at the plan they supply to us on how they will manage their organic practices," Kate Newkirk, interim director of certification at MOFGA, said. "Once we review that plan, we send an inspector to that farm or processor to see how



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Tim Devin picks up large rocks around the frame of a new greenhouse at Chase Stream Farm in Monroe recently. Devin and his wife, Anna Weinberg, are working to be certified by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association.

it is being implemented. That inspector verifies the plan is in operation." Once the inspector reports back

to Newkirk and her staff, they determine if it meets the certification requirements or if there are  
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## Forum explores solutions to food waste

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE  
BDN STAFF

PORTLAND — A third of all food in the United States gets wasted, even as millions of children go hungry. At the same time, there is an obesity epidemic. What's going on?

"We've been wasting food for years; we just haven't been paying attention," said Bill Seretta of The Sustainability Lab, a Yarmouth-based nonprofit which helps institutions save precious resources like food and water.

Ways to counter edible waste from the entire food spectrum anchored a discussion Tuesday at Maine Startup and Create Week. Seretta joined a panel of agriculture, food safety and tech experts at Maine College of Art to explore innovations yielding improved access to fresh, healthy food.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "up to one third of all food is spoiled before it is consumed." Recovering half of what is wasted could feed the world. Therein lies business opportunity.

"We were contacted by a produce distributor who said they had 800 pounds of browning bananas. It was a shame to waste. We were able to connect them with a baker, who turned the bananas into banana bread."

EMILY MALINA, CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER, SPOILER ALERT

Hannah Semler, gleaning coordinator for Healthy Acadia, led the talk that delved into food insecurity and the need in Maine for better aggregation and distribution channels for food, fish and fowl.

The idea, said Semler, "is to humanize the food system. Gleaning has been a vehicle to bring people together around the idea of food and what it should be." Gleaning, collecting food that would otherwise go to waste, is not a new idea. It was mentioned in the Old Testament, said Semler.

Healthy Acadia conducts regular farm maintenance, cleaning out rows and thinning spinach, for example, which is delivered to food pantries Down East and in counties like Aroostook and Hancock.

"One farmer tells me, through the gleaning initiative, they are able to give 10 times more food than they would be able to give. The capacity of donating requires time and coordination," said Semler.

And food that's safe to eat. Given its perishable nature, food safety is crucial, especially when money is on the line. Panelist Michele Pfannenstiel, president of Dirigo Food Safety, consults with businesses on best practices and offers training and tips on how to handle a crisis. At home she follows similar steps to feed her family of five.

"Make sure the foods you buy are stored correctly. Don't overstuff the fridge because the air needs to circulate," said Pfannenstiel.

Other tips for controlling food waste include going to the grocery store with a shopping list, checking the dates and consuming closely dated items first and properly storing the rest.

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Cynthia Thayer (center) looks at the compost pile that Steve Eaton (right) is making while Bill Thayer watches at Darthia Farm in Gouldsboro on Tuesday.

## Cultivating a partnership

Nontraditional agreement helps Gouldsboro couple ensure their farm will live on

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS  
BDN STAFF

When Cynthia and Bill Thayer came to Gouldsboro from Massachusetts and started organic farming at Darthia Farm in 1976, they had dreams but not certainty about how their life in Maine would work out.

Forty years later, they've figured out how to extend their agriculture season by selling Christmas wreaths and jams and jellies by mail. They have settled into the community, with Bill Thayer, now 79, serving as a longtime selectman in the town of Gouldsboro. They even managed to rebuild after a devastating fire in 2012 that killed most of their livestock, including three draft horses, two pigs, two calves, more than a dozen sheep and about 60 chicks.

But finding a successor to



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Steve Eaton shovels up the sheep's winter bedding to use as the top layer of a compost pile at Darthia Farm in Gouldsboro on Tuesday.

take over the farm they love who will make sure it remains a part of Gouldsboro has been a different kind of challenge, as it is for many farmers in Maine. Back in 2002, the Thay-

ers joined the Maine Farmland Trust's FarmLink service, through which the nonprofit organization helps connect people seeking farmland with farmland owners who are look-

ing to sell, lease or work out nontraditional tenure arrangements.

Now, the Thayers believe they have finally found the right family for the job: Steve Eaton, 31, Liz Moran, 28, and their two young children, Cedar, 1, and Harbor, 4. The young family moved to a separate house on Darthia Farm in February and settled into their new home and farm this spring.

"There have been some really cool things," Eaton said. "Everything is just so good. And my kids really love being with Cynthia and Bill. Harbor got her first lesson on a stirrup hoe today ... She's helped me plant so much this year and now she's helping with weeding, and it's great. We knew we wanted to do farming for life. The only way that could happen was living on the farm."

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## Midcoast barn fertile ground for sparkling wine, friendship

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE  
BDN STAFF

JEFFERSON — The early 19th century cattle barn, though grand, is like one of many across Maine. On a rise above Damariscotta Lake, attached to an inn, it's an inviting setting for a getaway.

In a former life, Yankee ingenuity dictated a 90-degree rotation because the animals inside were freezing because of chronic onshore blasts from the lake. But these days, the animals are gone, and the barn has a new purpose: Down in its cellar, two Mainers are busily putting the finishing touches on a unique, dry, blue-

berry sparkling wine called Bluet.

"Every wine reflects the people and place where it is made. From the barrels up in Appleton Ridge where the blueberries were harvested, from the barn here that dates back to the 1800s, the molecules from the environment are in the wine," said Michael Terrien, a California winemaker who grew up in Cape Elizabeth and has been in the wine business since 1995.

Hidden beneath the broad floor and soaring former hayloft, Terrien and his childhood friend Eric Martin toil below in the granite cellar, which now shelters their budding winery.

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Eric Martin (left) and Michael Terrien hold glasses of Bluet, a sparkling wine made in the basement of a barn facing Damariscotta Lake, on Thursday in Jefferson.