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## From Hollywood to the Hudson Valley

*“Eat Well Guided Tour of America” Culminates in tour of New York’s Hudson Valley and Harvest BBQ Party with Farm Aid, Where chefs, farmers and consumers are helping drive Growing demand for good, wholesome, locally-grown, sustainable foods*

New York City – August 30 – It’s no accident that the “Eat Well Guided Tour of America,” which began Aug. 2 in West Hollywood, California, will celebrate its last major event on Sept. 7 with a series of adventures in New York’s majestic Hudson Valley and linking up with Farm Aid’s Upstate-Downstate Food and Farm Caravan touring New York state farms. (The tour will officially conclude on Sept. 9 at the Farm Aid show on Randall’s Island.)

“We’ve seen so much enthusiasm and passion for food that satisfies our palates and helps sustain our environment, all the while helping us to re-connect with community,” said the tour’s leader, Diane Hatz, who four years ago founded Sustainable Table, the nonprofit program that produced “The Meatrix” ([www.themeatrix.com](http://www.themeatrix.com)) movies and the Eat Well Guide ([www.eatwellguide.org](http://www.eatwellguide.org)). “And the Hudson Valley,” Hatz said, “is no exception.”

Farm Aid, the group that singer Willie Nelson founded in 1985 to help family farmers thrive despite the growth of industrial agriculture, will join Sustainable Table in hosting a live webcast and Harvest BBQ Party in Red Hook, where chefs, farmers and sustainable food advocates will discuss the future and flavor of locally grown, good food.

“Right now, America is on the cusp of a ‘good food’ movement,” said Farm Aid Executive Director Carolyn Mugar. “The American public recognizes family farmers as their resource for food that is local, humanely-raised, organic, and sustainable, and consumers are reaching for these foods in grocery stores, at farmers markets, in schools and even in hospitals. This demand offers growing economic opportunity for family farmers to thrive. Farm Aid is excited to share this special day with local farmers in The Hudson Valley and indulge in local sustainable pie.”

The Hudson Valley's natural beauty was famously sullied over half a century ago when industrial waste left the Hudson River highly toxic. Today, food, wine and travel writers are increasingly predicting that it will become "the new Napa" or "the next Loire."

After picking up reporters in Manhattan, Hatz and fellow passengers aboard Sustainable Table's bio-fueled bus will head into the Hudson Valley to see how farmers and chefs have been the key to the region's dramatic transformation. Along with Hatz, speakers on the bus will be Laura Pensiero, a French Culinary Institute graduate, a registered dietitian, health educator, owner of Gigi Trattoria & Gigi Market, cookbook author, spokesperson, and industry expert who believes that "Good food should thrill the senses," read more about her at ([www.Chef4Life.com](http://www.Chef4Life.com)) and Janet Crawshaw, The Valley Table, the magazine of Hudson Valley farms, food & cuisine, cited by the New York Times as the source for all things epicurean in the Hudson Valley--Check it out at ([www.valleytable.com](http://www.valleytable.com)).

"The Hudson Valley has historically been an important agricultural region, but the loss of farms and farmland has been alarming, as farms and orchards make way for new houses. The Hudson Valley has become a proving ground for sustainability—with more communities considering farmland preservation, more farmers developing creative ways to direct market, more artisanal producers and more chefs serving local farm foods. The Eat Well Guided Tour of America brings tremendous attention to this agricultural region," says Crawshaw, a leader in the sustainable food movement in the Hudson Valley.

At their first stop--Plankenhorn Farm in Pleasant Valley--they will meet owner Sam Simon, a retired orthopedic surgeon who five years ago created Hudson Valley Fresh, a cooperative in New York that draws milk from seven local dairies, whose sales have shot up 30-40 percent over the past year. Their milk is a premier product and has many distinguishing properties that go above and beyond regular dairies, including a higher fat content and much lower bacteria counts. Whole Foods just met with him (40 people from the company came up for a visit) and his product will be in their New York City stores starting in September. Plankenhorn Farm offers powerful evidence for the notion that the closer food is grown to home, the fresher, safer and tastier it is.

Passengers on the "Eat Well" bus will then head to nearby Millbrook for lunch and a tour of Millbrook Vineyards and Winery, 70 acres of plants that wind their way toward the large white-and-brown barn that houses the operation. Millbrook grows about 25 varieties of European grapes, more than any other winery in the state and its wines have won numerous awards.

What's most significant about Millbrook, however, is founder John Dyson. As the state's commissioner of agriculture and markets, Dyson helped persuade then-governor Hugh Carey sign the Farm Winery Act in 1976, which allowed winery owners to bypass wholesalers and sell their wine directly to the public at the winery, as well as, to retailers and restaurants. When the Act was passed, no wine trails existed in the Finger Lakes or the Hudson Valley or the eastern tip of Long Island. Today there are 239 wineries - the number increases almost monthly - and the vast majority of them are farm wineries.

From Millbrook, the bus will then venture 19 miles north to Sky Farm, a quiet 11-acre parcel nestled in the rolling hills near Millerton where one of the area's younger farmers, Chris Regan, a former artist-turned farmer has been growing some of the most desirable salad greens in the valley for 13 years. Chefs like Laura Pensiero, owner of Gigi Trattoria and Gigi Market in Northern Dutchess County, praises his baby greens, saying, "His baby greens are the star ingredients of her eateries." He is also known in the Valley as "The Salad Man." Regan sells most of his produce to local restaurants. Pensiero says, "A consistent message of health educators is 'eat more fruits and vegetables' if all salad greens tasted like Sky Farms they would and what's the point of eating healthy if it doesn't taste good."

In a recent article in *The Valley Table*, Regan said, “I really like dealing with chefs, they tend to be interesting people, first of all. But the chefs I deal with are also really interested in food and very serious about what they do. I get a lot of feedback from them—and a lot of positive feedback, which is worth a lot.” In peak season he produces over eight hundred pounds a week on land that he leases rather than owns—an increasingly common practice that helps landowners get tax exemptions for keeping their farmlands active, and provides an “in” for farmers with modest means like Regan who would otherwise be unable to purchase the area’s rising property values.

The tour then heads 25 miles west to Mead Orchards in Tivoli County because the picturesque, 180-acre fruit orchard and vegetable farm exemplifies what can happen when families stick together for generations.

Chuck Mead has been working with his father Sid for more than 20 years, and began managing the farm in the 80's--Now he and his helpers take up to 40 different fresh items to farmers' markets in communities closer to New York City. He's also expanding pick-your-own here on the farm. Mead says, “In 2001, we sold the development rights from the farm so that housing tracts may never be built here (plus, we like farming!). At that time, we bought an adjacent 80 acres, and have continued to plant fruits and vegetables there.”

### **FARM AID JOINS THE TOUR AT GIGI'S MARKET IN RED HOOK, NEW YORK**

The “Eat Well” bus then heads back a few miles south for the climax of the day - local music, a live webcast and Harvest BBQ Party in nearby Red Hook from 6:30 pm to 9:30 p.m. The event takes place at Gigi Market, located at the “pick your own” fruit and vegetables Greig Farm in Red Hook, there we will have a stage set-up where advocates from Sustainable Table, Hudson Valley Farmers and Farm Aid will discuss sustainable farming, food and the flavor of local cultures and communities with moderator Janet Crawshaw, publisher of *The Valley Table*. We will be projecting clips from “The Eat Well Guided Tour of America” on the side of a barn and show our webby award winning animated short films ([www.thematrix.com](http://www.thematrix.com).) Local advocates and local farmers will also gather at tables to help educate Valley consumers about local farming in the Hudson Valley.

At Gigi Market, Sustainable Table together with *The Valley Table* will host a pie judging contest where representatives from Farm Aid will join us to delight in the taste of pies and celebrate local, sustainable farmers.

Pie judges will include such culinary critics as Pascale LaDraoulec who is the author of *American Pie Slices of Life (and pie) from America's Back Roads*, published 2002. The book is an account of her trip moving from California to the Hudson Valley, eating pie all along the way.

Hatz said, “We made pies a key theme for the night and indeed throughout the tour, for they capture the power of eating local. They are such a great metaphor for sharing community through local, wholesome food because their ingredients tell stories about the people who bake them and the communities who created them.”

Or as Pensiero recently put it, “Eating locally gives us roots in the communities where we live. It makes it more of a pleasant lifestyle and not a diet. It makes us think about other people, and how we are all connected. It puts us in touch with everyday life in a way that is hard to find in today’s busy world and the closer food is grown to home, the fresher, safer and tastier it is..”

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- To ride the Sustainable Table bus and join the daytime media tour highlighting sustainable farmers and vineyards in the Hudson Valley, contact Denise Hughes at

917-549-2621 or [denise@creative-connectors.com](mailto:denise@creative-connectors.com). At 10 a.m., the bus will pick up reporters at 215 Lexington Ave., between 32nd and 33<sup>rd</sup>.

- Directions to the Harvest BBQ Party: 227 Pitcher Lane, Red Hook, NY 12571. Red Hook is about 90 miles north of NYC. Take Amtrak to Rhinecliff or Metro-North's Hudson River line to Poughkeepsie. Admission/Tix: \$20, local farmers & media are free. Or bring a homemade pie made from sustainable, local ingredients and get in free. All pies will be entered into a contest. Best pie wins 2 tickets to Farm-Aid concert on 9/9! To purchase tickets or for more information call Gigi Market at (845) 758-1999 or email [laura@gigimarket.com](mailto:laura@gigimarket.com). **Read more or watch the event live on 9/7 at [www.sustainabletable.org/roadtrip](http://www.sustainabletable.org/roadtrip).**
- Tickets for Farm Aid 2007: A HOMEGROWN Festival are available at all Ticketmaster outlets, online at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com), or by calling (212) 307-7171, (631) 888-9000 or (203) 624-0033. Ticket prices are \$52 for general admission, \$102 for reserved seats and \$302 for VIP reserved seats. The VIP package includes catering in an exclusive area and other amenities. For more information about the festival and concert line-up, visit [www.farmaid.org](http://www.farmaid.org).

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### **Sustainable Table**

Sustainable Table celebrates the sustainable food movement, educates consumers on food-related issues and builds community through food. Projects include The Meatrix, award-winning, humorous animations on industrial agriculture, and the Eat Well Guide, an online directory of sustainably-raised products from farms, stores, restaurants and other outlets in the United States and Canada. Sustainable Table is a program of GRACE.

### **Farm Aid**

Farm Aid's mission is to build a vibrant family-farm centered system of agriculture in America. Farm Aid artists and board members Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp and Dave Matthews host an annual concert to raise funds to support Farm Aid's work with family farmers and to inspire people to choose family-farmed food. Since 1985, Farm Aid has raised more than \$30 million to support programs that help farmers thrive, expand the reach of the Good Food Movement, take action to change the current system of industrial agriculture and promote food from family farms.