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A Fresh! Pilot

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Photo by Bonnie Schultz

It was a foodie's dream: guests were treated to a farm-to-table dinner including donations of cheese from [Cherry Grove](#), Asian vegetables from [Chia Sin](#), and fruits and vegetables from [Stults Farm](#) and [Terhune Orchards](#) -- all cooked by Jim Weaver, executive

chef-owner of [Tre Piani](#) -- and shot by documentary videographers.

In a month or two, these diners might well see themselves on NJTV, and on the website of [Greener New Jersey Productions](#), which organized the dinner to launch the filming of a pilot for a 13-part documentary series called Fresh!

These efforts are led by Joanne Ruscio, founder and president of Greener New Jersey Productions and former marketing director of NJN Public Television and Radio.

The Fresh! pilot will include footage from the Tre Piani dinner and the [West Windsor Farmers Market](#), which was just voted #1 in New Jersey for the American Farmland Trust's "America's Favorite Farmers Market" Award.

Weaver, who is also founder of the Central New Jersey Chapter of the International [Slow Food](#) grassroots movement, addressed the group by saying that a lot of people around the table and elsewhere have worked hard to make Central Jersey a "hotbed" for the whole farm-to-table concept.

"When Slow Food started in 1999, farm-to-table was unheard of, and though we weren't the only ones, I like to think we had a lot to do with making it a

cool thing,” said Weaver.

Attendees included Gary and Pam Mount, owners of Terhune Farm, who also donated the pies and centerpiece for the dinner. Other attendees included Beth Pearson, marketing coordinator for Whole Foods Market, Debra Falk of NJTV, Debra Galant of NJNews Commons at Montclair University, local food writer Pat Tanner, Tom Gilbert, head of Trust for Public Land and Keep it Green Campaign, Linda Mead, Executive Director of D&R Greenway, Bob Prewitt of Dana Communications, and Chris Cirkus, Manager of the West Windsor Farmers Market.

Megan Gunning was also present. Former host of “NJ Fresh!,” which was produced and broadcast by NJN, Gunning will also be hosting the new “Fresh!” series.

At the West Windsor Farmers Market the next day, Gunning walked around interviewing the vendors. She plans to take the documentary crew to tour some of the farms, and record farmers talking about what they grow and their farming philosophies.

“In each episode we will do a cooking segment as well where I’ll meet up with a local chef who will come to the market with me, we’ll shop the ingredients together and then cook an amazing dinner afterwards,” said Gunning.

Gunning had worked with Weaver to create the farm-to-table dinner at Tre Piani the previous night. “All the ingredients that went into the dinner last night were goods and produce that are sold by vendors at the West Windsor Farmers Market.”

According to Ruscio, nutrition will be a major part of the series, and they hope to reach children too. “Everyone should go into the sun, pick a tomato off the vine and eat it right then and there,” said Ruscio.

“‘Fresh!’ allows you to meet your farmers so you know where your food comes from, see how the meal is prepared, and then the hope is that people will feel more confident about going to a farmer’s market. For a lot of people who are used to shopping at your typical chain supermarket, it is a little intimidating and overwhelming to step into the world of the farmers market for the first time,” said Gunning. “We’re kind of helping people navigate their way through and then giving them cooking ideas by bringing in the cooking segment and having the chef shop with us.”

Other projects that Greener New Jersey Productions have worked on include a [geoscience project](#) for the Sandy Hook Foundation involving Red Bank

school district, Rutgers University and Brookdale Community College.

Greener New Jersey Productions is more than halfway toward meeting their fundraising goal. If all goes well, the public can expect to view at least two series that focus on the greener side of the Garden State: “Fresh!,” which highlights its farms, farmers markets and local seafood, and “Parks and Recreation,” which takes viewers through the many parks, trails, nature preserves, and outdoor activities the state has to offer.

About the Author »



Bonnie Schultz

Bonnie Schultz has worked as a technology and marketing writer in the Boston area. She moved here in 1997 and is the mother of two boys. Since 2007, Bonnie has been blogging about food and community happenings in the Princeton area.

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