

Sweet corn & U-Pick-It surprise Italian vegetable grower

By Doris Crowley
 NEWARK, Del. — Twenty-five year-old Marco Coltelli has been growing vegetables all his life, but until this summer when he visited the U.S., he had never eaten sweet corn or tasted yellow squash. And until he came to Delaware, he had never seen a pick-your-own farm.

Coltelli came to the States from Italy last June under the auspices of the International Four-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) program. When he returns to his family's vegetable farm near Bologna a few days from now, he'll have many impressions to share—impressions about American life styles, including the food we eat and the way we grow and sell it.

The personable young Italian began his four-month visit with a brief orientation period in Washington, D.C., and then traveled to North Dakota where he lived with 4-H families until early August. Next he spent 10 days touring California's vegetable industry. From there he came on to Delaware for a two-month stay. His hosts in this state were Henry and Virginia Morneau of Newark, Larry and Pat Shaffer of Wilmington, and Jim and Kay Powell of Camden—all active 4-H supporters with young people of their own.

While living with these families Coltelli participated in local 4-H activities, including meetings where he showed slides of his farm back in Bologna and talked about Italy's 3-P clubs, which were founded in 1957 on the pattern of American 4-H. The three Ps stand for the Italian words: provare (try), produrre (produce), and progredire (improve). Like 4-H, the Italian clubs provide training in leadership, professional and other skills, as well as social activities in membership age (13 to 30, rather than 4-H's 9 to 19) and in being restricted to the sons and daughters of farmers (4-H today serves both urban and farm youth).

With the help of his hosts, Coltelli also saw a lot of Delaware agriculture while he was here. I met him toward the end of his stay, and by then he had visited a number of farms and farm-related businesses.

One day last August, for example, he accompanied New Castle County extension agent Dean Belt on a round of farm visits in the Middletown area. Among other places, they stopped to see broccoli and cauliflower growing at Baker Farms, potatoes at the Frank Rutkowski farm, and cabbage at Chris Wicks'. While he was in New Castle County, Coltelli also joined a group of plant scientists from the University of Delaware ag college on a trip to a research farm in Pennsylvania.

After moving to the Powells in Camden, Coltelli saw even more of the local farm scene. Kay Powell lined up and accompanied him on tours of the Draper King Cole vegetable processing plant near Milton, two Delmarva broiler operations, including a hatchery, and a turkey processing plant.

Powell introduced Coltelli to Kent County extension agent Bob



Italian vegetable farmer Marco Coltelli recently spent two months in Delaware, meeting 4-H'ers and visiting farms under auspices of the International Four-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) program.

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