

# Boyer's Lambert Organic Farm Emphasizes Ethnic, Heirloom Produce

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Lancaster Farming Staff  
NARVON (Lancaster Co.) — Linda Boyer believes that vegetable growers — and ultimately the general public — could be losing their heritage.

In fact, she's molded her community supported agriculture (CSA) program and her farm market, which emphasizes heirloom and ethnic vegetables, exactly on that premise.

Heirloom vegetables, which comprise a large percentage of what she grows on the seven acres of land near her home, are more durable, disease and pest hardy, healthy, and ultimately so good tasting, Boyer said.

With husband Leon, in the early '90s, Linda completed a lot of research, seeking out the best heirloom and ethnic vegetables she could find, gathering information from suppliers worldwide.

She points to the "Hillbilly" variety of bi-color tomatoes that keep setting fruit up until Thanksgiving. "Give it half a chance and it will go on forever," she said. She recalls the Pink Peach tomato, "rosy and sweet," she said, that feels like a garden peach but has the flavor and texture of a tomato. "You won't

find that in a grocery store," she said with a smile.

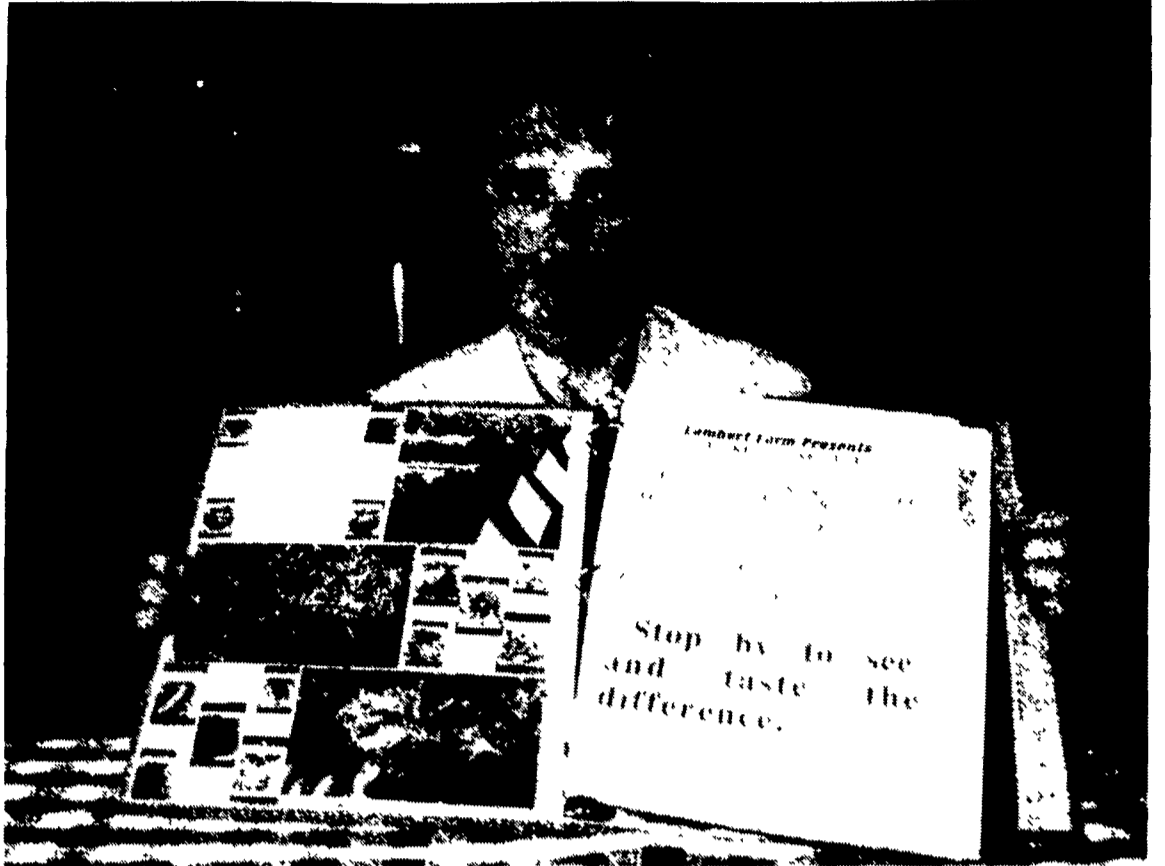
Said Boyer, "I can't eat store-bought lettuce. It makes me physically sick."

Linda told a story of some customers from Maryland that traveled to the Quarryville Growers Market, where she maintains a stand. They took one look at the Russian black plum tomato, and weren't convinced it wasn't the best tomato they had ever seen. They took one free sample Boyer offered, purchased a quart basket, ate more in the car on the drive home, ran out, turned around, and came back for more.

"I do the stuff grandma did," said Boyer.

The key is to plant, cultivate, harvest, and present the vegetables in a way that brings back the memories of how good the heirloom vegetables tasted on the table during the holidays at Grandma's house.

Customers who are looking for the many varieties of peppers Boyer growers point out that she raises "the six hottest in the world," many of which are dried to make mild, hot, and superhot mixes. "I sold one customer by the bushel box," she said.



Heirloom vegetables, which comprise a large percentage of what she grows on the seven acres of land near her house, are more durable and soil-hardy and ultimately so good tasting and healthy, she noted. Together with husband Leon, in the early '90s, Linda completed a lot of research, seeking out the best heirloom and ethnic vegetables she can find, gathering information from suppliers worldwide.



Recently Linda and Leon (who works down the road at Conestoga Custom Kitchens) planted a 60-tree antique orchard, with standard and dwarf-sized trees, including apricots, peaches, different types of apples, sweet and sour cherries, plums, and nectarines. Cherries are big sellers, but the Boyers also sell different varieties of blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries.



Leon Boyer looks over the farm market stand at the Quarryville Growers Market.

New for Boyer this year are cherry tomatoes.

"I am going to have every color in the rainbow," she said. "The flavors and textures are fantastic."

This is the first year for the Lambert Farm CSA on the Lambert Road hillside just north of Churchtown. Already the Boyers have signed up seven members. The cost is \$300 per season, which includes two hours of member garden labor. Those who don't wish to perform the hand weeding and other tasks are charged \$350 per season.

Boyer said there is room for three more members. There are incentives for members to sign up others for the CSA.

The season lasts from 23-30 weeks, including spring planting, summer picking, and fall harvest. Boyer also offers weekly pick-your-own flower bouquets and a fresh farm-grown chicken or duck for the holidays.

Lambert Farm will provide to members asparagus, lima and snap beans, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chard, chinese cabbage, collards, and corn (at least a dozen). They will also allow members to take home cucumbers, kale, lettuce, leeks, okra, onion, sugar, snap, and hull peas, and at least one pack of sweet, hot, and bell

peppers.

The CSA also allows members at least one quart of potatoes, two pumpkins for eating during a season, radishes, spinach, squash, and sweet potato. The members are allowed one quart of tomatoes, in addition to turnips, Indian corn, popcorn, and raspberries, blueberries, strawberry, cherries, apples, plums, peaches, pears, and apricots. They will also allow one bunch of rhubarb, muskmelon or cantaloupe, one watermelon, herbs, and four eggplants.

Members can also pay on a monthly basis.

For the past five years, the Boyers have operated their own fresh market stand at the Quarryville Growers Market, which opens May 8. The market is located at Good's Store at the corner of routes 222 and 372. The market operates every Saturday through October from 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

It's been a hard hoe to operate, in starting the farmers' market, noted Boyer.

"We've had to fight tooth and nail, literally, to get it established," she said.

People come from many different locations — Philadelphia, Delaware, Virginia, and Maryland — to the market Saturdays during the season. Most business comes from Maryland even though the

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All weeds are hand-hoed. Boyer extensively uses biological insects, including praying mantis, lady bugs, and wasps. "I release them every year," she said.