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summerguide

# LA VIDA LOCA

When and where to get what the region has to offer

> BY KATHERINE O'DAY



**Tomatoes:** mid July-mid October

**Yellow squash, zucchini:** July-September

Because sometimes you have to travel far and wide for the freshest and best, here is a list of local farmer's markets in the city and pick-your-own farms further afield:

**Farmers markets in Buffalo:**

**Broadway Market Farmers Market:** (999 Broadway, 893-0705), May-October, Thursday & Saturday, 9am-5pm

**Downtown Country Market at Buffalo Place:** (Main Street between Court & Church Streets, 856-3150) May-October, Tuesday & Thursday, 8am-2:30pm

**Elmwood Village Farmers Market:** (Bidwell Parkway & Elmwood Avenue, 881-0046) May-November, Saturday, 8am-1pm

**Niagara Frontier Growers Co-op Market:** (Clinton Street & Bailey Avenue, 822-2466) Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 7am-6pm; Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday, 4:30am-6pm

**Pick-your-own farms:**

**Awald's Berry Farm:** blackberries, blueberries, gooseberries, loganberries, raspberries, strawberries (Gurney Ave., North Collins, 337-2997)

**Becker Farms:** apples, asparagus, blueberries, cherries (3724 Quaker Rd., Gasport, 772-2211)

**Brown's Berry Patch:** apples, blueberries, cherries, elderberries, strawberries, raspberries (14264 Roosevelt Hwy., Waterport, 585-682-5569)

**Burdick Blueberries:** (8267 Thompson Rd., Cattaraugus, 257-9760)

**Childs Blueberries** (3207 Cooper Hill Rd., Hinsdale, 557-2529)

**Ellis Fruit Farm** (4748 Thrall Rd., Lockport, 434-1005)

**Erdle Farm:** blueberries (12229 Hanford Rd., Silver Creek, 934-9599)

**Greg's U-Pick:** strawberries, blueberries (9270 Lapp Rd., Clarence Center, 741-4239)

**Sanger Farms:** cherries, pre-picked produce (6730 Lake Rd., Appleton, 778-7330)

### SEASON'S BEST RATATOUILLE

Exploit summer offerings with a fresher version of this Mediterranean dish by forgoing the peppers (available year round, after all), using fresh tomatoes instead of canned and baby zucchini and eggplant if possible.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

1 large eggplant, cut lengthwise in half and then crosswise into 1-inch slices OR 8-10 baby eggplant, cut lengthwise in half, then crosswise in half

"Locavores," those who try to eat only locally grown foods—the term "organic" having long ago been corporately co-opted—can face challenges in colder climates such as ours. The locavorian trend began in California's Bay Area (see www.locavores.com for more on this), where the climate lends itself much better to year-round crop production than it does here in Buffalo. Upstate New York crops tend to ripen later in the season, and some crops are at their best more than a month after the prime season occurs in the rest of the country—and up to two months later than in warm, coastal areas like California. This late harvest season doesn't necessarily mean a shorter one though, and while hot weather denizens may be able to enjoy traditional spring vegetables as early as April, around here we can celebrate some harvest crops right up until the first frost.

**Ripening dates for fruits and vegetables:**

**Blackberries:** mid July-end of August

**Blueberries:** August-October

**Cherries:** mid June-end of July

**Herbs:** mid July-end of October

**Nectarines, peaches:** mid July 15-mid September

**Raspberries:** early June-late August

**Strawberries:** early June-late July

**Asparagus:** June

**Cucumbers:** July-mid September

**Okra:** mid August-mid October

**Peppers:** early July-late November

**Rhubarb:** June-August

**Snap bean:** late June-late September

**Sweet corn** – August, September, October, November

2 zucchini, cut crosswise into 1-inch slices  
OR 8-10 baby zucchini cut lengthwise in half, then crosswise in half

1-1/4 cups olive oil

6 cloves garlic

2 cups fresh basil leaves, cleaned and torn

1 large onion, halved and sliced 1/4-inch thick

1/2 cup fresh lemon juice, plus the zest of 2 lemons

1/4 cup chopped parsley

24 cherry tomatoes, halved

Golden-fry eggplant slices in olive oil that is hot but NOT smoking (you may need to use an entire cup) and remove with a slotted spoon. In remaining 1/4 cup oil saute zucchini and onion for about five minutes, or until onion is wilted. Combine eggplant, zucchini & onion mixture, garlic, basil, lemon juice, zest, cherry tomatoes, & salt & pepper to taste in a large casserole with a lid. Cook covered for 45 minutes. Remove cover, top with parmesan (if desired) and broil until crisp on top.



### BEER-BATTERED FRESH HERB FRITTERS

2 large eggs, separated

1-1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil, and more for frying

1/2 cup beer

3/4 cup all-purpose flour

4 oz. fresh herbs (basil, chives, mint, oregano, parsley, sage, tarragon or whatever is growing in your garden), washed and dried

Coarse salt and ground pepper

Lemon wedges

Whisk egg yolks, beer and vegetable oil together. Let sit for at least 15 minutes. Beat egg whites until they form soft peaks and fold into beer batter. Heat about one inch of vegetable oil in a saucepan over high heat and, when hot, dip each herb spring into the batter, letting excess drip off. Golden-fry the herbs, drain on paper towels, season with salt and pepper and serve with hot sauce and lemon wedges.

### WATERMELON LASSI

4 cups watermelon

2 cups pineapple chunks or pineapple juice

2 cups plain yogurt

1 tablespoons ground cardamom

pinch of salt

2 tablespoons honey or sugar (optional)

Blend all ingredients in blender or food processor. Pour into tall glasses and garnish with mint. Serves two.

### GINGERED RHUBARB SAUCE

1/2 lb. cleaned & trimmed rhubarb cut into 1/4-inch pieces

3/4 cup honey

1/4 cup fresh grated ginger root

2 tablespoons water

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan, and simmer gently for 10 minutes. Stir occasionally. When liquid has thickened, after about 10 more minutes, remove from heat. Puree in blender or food processor, then strain. Taste for seasonings (ginger makes it a bit spicy), and add more honey or a dash of lemon juice if desired. Chill for at least two hours. This is delicious (not to mention a beautiful color) on ice cream, bread pudding, pound cake, or even coffee cake.

### SWEET & SAVORY GAZPACHO

2 cups fresh tomato puree—about 10 medium sized or plum tomatoes (Concasse tomatoes by blanching them whole in boiling water for a minute or two, or until you see the skins start to burst open. Cool a remove skins, which should peel off easily, core them and puree in blender or food processor.)

2 cups fresh orange juice

zest of one orange

zest of one lime

half a honeydew melon in 1/4-inch dice

1 peeled cucumber, cut in 1/4-inch dice

1/2 cup seedless green grapes, halved

2-4 jalapeno peppers, very finely chopped (taste for heat intensity before adding the full four)

1/2 cup almonds

Toast almonds in 350-degree oven for 10-15 minutes, or until golden brown. Process in a food processor until finely chpped but not pulverized (keep some texture). Reserve about 1/8 cup for garnish. Combine all ingredients in a glass bowl. Stir in 3/4 of the almonds and chill for at least 2 hours. Serve sprinkled with reserved almonds and additional fruit garnish if desired.

### BERRY BREAD PUDDING

Preheat oven to 350°F

4 cups cubed bread (stale is best)

2 eggs

1/2 cup granulated sugar

2 cups milk

1 tsp. vanilla extract (optional)

1-1/2 cups fresh berries (any assortment of blackberry, strawberry, blueberry, sliced peaches or nectarines)

Butter

Whisk together milk and eggs with sugar and a pinch of salt. Whisk thoroughly. Add bread cubes and berries and gently turn over with a wooden spoon until the bread is evenly immersed in the milk. Pour mixture into a buttered baking dish and bake for one hour, or until the custard has set. Cool about 20 minutes and serve with whipped cream and/or maple syrup.

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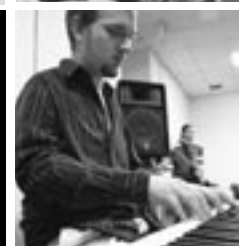
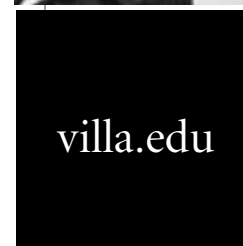
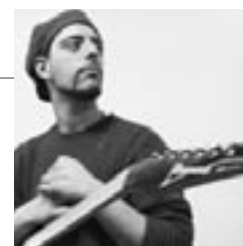
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