



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ample Apples, Plentiful Pumpkins and All the Flavors of Fall

PATTY RITCHIE October 1, 2013

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

To many people, fall is more than just a change in the weather. It's everything from apple picking and fresh cider to homemade pumpkin pie and taking a drive to see the change in colors. Here in Upstate New York, we're lucky to have an abundance of fall flavors and activities right in our backyard.

This year, there's no shortage of fall fun—and food—to be had. A highlight this fall is one of the best apple crops in recent years. Following last year's warm spring and early frost that led to less than ideal conditions for apple growers, this year's orchards are full of fruit that is crisp, flavorful and ready for

picking.

New York State is home to more than 650 apple orchards—in fact, the Central and Northern New York regions boast more than a dozen places where you can pick your own. For a full list of apple growers who sell directly to the public, [click here](#). There, you'll find not only a listing of orchards in our area, but also information on apple varieties, recipes, a history of New York State apples and so much more.

Along with apples, nothing says fall like a patch full of pumpkins. Here in New York State there are an estimated 1,400 growers who produce roughly 50,000 tons of pumpkins annually. Most of these pumpkins are for decorative use with a smaller number designated as “pie pumpkins.” One of the most popular places pumpkins are popping up? Craft beer. With everything from pumpkin ales to Oktoberfest beverages, it's estimated that eighty-four percent of people who drink craft beer, choose their drink depending on the season.

As Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I'm working hard to make sure New York's farm industry continues to grow—producing not only your favorite foods, but also the new businesses and jobs our state depends upon. This year, the state budget included key elements from my “Grown in New York” plan, including restored funding for vital marketing and research programs from apples to dairy and maple.

In addition, the Senate and Assembly also lent their support to my innovative new plan that connects state prisons, hospitals and agencies directly with New York farmers to boost purchases of locally produced foods, bringing better nutrition and boosting farmers' bottom lines. This year, I also sponsored new legislation that boosts production and sales of cider products by New York farmers, modeled on successful measures that have helped propel New York's farm winery, distillery and craft brewing sectors.

With the season only lasting several short months, we have to make the most of fall while it lasts (and before the snow starts falling!). One of the best places to find everything the season has to offer is your local farmers market. While many markets have closed for the season, there are a number that will still be open in the weeks to come. You can find information on local farmers markets [here](#). Best wishes for a happy—and healthy—fall!