

HUDSON VALLEY HARVEST

HELPING NEW YORK FEED NEW YORK



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In our July 2013 issue, we introduced you to Paul Alward and Hudson Valley Harvest. They work with small Hudson Valley farms and farmers to provide transparent, local, traceable food, and make that food available year round by freezing and canning. As Alward told us last year, what differentiates them is the unparalleled quality of the food that the farmers that they work with grow and raise, and the level of work and service that their organization provides. They provide their customers all over the tri-state area with year-round access to fresh Hudson Valley foodstuffs, a unique service.

Hudson Valley Harvest was only two years old when we spoke with Alward last year, and in most instances a lot can happen in the first five years of a small business' life. For that reason, we wanted to check in with Alward to see what has taken place in Hudson Valley Harvest's third year of business. Here is what Alward had to tell us:

As is true with lots of things in life, when you start at the bottom there's no place to go but up. Hudson Valley Harvest was founded in July of 2011, just in time to watch Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee deliver a one-two punch to local agriculture that left many local farmers, and us, as a brand new company, on our backs. Our timing couldn't have been worse, and yet couldn't have been better.

To continue the boxing analogy, we made it off the canvas and we got through the round. And

although a little wobbly we pushed on. As the fight to preserve local agriculture has progressed we've started hitting our stride. We've been working tirelessly, and the result is that we've been growing fast. The dedicated and skilled farmers we work with are second to none, and we've been very fortunate to find committed supporters. Add to that customers like Whole Foods, FreshDirect, and The New School, and you'd be hard pressed not to feel positive. These kind of "marquee" customers have provided the critical mass necessary for us to grow, to buy more from local farmers, and to start to effect real change in the food system. Their commitment encourages growth and investment. They make scale possible and share a vision of more sustainable, local choices. And Hudson Valley Harvest gets to be part of changing the paradigm.

More than just lip service

We know "Local" is a popular word right now, and I don't want to offend anyone, but farmers need more than lip service. They can't pay their property taxes with admiration and compliments. They're a for-profit business, and to succeed they need to drive sales, improve margins, and find new revenue streams like any other small business. That's what we're trying to help with.

Our mission is to rediscover old markets and create new ones. Remove layers and overcome the barriers that separate consumer from producer. By

drawing upon the bounty of many farms we can collaboratively compete against the large monocropping operations located elsewhere.

It's a virtuous circle right now and for that we're very thankful. We're in the process of raising capital to fund a move to a new facility with more capacity (which we really need), and to fund the necessary infrastructure to open new markets. With customers like ours providing support and making commitments, there is momentum, and that drives change. They haven't just said local agriculture is important to us, they're putting their money where their mouth is and buying more locally. They've also provided us with the visibility to allow us and some of our farmers to put plans in place for the future, beyond just this year or growing season.

We've got a long way to go before New York feeds New York, but as we finish our third year I have never felt more optimistic about that dream becoming a reality. ●

Hudson Valley Harvest is available locally in New York at numerous locations including Marona's Market in Millbrook; Red Devon in Stanfordville; Local 111 in Philmont; Black Forest Flammekuchen, a Hudson Valley food truck; Gusto in Poughkeepsie; and Ella's Bella's in Beacon. For a complete list of all locations to find their products, as well as a full list of their farming partners and all other information, visit their website at www.hv-harvest.com.

Photos provided by Hudson Valley Harvest.