

Acting as Your Buying Agent: Weaver Street Market's Commitment to LOCAL FOODS from SMALL PRODUCERS

By James Watts, Jr.

Weaver Street Market Operations Manager

here's the scoop: Dairy farming is a tough business. The number of dairy farms decreases every year, as small and medium family farm businesses find it impossible to compete in the US marketplace. Small farms that have been in the family for generations, see the cost of production rise with every fuel price spike, every insurance bill, every feed purchase. At the same time, fluid milk prices are at historical lows, and very few small farms can be profitable in this economic climate.

Weaver Street Market has been able to source milk from Maple View Farm, a local supplier that bucks this trend by bottling, marketing, and delivering their milk and ice cream directly to their retailer partners. Controlling every part of the process has made Maple View Farm a model of a successful small family farm operation. We're proud to say that we sold the first bottle of Maple View Farm milk that left the farm, and recognize the fact that supporting farms like Maple View Farm is

key to Weaver Street Market's vision of being your buying agent. You've shown us, through your sales support of small, local and fair-trade producers, that we're on the right track.

We recognize that you have a wide range of needs, and try to meet as many of them as we can. Weaver Street Market has carried Maola Dairy products throughout the many years we've been open since not every customer wants milk in glass bottles; many prefer the convenience of paper and plastic cartons. Maola had been a locally owned and operated business, but is now owned by Maryland and Virginia Milk Producer's Cooperative, who markets milk from Alabama to New Jersey. Of course we think that cooperative ownership is great, but don't believe that Maola is producing the type of products that you want us to promote. It's provides an alternative to glass bottles, but that's all.

Claudia Tolan (WSM's head of product selection) and I visited the Bowman family's Homeland Creamery. Located in Julian, NC, this family-run

operation makes milk and ice cream for the Triangle and Triad market. Like Maple View Farm, Homeland Creamery is a full-service dairy, doing everything from growing the grain that the cows eat to bottling the milk and delivering it to the stores. However, they bottle their milk in plastic bottles. So we can now offer you locally produced milk, without added growth hormones or antibiotics, with the convenience of plastic.

We have phased out the Maola products and now introduce Homeland Creamery to you. With a bonus: Homeland Creamery's products cost Weaver Street Market less than comparable products from Maola. So, we'll be passing on the savings to you. It's great when we get to take an action that meets our vision of a sound food production system, and it also costs you less.

We take the job of acting as your buying agent very seriously. We don't always get it right, and sometimes find that we're supporting products that are inconsistent with your values. But we also hear from you when we find a great product line (like Homeland Creamery) that has great value to producer, retailer, and consumer. Just part of being your buying agent!

NEW AT WEAVER STREET!

SMALL FAMILY FARM: **homeland creamery**

6TH GENERATION FAMILY FARM
OWNED & OPERATED BY THE BOWMAN
FAMILY IN JULIAN, NC

all-natural
fresh
local
milk

SUPPLYING WSM SINCE 1996

SMALL FAMILY FARM: **maple view farm**

6TH GENERATION FAMILY FARM
LOCATED ON DAIRYLAND ROAD IN
HILLSBOROUGH, NC

all-natural
fresh
local
milk



Fair Trade Chocolate: The treat that's twice as sweet

By Elizabeth Friend, Weaver Street Market Cheese Enthusiast

What could be more delicious than Fair Trade chocolate? Equal Exchange offers rich dark chocolate studded with almonds, as well as creamy milk chocolate blended with finely ground hazelnuts, while Green & Black presents an exotic mélange of cocoa, orange, cinnamon and nutmeg known as Maya Gold. The taste alone is reason to rejoice, but what makes it even sweeter is the knowledge that these chocolates are every bit as ethical as they are delectable.

Why is Fair Trade so important? Fair Trade is about ensuring that farmers are paid a reasonable price for their cocoa beans. Prior to the introduction of Fair Trade practices, farmers wanting to sell their crops were at the mercy of brokers and middlemen. Because the farmers had no way to negotiate with chocolate companies for a fair price, these middlemen would arbitrarily drive the price of cocoa beans down, then sell the beans to chocolate makers at a substantial profit. Unfortunately, none of this profit ever reached the farmers or their communities. Sometimes the price was too low to recoup the cost of growing the crop in the first place.

Fair Trade is different. It cuts out the brokers and middlemen, helping farmers export their crops directly to the chocolate producers. Gone is the economic disparity between bean growers and chocolate makers, the secret price gouging, and the tacit approval of unscrupulous practices like child and slave labor. Instead, the process is transparent: you can trace the path from bean to bar.

Fair Trade buyers work with cooperatively-run farms to guarantee a yearly yield of high-

quality cocoa beans that are used to make some of the best chocolate available. Chocolate makers promise to pay farmers enough money per pound to support the cost of production, regardless of the global market. Often, buyers pay a premium for organic, shade-grown or specialty beans. In exchange, growers agree to international monitoring by independent organizations to ensure no child or slave labor is utilized, and that farming practices are ecologically sound and sustainable.

Recently, global cocoa bean prices dropped to \$640 US Dollars (USD) per ton, a price so low that in some parts of Central and South America it was more cost-effective to let the beans rot in their pods than pay workers to harvest them. The guaranteed Fair Trade price of \$1,950 USD per ton ensures not only a reasonable return on the sizable investment of time and labor needed to grow cocoa, but also affords farming communities a chance to build a future beyond grinding poverty and exploitation.

One great example of the incredible impact of Fair Trade is the CONCADO co-op in the Dominican Republic. With the income generated from Fair Trade sales of high-quality organic cocoa beans, members of the co-op have been able to fund a bank, health clinics, a library, road and bridge repair, a potable water program, and a low-cost plant nursery that enables farmers to grow their own crops to support their families.

It may seem like a small thing, but purchasing Fair Trade products is one of the easiest ways you can help build thriving sustainable communities all around the world. Whether you're buying for its decadent flavor or its remarkable social rewards, it's hard to resist the charms of Fair Trade chocolate!

EQUAL EXCHANGE

ORGANIC FAIR TRADE chocolate bars

DARK CHOCOLATE WITH ALMONDS
MILK CHOCOLATE WITH HAZELNUTS
VERY DARK CHOCOLATE

sale
\$2.29 3.5 oz
regularly \$3.19

NEW! EQUAL EXCHANGE

ORGANIC FAIR TRADE chocolate bars

DARK CHOCOLATE WITH COCOA NIBS
DARK CHOCOLATE W/ ESPRESSO BITS
DARK CHOCOLATE WITH MINT

sale
\$2.29 3.5 oz
regularly \$3.19

GREEN & BLACK

ORGANIC FAIR TRADE chocolate bar

MAYA GOLD

\$3.29 3.5 oz