

## A Capital Idea: Farmers Market Pops Up in the Heart of Atlanta



Georgia Grown farmers and producers set up in the shadow of the Georgia Capitol to share their bounty with state employees during the Georgia Grown Liberty Plaza Farmers Market July 9.

Georgia Grown, the marketing arm of the Georgia Department of Agriculture, brought farm fresh produce and farm-made products to the Capital City July 9 with a Farmers Market featuring Georgia Grown members. The market set up in Liberty Plaza across from the Georgia Capitol Building and drew a steady stream of state employees seeking everything from fresh fruit popsicles to pounds of pecans and peaches.



Suzy Neal of Unicoi Preserves sells Salted Caramel Peach Spread developed from a batch of fresh Georgia peaches purchased at the Macon State Farmers Market.

## GUEST COLUMN: Be Safe and Sure When Canning

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Summertime means harvest time, which for many means preserving the fruits of the yield through home canning. Home food preservation is on the rise nationally, with some surveys suggesting that 1 in 5 U.S. households now can their own food. There are some key considerations to making sure you enjoy the fruits of your labor instead of getting sick or wasting time and food. Follow the latest guidelines for safety; use the recommended equipment and make sure it is in good working order; and use good quality ingredients. The produce you choose to preserve through canning should be of really high quality. Canning is not a time to use up fruits and vegetables that are beginning to spoil.

Different types of foods require different canning methods. For example, canning low-acid vegetables, meats, fish and poultry requires the use of a pressure canner, the most reliable way of killing spores of *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria. Found naturally in soils, the bacteria is highly heat resistant. It is the leading cause of food-borne illness from home-canned food.

Left alive after canning, botulinum spores will eventually germinate into actively growing bacterial cells that produce a potentially deadly toxin. The bacteria likes the conditions inside closed jars of low-acid foods (such as vegetables and meats) sitting at room temperature, so it must be killed during the canning process for safe storage.

Two basic types of pressure canners are available. One has a dial gauge to indicate the pressure inside the canner; the other has a metal weighted gauge. Dial gauges must be tested for accuracy before each canning season. For information on testing a dial gauge, call your county extension agent or a local hardware store. The University of Georgia Extension Service has detailed information on how to assess the other parts of your canner. Learn more about pressure canners at [http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/uga/using\\_press\\_canners.html](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/uga/using_press_canners.html)

A boiling water canner is all that is needed for canning high acid foods such as fruits, pickles, jellies and jams. The canner should be deep enough to allow at least one to two inches of water to boil over the tops of the jars. Both types of canners should have a rack in the bottom to keep jars off the bottom of the canner and prevent breakage.

Using up-to-date canning instructions from a reliable source is also essential. Scientific knowledge and equipment have changed since earlier generations were canning foods at home. Study up on safe canning practices by reading *So Easy to Preserve* by UGA, now in its 6th edition and updated with our latest recommendations. This book and other information is available from your county Extension office. You may also learn more about safe canning online at the National Center for Home Food Preservation: <http://nchfp.uga.edu/>.

Being prepared by checking your equipment, getting the latest in recommended canning procedures, and being willing to change from older, unsafe methods can save you time, money and frustration; it also might just save you and your family from getting sick. Make it a happy, successful canning season.

### Correction to Sheep Farming Story

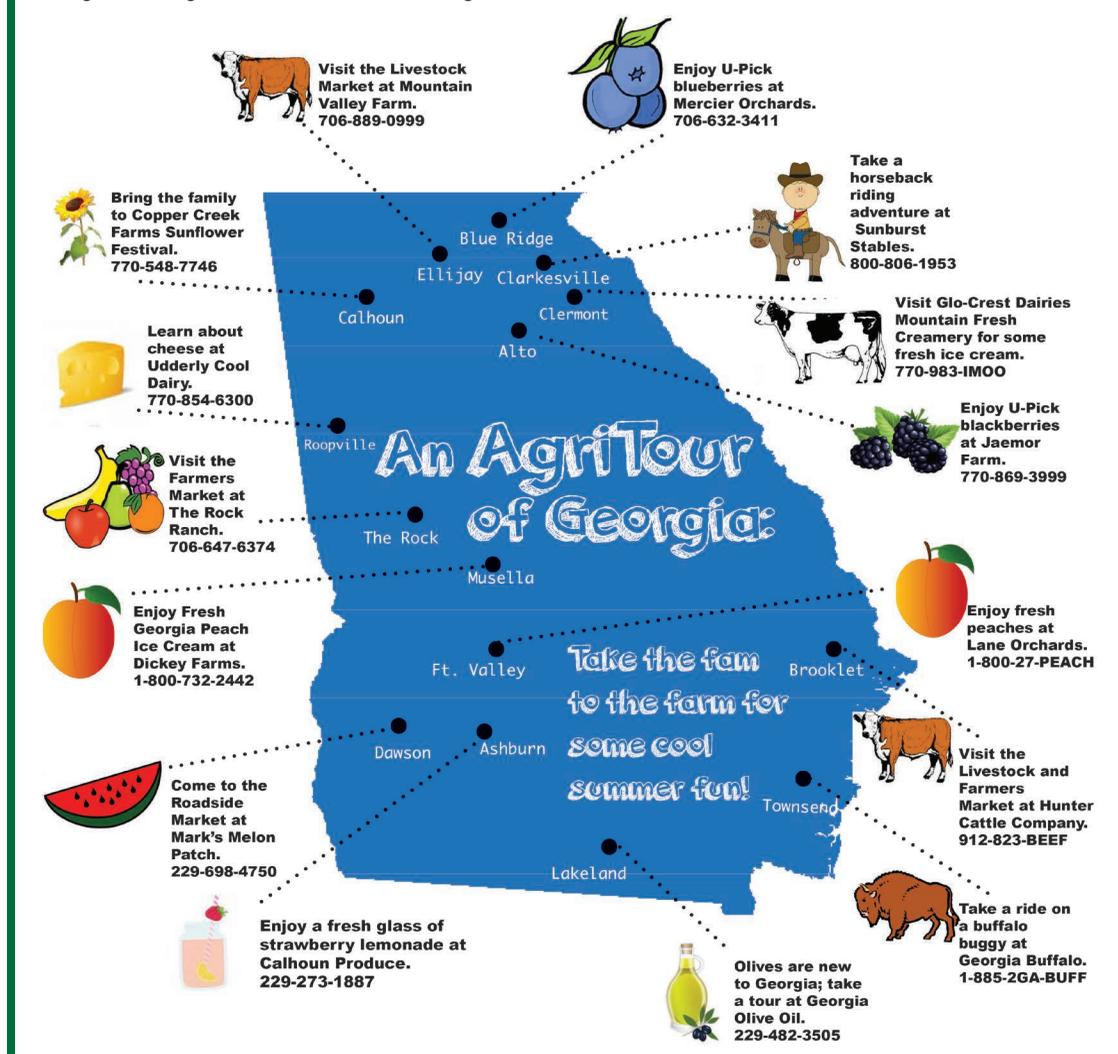
The *Market Bulletin* staff regrets an error in our July 8 issue regarding Georgia's sheep and wool growing community. The article erroneously referenced a vaccination requirement to prevent the spread of scrapie, a fatal disease that attacks the nervous systems of sheep and goats. In fact there is no vaccination against scrapie nor is there any treatment for the disease.

By law, all sheep in Georgia must be identified with ear tags from the U.S. Department of Agriculture whenever they leave their flock of birth. The USDA provides scrapie tags to flock owners free of charge. They can be ordered by calling the Georgia State Veterinarian's Office at 404.656.3671.

For those interested in owning sheep either as pets or for commercial production, the Georgia Department of Agriculture recommends:

- Checking your county's zoning regulations regarding farming.
- Feeding your animals the right foods. Sheep are very sensitive to copper and regular livestock feeds contain copper in high amounts.
- Consult with your veterinarian about a vaccination and deworming program.
- Order and apply scrapie ear tags.

The next time we print a map here at the *Market Bulletin*, we'll be sure to try it out first! We made a couple of errors on our first attempt, so here it is again, a fun little guide to inspire an impromptu excursion into the land of Georgia Grown goodness. It's not too late to get a taste of summer!



### FARMERS & CONSUMERS MARKET BULLETIN (ISSN 0889-5619)

is published biweekly by the Georgia Department of Agriculture  
19 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive  
Atlanta, GA 30334-4250  
404-656-3722 • Fax 404-463-4389  
Office hours 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday

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