

The Berry Best Festivals Award

Presented to: Thomas Hoagland, General Manager, RI ARAMARK Education



ARAMARK managed districts celebrated Rhode Island Grown produce last autumn with not one harvest festival, but three! From September through December, seasonal RI Grown produce was featured on school lunch menus on three different occasions. This gave kids not only the opportunity to enjoy the freshest fruits and vegetables, but provided the opportunity to connect them to the idea that the most delicious local foods are only available for a short time, and that is indeed something to celebrate. From juicy, ripe nectarines in September to sweet roasted butternut squash in December, students in 8 districts across the state enjoyed their local lunch as well as a lesson in Rhode Island agriculture.

The harvest festivals were such a hit that General Manager Tom Hoagland arranged to celebrate the first of the RI Grown crops in June. As soon as the farmers gave the okay, 8 ARAMARK districts across the state ordered RI Grown lettuce and strawberries. Whole and sliced berries, Spinach and Strawberry Salad, and salads of 8 different mixed greens were served for the first time in schools during ARAMARK's Strawberry and Greens Festival. Kids First chefs visited middle school cafeterias across the state and served over 4,000 strawberry and yogurt parfaits to many, many very happy students.

The success of the RI Grown produce in ARAMARK's festivals has inspired the planning and purchase of various crops for regular use in the school lunch program. This summer, Tom Hoagland and his team of Food Service Directors spent time with RI farmers, forecasting what crops will be available when and writing their menus accordingly. RI Grown peaches, apples, pears, broccoli, carrots and more will be served to students in 10 districts. Some lucky schools have fresh fruit and vegetable bars that will feature their choice of RI Grown produce everyday!

ARAMARK plans to continue their custom of harvest festivals by celebrating the bounty of the harvest all autumn long this year by moving the party from one district to the next. Each event will highlight a different fruit or vegetable, depending on what is at its peak.

For his commitment to purchasing and celebrating the freshest RI Grown produce, KF is proud to present Tom Hoagland with the "Berry Best Festivals Award"