

Food Holidays Tempt Taste Buds

By Cyndie Sirekis

Food holidays, whether feting a day, week or month, have been around for quite some time. And it's true that some consumers, as well as farmers and ranchers, may be suffering from a surfeit of food holidays. But there there are some options to stave off food holiday fatigue:

Pick a food holiday and plan a special meal or party theme around it. Options in July include bison, fried chicken, barbecued spareribs, caviar and a bevy of desserts (gingersnap or sugar cookies, apple turnovers, pecan pie).

Celebrate all the permutations of a particular food group highlighted during a specific month. Launched in 1937, June Dairy Month may well be the doyenne of food holidays, but July is no slouch when it comes to recognizing dairy delights. In addition to National Ice Cream Month, July also boasts Creative Ice Cream Flavor Day, Strawberry Sundae Day and National Peach Ice Cream Day.

Buy a local food product, go on a farm tour or meet a farmer in your area. If you're not sure where to start, all state Farm Bureaus maintain websites, many featuring information on farm tours and what foods are in season (more info, <http://bit.ly/raMHNw>). You can look for a farmers' market in your state at <http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/>.

Join online conversations with farmers and ranchers about food. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube allow consumers to connect with all types of farmers and ask questions about how food is produced. If you're on Facebook, check out the Real Farmwives of America and Friends. Here you can catch a glimpse inside the world of real family farms from the unique perspective of a dozen or so talented women bloggers.

"Social media is a valuable tool that allows us to communicate with others across the country about our farming operations while we are working on daily tasks," says Mike Haley, a fifth-generation grain and cattle farmer in northern Ohio and founding member of the Ag Chat Foundation. Connect with @FarmerHaley on Twitter or find Haley Farms on Facebook.

Play up a historic day not typically associated with food. For example, serve *charcuterie* on National Bastille Day (July 14). This French national holiday commemorates the storming of the Bastille fortress-prison in 1789. The French word *charcuterie* is based on *chair cuit*, meaning cooked meat. It refers to preserved meat products sold by a *charcutier*, such as hams, sausages and pâtés. Originally limited to pork products, charcuterie platters today often include veal, game, vegetables and fish.

Learn more about food holidays and find one that tickles your taste buds online at <http://www.thenibble.com/fun/more/facts/food-holidays.asp>.