

# *edible*PORTLAND

Celebrating the Abundance of Local Foods, Season by Season

## **Sample Pitch**

*Submitted October 2007*

### **Farm to Fork**

Alison Kirby rises every day at dawn. Like many family farmers in the Pacific Northwest, she steps into a pair of sturdy workpants, spends the daylight hours surrounded by organic vegetables, and arrives home smelling of earth. Alison, however, is not a farmer – she delivers produce and natural groceries for a Portland-based company called Pioneer Organics.

#### **Section on organic delivery systems:**

- how they work / the services they provide.
- the connecting role they play between local farms and customers' tables.

25-year-old Alison, who is also a producer at Portland's community radio station, KBOO 90.7, enjoys a job perk that many farmers miss: daily interaction with customers. She is often greeted by customers' dogs (and the occasional pot-bellied pig), and revealed that one child comes running outside yelling, "Yay, broccoli!" when he hears her truck in the driveway. This amazing toddler, it turns out, also loves kale. "He eats it raw," Alison said.

As her truck winds through Greater Portland, stopping to deliver boxes of heirloom tomatoes and sugar snap peas, Alison weaves a network of stories and relationships. A hairstylist in Lake Oswego insisted on cutting Alison's hair to thank her for bringing his weekly share, and another customer occasionally surprises her with fresh eggs from the chickens she raises in her backyard. En route last summer, Alison spoke with an elementary school teacher who runs a cooking and nutrition class for her students. "She was paying for all the expenses out-of-pocket," Alison said. After a conversation with her supervisors at Pioneer Organics, the company now donates produce for the class.

#### **Section on customers, challenges and choices**

- Delivery systems tend to attract more "mainstream" customers, who would not necessarily join a CSA - cancer survivors who want to avoid pesticides and parents who want to feed their kids organic food.
- Pioneer Organics - and other delivery services - are in a continual balancing act between their ethics and the realities of business and the way people eat.

- Alison estimates that 75% of Pioneer Organics' produce in the summer comes from local farms (I am currently checking this number with the company) - but they offer things like bananas and non-local produce in the winter months.
- As a local foods enthusiast and home gardener, Alison is torn about these decisions and says she feels "embarrassed" when customers ask her why they don't limit their selection to local produce.

### **Closing**

- Still, delivery services are on the rise - cities like New York and Chicago (and Seattle where there is a second branch of Pioneer Organics) have similar companies.
- In the face of the "faceless" industrial food system, they stand with CSAs and farmers' markets as one important way to support small farmers, deliver wholesome foods to customers, and build community.
- Ending anecdote / quote.

### **Article Specifics**

**Purpose and focus:** There are lots of articles written about CSAs and local, organic farmers these days. My article would bring to life a different aspect of the farm-to-consumer "food chain."

**Sidebar:** I do not intend for the article to directly market Pioneer Organics. That said, readers would benefit from learning about a Portland-based service. A fitting sidebar would be information about organic, home delivery for Pioneer Organics and a similar service in Portland, Organics to You.

**Intended Length:** 800 words

**Season:** Spring or summer would be best.

**Photos:** Alison has a collection of beautiful photos taken en route that could accompany the article.

**Recipes:** Pioneer Organics features member-contributed recipes online. I could work with Pioneer Organics to obtain written permission to print the recipes. I would also test the recipes several times before submitting and tweak if necessary. **Sample recipes:** Indian-style Kale with Yogurt Sauce, Pluot Ginger Chicken Salad, Snap Peas with Ginger, Lemon Zest