

the city's cash flow needs — and will not be available for anything else, like an increase in Medicaid caseloads or another drop in revenue collections. This reserve will be built up to a whopping \$530 million even though DC has never had more than \$175 million sitting around for these purposes.

Building up the fund balance by \$675 million will take many, many years, which means a large amount of taxpayer funds will be tied up for a long time.

Tying Up a Significant Amount of Resources as We Exit the Recession Is the Wrong Prescription

In the end, this decision reflects the wrong diagnosis of DC's current financial ills — and the wrong prescription. Every dollar we put into a reserve is a dollar that can't be used to invest in our city. That balance needs to be weighed carefully going forward. DC's most pressing fiscal problem is the large drop in tax collections that has led to cuts in all parts of the budget — from libraries to parks to street sweeping to affordable housing. DC's finances are likely to be fragile as it comes out of the recession, which means preserving resources for the budget should be the top priority right now.

A more balanced approach would still include a rebuilding of our fund balance, but not by setting aside nearly all future resources or by building it up more than necessary. Setting aside a smaller portion of resources would help us rebuild our reserves while also giving the mayor and council enough flexibility right now to preserve services and to begin making critical reinvestments as we exit the recession.

Reed is a policy analyst with the DC Fiscal Policy Institute (www.dcfpi.org), which conducts research on tax and budget issues that affect low- and moderate-income DC residents. ♦

A Taste of Northwest's Farmers Markets

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY JAZELLE HUNT



On an overcast, sticky Sunday I took a walk to check out one of DC's weekend gems: the farmers market. This particular trip was to Dupont Farmers Market at Q and 20th streets NW, where small stands featuring everything from handmade soap to farm-raised meat lined the streets and spilled into PNC Bank's parking lot. The Starlingtons, a country music trio, provided live background music as passersby shopped, sampled and snapped photos. Despite the imminent thunderstorm, the market drew a sizable crowd.

Dupont Farmers Market (and all of DC's farmers markets, really) features growers from nearby states along the East Coast, and producers who are dedicated to using local ingredients in all they do. Dupont is one of 11 markets operated by FRESHFARM Market, a nonprofit organization committed to building an urban-rural partnership in the Chesapeake Bay region so that all may enjoy and appreciate locally grown food.

Trying to find the most unusual thing to eat at any farmers market was a bit of a challenge; there were plenty of offerings a city girl like me has never come in contact with. There was bison jerky, cheeses I had never heard of, even popping corn — dried corn cobs you could just put in the microwave, like the Redenbacher bags I keep in my cupboard.

I was tempted to buy that until I came across quail eggs. A few small cartons were for sale at the mushroom stand, a

13-year mainstay of this market, owned by Ferial Welsch. That Sunday, Erika Kanapp and Travis Dragan manned the table.

"We mainly grow mushrooms and other vegetables," they explained. "But a friend of ours sells the quail eggs at farmers markets up and down the Eastern shore and can't always sell them all."

So sometimes they bring the surplus to DC all the way from Kennet, Pennsylvania.

Quail eggs are a delicacy in many countries and a gourmet item here in the US. Although they are not necessarily rare, I



TOP TO BOTTOM:

Reid's Orchard at Bloomingdale Farmers Market offers a wide variety of apples, peaches, apricots and berries, including tangy-sweet gooseberries.

Chez Hareg's "The Big Orange" cupcakes are light, sweet and completely vegan, down to the tofu-based icing (and you'd never know it if they didn't tell you)!

The Quaker Valley stand at Dupont Farmers Market offers real popcorn, still on the cob.



had never seen them in person, nor was I aware that quail eggs could be perfectly white and un-speckled, such as these.

I tried them hardboiled and lightly salted first — they were like bite-sized chicken eggs with a richer, creamier yolk. I also tried them fried — in that case the richness of the yolk translated to a buttery flavor — and then boiled again, this time as part of a spinach salad with vinaigrette dressing. The yolk seemed to melt in and mix with the vinaigrette, so I could taste the egg in each bite.

The following Sunday, at the Bloomingdale Market (on First & R streets NW, run by Markets and More LLC), the crowd was thinner and quieter, and the market itself was smaller. The variety of vendors, however, is comparable.

After being sucked in by the goat cheese-

— after the initial burst of sweet berry flavor, they delivered a series of tart kicks until gone. After each one, I paused and wondered if that was too tart — until I realized I wanted another.

“To me they taste like rhubarb ... I just like to eat them one by one,” one of the Reid daughters quipped. “My sister cooks them down with sugar to make a great sauce, though.”

If Bloomingdale is out of your way, its sister market at 14th and U streets NW also features gooseberries. But at this market, you may find that the allure of gooseberries pales in comparison to what else is available. Between Chez Hareg’s vegan, French-inspired pastries (try the palmiers or “The Big Orange” cupcake, delicious even for an omnivore like me!), and Dolcezza’s 100 percent local-ingredient artisan gelatos, it was hard to choose just one thing.

But then Robin Shuster, markets director for Markets and More LLC, introduced me to the Cherry Glen stand. Cherry Glen Farm is the only goat cheese producer in this area that also tends the goats and the milk with which they make their cheese. The farm is in Boyds, Maryland, within the Montgomery County Agriculture Reserve.

Cherry Glen’s Monocacy Chipotle and Monocacy Crottin were my favorites. Crottin is a pressed cheese, sharp and dry like parmesan (and can be substituted for it), though not as hard and with a broader range of flavor — there’s a tart flavor at first, then a nuttiness that lingers

after the cheese is gone. I could eat the chipotle on a water cracker every day — it’s a savory, soft cheese made with chipotle, peppery spicy on the finish.

Whether you’re a trailblazing foodie or just a discerning shopper, DC’s farmers markets have a lot to offer. With the hard work and dedication of the growers and producers and the support of the community, each weekend brings a slice of small town marketplace dynamic to the nation’s capital.

For more information about the FRESHFARM Markets, call 202-362-8889 or visit freshfarmmarket.org.



A sign at the 14th and U Market advertises Dolcezza’s gelato and sorbet flavors for the day.

stuffed beet tortellini at the venerable Chef Stefano Friederio’s Copper Pot stand (yes, it was delicious for dinner that night), I wandered over to Reid’s Orchard stand. Reid’s Orchard & Winery, which is just outside Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, grows over 75 varieties of apples, various berries (including red and black currants), walnuts, vegetables and even grapes for their winery (they do not offer their wine at the market).

Among the tiny strawberries, fresh blueberries, and ripe peaches available at the stand, green and red gooseberries caught my attention. They looked like veiny grapes. Small and plump, their skin is covered in tiny (sometimes hairy), almost invisible goosepimples, which you don’t notice until your tongue grazes them. The taste brought back memories of candies that change flavor as you eat them

continued from page 30

Walking the Street

I got all excited talking to Brown, so I thought I’d take a little stroll up that section of North Capitol and check out what’s going on.

Not to be a downer, but I was a bit disappointed. Doing development obviously entails conjuring a vision for an area that’s far removed from its current configuration, but this felt like a real leap of the imagination.

It’s not just that North Capitol is remarkably unattractive or that it’s populated by the usual combination of Chinese takeout joints, nail and hair salons, and liquor stores. The real problem is structural: the street is wide and busy, sidewalks are narrow, and around S Street, North Capitol splits and part of it dives down in an underpass — all making it pretty unwelcoming to foot traffic. North Capitol as the next big thing? I don’t know. Maybe.

But there is one bright spot: ZZ Pizza and Kabob, at P Street. It opened a month ago and offers a wide variety of food, including Middle Eastern standards like falafel and kabobs, as well as strombolis, quesadillas and milkshakes. The owners, who run a similar place in Mount Rainier, say they’re planning to improve the shop, which isn’t the most charming, currently featuring bulletproof plastic.

“We feel this place will have a good future,” explained Ali Haider, co-owner. “This area is growing day by day.”

