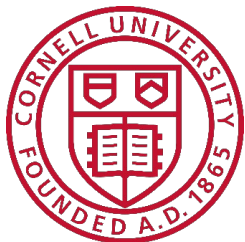


# Cornell Cooperative Extension | Erie County

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*This article is the first in a series that will focus on vendors who are selling their wares at the Grand Island Welcome Center's **Taste NY Market**. Thank you to Tom and his team for taking the time to share their story and some marketing tips and strategies.*



## Spotlight on Singer Farm Naturals

For Tom Szulist of Singer Farm Naturals, marketing is as much about the story as the product. That's not to say he and his wife Vivianne ("Viv" Singer) Szulist and their staff have not produced and assembled an enticing array of locally and regionally grown foods, health aids and other merchandise for sale at their "Legacy Barn" market on Lake Road in Appleton, New York in Niagara County. But it's more than marketing that motivates Tom. It's also about the individual and community benefits of locally produced food and health aids. It's about having a place for community residents to learn about the benefits of healthy lifestyles including healthy diets. It's about being an example of ways to move beyond just growing and selling crops or livestock. It's about getting off the treadmill and enjoying a simpler life to the fullest.

Though Tom had considerable home gardening experience, and briefly worked as an industrial engineer, he spent 29 years of his life in the financial industry as a stockbroker, salesman, and venture capital advisor. Tom says that the lifestyle took its toll on his mental, physical and spiritual health and well-being. Tom told his father-in-law, Tom Singer, one day that he'd really like to switch careers and grow

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garlic. “Why don’t you?” was the reply. So he, Viv and their children left their high-end home in Clarence, New York and returned to Viv’s family cherry orchard in Appleton.



Photo credit: Singer Farm Naturals

Their lives changed in ways they hadn’t imagined. They temporarily moved into a mobile home on orchard property and began the adventure that has become Singer Farm Naturals. They’ve since settled into a modest Appleton residence as they have worked to revive, revitalize and repurpose the property and buildings that are part of the Singer Farm Naturals operation. You can see signs of a small part of their journey in captioned photographs of the restoration of the Legacy Barn, “the heart” of their operation, on [the farm’s web page](#). In the renovated space and with the benefits of innovative solar, wood heating, and wind technologies, Tom and his team store, process, and market an array of products centered around tart cherry concentrate, organic garlic, and more recently, hemp derived CBD products.



Most of the cherries used in the concentrate come from [Bittner Singer Orchards](#), operated by Jim Bittner and his crew, along with other Niagara County and regional sources required to keep up with the growing demand. Garlic is grown on Singer Farm Naturals property by staff including a team of [WWOOFers](#)\*. Cherry juice is concentrated at the Grower’s Cooperative Juice Company in Westfield, New York.



Industrial hemp production for cannabidiol (CBD) oil extraction is a recent addition to the mix at Singer Farm Naturals. Under [New York State's Industrial Hemp Pilot Program](#), hemp plants are carefully cultivated with the goal of maximizing the value of each individual plant which will be harvested, cured and sent along to a processor for CBD oil extraction. Of course, there's plenty of testing and monitoring along the way including assurance that hemp buds do not exceed the legal limit of 0.3% THC – which would require destruction of the plant(s). Staff, including Tom's nephew Ed Szulist, and volunteer workers help with the hemp production.

A short list of products featured in The Legacy Barn farm market include:

- a wide variety of garlicks (in season)
- tart cherry juice concentrate
- frozen and dried cherries, chocolate covered cherries and cherry/berry mixes
- all natural fruit butters and spreads from **Blackman Homestead Farm**, Lockport
- hot sauces and salsas from **Karma Sauce**, Pittsford
- up-cycled jewelry and garden art designs by **Rachelle P**, Clarence Center
- wax candles by **Edie Goodnight**, Wilson
- raw and traditional honey from **Fiegel Apiaries**, Appleton
- maple syrup and sugar from **Wendel Farm**, East Concord
- all natural goats' milk soaps and lotions from **Humble House Gardens**, Gasport
- direct trade, fair trade, organic coffees from **New Day Coffee**, North Tonawanda
- range of culinary items, references and equipment
- homemade cherry-based goods including **7-Grain Cherry Cookies**, **Tom's Ultimate Cherry Pie**, and **Gluten Free Cherry Tarts** (recipes are also on the web page)
- coffee and tea during summer months

In addition to direct sales at the Legacy Barn farm market, Singer Farm Naturals sells and promotes its products at regional events and through its web page and social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube). Products are also sold at the **Grand Island Welcome Center Taste NY Market**. Juice concentrate, garlic, gift baskets and other products can also be ordered directly through the [Singer Farm Natural web page](#), by e-mail or by the phone.



One of the most recent additions to Singer Farm Naturals' mix of offerings is their "Legacy Common Medicine Garden" designed by Laura Kennedy of Rise Up Remedies. The garden plot layout and site preparation is now complete with planting work beginning in the fall of 2019. It will serve as a teaching garden as well as a limited production garden for small scale harvest of a wide variety of plants with a long history of cultural and medicinal uses. Singer Farm Naturals has entered a strategic alliance with Kristin Grohman of Reciprocal Roots to use the Legacy Common Medicine Garden as an education and demonstration facility.



A sizeable plot of Singer Farm Naturals' fertile, flat, well-drained soil has recently been made available at no cost to husband and wife team, Jerry & Kristi Winquist and their [Local Roots Farm Community Supported Agriculture](#) (CSA) organic operation based just down the road in the Town of Burt, NY. This sharing of resources fits well with Singer Farm Naturals' community-oriented production and marketing philosophy.



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Contrary to the traditional marketing focus on selling product, which was the marketing model Tom followed for much of his financial career, Tom's perspective has shifted dramatically to a very fulfilling and effective education, research and discovery-oriented, and explanatory marketing strategy. Tom knows his products well. He also has studied the way his products interact with the human body. He's always happy to tell the story of personal benefits and what he has learned as he immersed himself in the Singer Farm Naturals adventure. Viv helps in many ways, especially on the design side of the promotion, presentation, and marketing process.

"Money is a total distraction from life, in my eyes," Tom said. It's part of what we've been taught. "Let's get back to what really matters." That's part of the story he wants to share as well. "It's too big!" We have to be ready for what will be coming along. That is not to say Singer Farm Naturals is not striving for success including growth and financial stability. But success is not measured purely in economic terms.

Tom is happy to tell anyone willing to listen what he has learned about epigenetics, nutrition, the human genome, and the microbiome including how his products interact with the human body and DNA. Much of his insight is based on his own personal experience along with his studies of cutting edge research. That's a big part of his marketing story and what motivates Tom and Viv in their Singer Farm Naturals community-oriented business, life-style, education, and marketing model.

Tom's father-in-law, Tom Singer, once told Tom, "Make sure that whatever you are doing in life, that you're proud enough that if it's on the front page of the paper the next day, that would be okay." Tom says his goal is always to put humans ahead of money. He has finally learned that he needs to listen to what people are telling him they need before moving on to the sale. He's learned to give people the time and the kind moment to talk with them. "That is so fulfilling. That's what life's about." Other people then do a big part of the marketing for you. "It's a very gifted, purposeful life."

"It's a beautiful journey" and a unique marketing story.