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Tucker Farms wins state potato contest

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GABRIELS — Tucker Farms, Inc., a potato farm in Gabriels, recently won the Eastern Division Grand Championship in the statewide potato Consumer Package Contest for the third time in four years. The award recognizes superior quality potatoes marketed at the retail level and provokes growers to better understand national packaging standards, according to a press release.

The contest is sponsored by the state Department of Agriculture and Markets and judging is conducted by the agency's inspectors, who examine random selections from eligible growers for uniformity of size, grade defects and general appearance as well as the package labels and markings. To be eligible, potatoes must be produced and packed in New York and marketed to groceries, restaurants and directly to consumers.

The contest goes hand-in-hand with the "buy local" ethic beginning to ring loudly around the state as consumers seek to avoid buying produce from hundreds or thousands of miles away, the release said. The Department of Agriculture and Markets recently launched its "Buy Local. Buy Pride of New York" campaign. NY Farms!, a statewide consortium of agricultural organizations, has provided seed money for various buy-local initiatives, and for several years, Adirondack Harvest, has been promoting local produce in Essex, Clinton and Franklin counties.

The packaging contest pushes growers to think about how to attract consumers to their products and to give them the information they need to make prudent choices in the marketplace. For these reasons one will find basic nutritional information about potatoes along with clear information about who grew them and where. It makes little sense to buy potatoes grown and shipped from thousands of miles away, especially when equal or perhaps superior quality potatoes are available from local farmers. Consumers will usually make the right decision, if given the necessary information.

Tucker Farms is a family-owned business specializing in certified and foundation seed potatoes sold to commercial growers and gardeners throughout the east coast and upper Midwest.