Food Heaven, Hunger Hell

BROOKLYN FOOD ATLAS 2011
Produced by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger with Generous Support from the Brooklyn Community Foundation
LETTER FROM JOEL BERG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEW YORK CITY COALITION AGAINST HUNGER

I love living in Brooklyn, especially when it comes to food. I live at the edge of Park Slope and Prospect Heights, just blocks away from the Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket, one of the best in the country. In season, my household shops there for heirloom tomatoes, squash blossoms, and garlic scapes just harvested from Upstate and New Jersey farms; wild-caught Long Island scallops; crisper than crisp Hudson Valley apples; and, on occasion, baked goods to die for.

Elsewhere in Brooklyn, I can go to a weekly food festival and gorge on home-made sausages, artisanal grilled cheese sandwiches, hand-crafted cold sesame noodles, and neighborhood-fermented kombucha. I can get Polish pierogies in Greenpoint, Salvadoran pupusas in Red Hook, Bosnian burgers in Bushwick, or Chinese dumplings in Sunset Park – all of which are world class in quality. Today’s Brooklyn is indeed “Foodie Heaven.”

I – and many other middle and upper income Brooklynites – can obtain all those things because we have enough money and time to do so. Yet many our Brooklyn neighbors aren’t so fortunate. Approximately 467,340 Brooklyn residents – more than one in five people who live in the borough – suffer from hunger or live at the brink of hunger, unable to afford enough food, sometime during the year. For them, the borough is a food hell.

Hundreds of thousands of Brooklynites are forced to rely on more than 340 food pantries and soup kitchens in the borough to feed their families. In 2010, 91% of those agencies faced an increased demand for food and fully 40 percent of those programs were forced to reduce portion size, reduce hours of operation, and/or turn people away because they lacked enough resources to meet the growing demand. That’s right, in a city and a borough with incredible wealth, four in ten feeding charities couldn’t properly feed everyone who came to their door.

Many of these food insecure Brooklynites, and numerous others of meager incomes, live in food deserts, neighborhoods in which nutritious food isn’t commonly available. Furthermore, many low-income Brooklynites (working multiple jobs, traveling by public transportation, and lacking domestic help) are often the most strapped for time, making it more difficult for them to shop for and prepare healthy food. It is no wonder that the neighborhoods in Brooklyn with the highest rates of poverty, hunger, and food insecurity also tend to have the highest rates of obesity, as is the case in most of New York and America.

We are surely living through a “Tale of Two Brooklyns.” Poverty and wealth divide Brooklyn thoroughly, and that division plays itself out thoroughly in the vast differentiations regarding access to food. The charts and graphs in this atlas powerfully demonstrate that divide.
Fully 685,291 borough residents, about half of whom are children, receive food stamp benefits, which are usually far too paltry to enable families to purchase nutritious foods. Some non-poor New Yorkers believe that anyone can eat healthily if they just work harder, shop more, or cook better. That's just not true.

A few years ago, I took the Food Stamps Challenge, spending a week purchasing and eating the amount and types of food I could afford if I had to rely on food stamps. That allowed me only $28.30 worth of food for a whole week, equaling only $1.30 per meal. That week I couldn't afford juice, milk, or any beverages other than tap water. I couldn't afford red meat, seafood, whole grain breads, or anything organic. I had to rely on a very limited range of food choices. The cheapest, most filling foods I could afford were sometimes the least nutritious. As much as I once loved ramen noodles (in college!), I never want to see them again. While I was able to eat ramen noodles on sale for 12 for $1.33 at a grocery store several bus stops away from home, they are very high in sodium and saturated fat.

While the USDA recommends two cups of orange vegetables per week, I had none that week. USDA recommends two fruits daily, but I was only able to have one. And that one was an old, mealy, non-organic apple, bought at a mid-size food store down the block from my house, that wasn't very tasty. But it was the best I could get for 30 cents. Wonderful-tasting, crisp, organic apples, available just a few blocks away at the Greenmarket, cost 50 cents a piece and were out of my price range that week.

Still, I don't want to exaggerate my very small sacrifice. After all, I neither had to go through the often-taxing process of applying for the benefits nor did I have to face judgmental stares from checkout counter clerks when using them. Perhaps most importantly, I knew that, at the end of the week, I could go back to eating almost anything I wanted. Given that worrying about where you were going to get your next meal is one of the most debilitating aspects of food insecurity, the fact that I was confident that I would be able to afford whatever meals I desired after just one week was likely the biggest difference between taking the challenge and actually facing hunger.

Decades worth of research proves that hungry children cannot properly learn or grow, hungry adults can't effectively obtain and keep employment, and hungry senior citizens can't stay independent. Thus, when one in five of our Brooklyn neighbors lack the ability to obtain a full supply of nutritious foods, that not only leaves a dark, immoral stain on our civic fabric, it significantly hampers our local economy.

I hope you react to the data in this atlas not only with compassion and outrage, but with concrete actions to redress these problems. Donate. Advocate. Organize. Volunteer. In short, join us in fighting back.

Working together, we can someday ensure that all Brooklynnites can enjoy the pleasures and health benefits of living in “Foodie Heaven.”

Sincerely,

Joel Berg
Executive Director
New York City Coalition Against Hunger
LETTER FROM MARILYN GELBER, PRESIDENT, BROOKLYN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The motto of the Brooklyn Community Foundation is “Do Good Right Here” and by providing Brooklynites with knowledge about the critical issues facing our borough we hope to mobilize people to take action through giving and service. That is why we are pleased to have funded the creation of the Brooklyn Food Atlas, which graphically illustrates one of Brooklyn’s most daunting challenges: the unequal distribution of food resources.

Too often when we think of hunger the image that is evoked is of a developing country. Yet the truth is that hunger is a serious and widespread problem here in Brooklyn too. The Atlas’ wealth of data shows us that over 400,000 Brooklyn residents – that’s one in five of us – are in homes that are unable to purchase sufficient amounts of food at some point during the year. The Atlas also highlights vast “food deserts” throughout our borough, where fresh, nutritious, affordable food is scarce.

The Brooklyn Food Atlas vividly shows us the extent and location of Brooklyn’s most severe food-related problems, but it also shows the extraordinary network of community based non-profit organizations working hard to address the issues. Organizations such as St. John’s Bread and Life, Neighbors Together, Reaching Out Community Services, B’nai Raphael Chesed, Added Value, East New York Community Farm, Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger, to name but a few – need our on-going support. Their work is vital if we want to live in a Brooklyn where no one goes hungry.

Brooklyn has its collective work cut out for us. However, we will not rest until all of our neighbors – at every income level and in every community – have access to affordable, nutritious food.

Marilyn Gelber
President
Brooklyn Community Foundation
HOW BROOKLYN COMPARES TO THE OTHER BOROUGHS

Brooklyn has **467,000 people living in food insecure households** (unable to afford an adequate supply of food at least some time during a year), far more than any other borough.

Source: Feeding America, “Map the Meal Gap,” 2009
Brooklyn has **685,000 food stamp recipients**, far more than any borough.

*Source: New York City Human Resources Administration, as of August 2011*
Brooklyn residents received $107 million in food stamps benefits in August 2011, all of which is redeemed through private sector food retailers. This spending both significantly reduces hunger and greatly boosts local economic activity.

Source: New York City Human Resources Administration
Brooklyn has 340 soup kitchens and food pantries, slightly less than Manhattan.


### BROOKLYN FEEDING PROGRAMS LACK RESOURCES TO MEETING GROWING DEMAND

| Borough       | % of food pantries and soup kitchens at which demand for food increased (2010) | % of food pantries and soup kitchens at which the amount of food was not enough to meet growing demand (2010) | % of food pantries and soup kitchens forced to ration food by limiting portion size, reducing hours of operation, and/or turning people away (2010) |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
| The Bronx     | 74.0%                                                                           | 46.2%                                                                                                           | 50.2%                                                                                                                                  |
| Brooklyn      | 90.9%                                                                           | 64.4%                                                                                                           | 40.0%                                                                                                                                  |
| Manhattan     | 84.8%                                                                           | 36.7%                                                                                                           | 34.6%                                                                                                                                  |
| Queens        | 89.4%                                                                           | 57.5%                                                                                                           | 45.0%                                                                                                                                  |
| Staten Island | 100%                                                                            | 100%                                                                                                            | 66.7%                                                                                                                                  |

INEQUALITY OF WEALTH IN BROOKLYN IS SECOND ONLY TO MANHATTAN

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010
This map aggregates the data points of the individual maps that follow, providing a wide variety of food resources.
These are the five current NYC Human Resource Administration Offices where Brooklynites can apply for federal food stamps (also known as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP) benefits. People can also apply by mail, by fax, online, and at a number of community-based organizations (which are not listed on this map, but are listed in the appendix). Federal food stamp benefits can be redeemed at a wide variety of thousands of retail stores and a handful of farmers’ markets in Brooklyn.

*Source: New York City’s Human Resources Administration*
The Federal WIC (Women, Infants, and Children Program) provides supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.

Source: New York State Department of Health
The Federal Summer Food Service Program, administered in the city mostly by the NYC Department of Education Office of SchoolFood, provides free lunches and breakfast to children 18 and under during the summer months, when school lunches are not available.

*Source: New York City Department of Education*
“Breakfast in the Classroom” schools provide free breakfasts to students in all or some first period classrooms within a school, thereby significantly increasing the number of children receiving federally-subsidized breakfasts.

Source: New York City Department of Education
This map includes food pantries, which distribute free groceries, and soup kitchens, which provide hot meals eaten on site. Most of these programs are run by nonprofit groups, many of which are faith based. Most programs distribute a mix of government provided food and privately donated food.

Source: New York City Coalition Against Hunger
These are farmers' markets in Brooklyn; an increasing number of these markets accept food stamp benefits.

Source: Grow NYC
A Green Cart is a mobile food cart that offers fresh produce in certain NYC areas. Green Carts can only sell fresh fruits and vegetables and can only operate in Brooklyn in the designated area above, which is both low-income and lacking in other outlets for fresh produce.

Source: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
This map includes retail stores of any size that sell any types of food. Most of these food retailers are authorized to accept food stamp benefits.

Source: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
APPENDIX

NONPROFIT SITES ENABLING ONLINE FOOD STAMPS APPLICATIONS

1.) Groundwork Inc., 595 Sutter Avenue
2.) St. John’s Bread and Life, 795 Lexington Avenue
3.) Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, 1368 Fulton Street, 4th Floor
4.) United Jewish Organization (UJO), 32 Penn Street
5.) Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council, 265 Wyckoff Avenue
6.) Midwood Single Stop, 1707 Avenue M
7.) Center for Family Life of Sunset Park, 5505 Fourth Avenue
8.) Neighbors Together, 2094 Fulton Avenue
9.) Partnership for the Homeless Family Resource Center, 100 Pennsylvania Avenue

WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC) OFFICES IN BROOKLYN

1.) Child Development Support Center (CDSC), 352 Classon Avenue
2.) Family Resource Center (FRC), 100 Pennsylvania Avenue
3.) Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council (RBSCC), 265 Wycoff Avenue
4.) St. Nick’s Alliance, 790 Broadway
5.) Cypress Hills LDC, 2832 Fulton Street
6.) Woodhull Hospital (HHC), 760 Broadway
7.) Sumet Tenants Association, 215 Roebling Street
8.) East New York Diagnostic (HHC), 2094 Pitkin Avenue
9.) Bedford-Stuyvesant Family Health Center, 1413 Fulton Street/20 New York Avenue
10.) SUNY Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center, 111 Livingston Street
Bay Ridge Greenmarket
Walgreen’s parking lot, Third Ave. off 95th St.
Saturday 8am - 3pm, June 4 - November 19

Borough Park Greenmarket
14th Ave. btw 49th & 50th St.
Thursday 8am - 3pm, July 7 - November 17

Brooklyn Borough Hall Greenmarket
Supreme Court Plaza, at Court & Montague St.
Tue/Thu/Sat 8am - 3pm, Year-round

Brownsville Community Farmers’ Market
BMS Family Health Center lot
592 Rockaway Ave.
Saturday 8:30am - 4pm, July 9 - November 12

Brownsville Youthmarket
Rockaway & Livonia Ave.
Tue/Fri 1pm - 7pm, July 8 - October 28

Bushwick I Farmers’ Market
Linden St., btw Broadway & Bushwick Ave.
Wednesday 10am - 6pm, May 25 - Nov. 16

Bushwick II/Maria Hernandez Farmers’ Market
Knickerbocker Ave. & Starr St.
Saturday 9am - 5pm, May 28 - November 19

Bushwick III/Myrtle-Wyckoff Farmers’ Market
Myrtle & Wyckoff, outside Myrtle-Wyckoff Station
Thursday 10am - 6pm, May 26 - November 17

Carroll Gardens Greenmarket
Carroll St. btw Court & Smith St.
Sunday 8am - 4pm, Year-round

Coney Island Farmers’ Market
Surf Ave. & W. 16th St.
Sunday 9am - 3pm, July 10 - November 13

East New York Farmers’ Market I
New Lots & Schenck Ave.
Saturday 9am - 3pm, June 25 - November 12

East New York Farms Farmers’ Market II
New Lots btw Alabama & Georgia Ave.
Wed 3:30pm - 6:30pm, July 6 - October 26

Flatbush Caton Merchants Mart Farmers’ Market
794-814 Flatbush Ave. at Caton Ave.
Wednesday 9am - 5pm, July 7 - November 10

Flatbush-Myrtle Farmers’ Market
177 Myrtle Ave. (1 block east of Flatbush Ave.)
Tuesday 4pm - 7pm, July 5 - October 25

Fort Greene Park Greenmarket
Washington Park, btw Dekalb & Willoughby St.
Saturday 8am - 5pm, Year-round

Graham Ave. Farmers’ Market
Cook St., to the east of Graham Ave.
Saturday 8am - 6pm & Sunday 8am - 5pm
July 9 - October 30

Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket
Prospect Park entrance (Flatbush & Prospect Park W.)
Saturday 8am - 4pm, Year-round

Greenpoint/ McCarren Park Greenmarket
Union Ave. between Driggs & N 12th St.
Saturday 8am - 3pm, Year-round

Harvest Home Coney Island Farmers’ Market
Ocean Parkway, btw Ave. Z & Shore Rd.
Friday 8am - 4pm, June 17 - November 18

Harvest Home Lutheran Hospital Farmers’ Market
55th St. off Second Ave., inside gate
Thursday 8am - 4pm, July 7 - November 17
(FARMERS’ MARKETS IN BROOKLYN CONTINUED)

Hattie Carthan After Church Farmers’ Market
49 Van Buren Herban Farm & Bailey’s Café
Sunday 1pm - 6pm, August 14 - November 16

Hattie Carthan Comm Garden Farmers’ Market
356-365 Clifton Place, btw Nostrand & Clifton
Saturday 9am - 3pm, (9am - 8pm 1st Sat. of month)
July 9 - November 19

High School for Public Service Farmers’ Market
600 Kingston Ave. btw Rutland & Winthrop Ave.
Wednesday 3pm - 6pm, June 22 - October 26

Kensington Youthmarket
Ft. Hamilton Pkwy btw E. 4th & E. 5th St.
Saturday 9am - 3pm, July 9 - October 29

Lafayette Ave. Youthmarket
Washington Ave. btw Washington & Dekalb Ave.
Sunday 10am - 3pm, July 10 - October 30

Malcolm X Blvd. Community Farmers’ Market
Jackie Robinson Park
Saturday 8am - 3pm, July 9 - October 29

Midwood/Cortelyou Greenmarket
Cortelyou Road btw Argyle & Rugby Road
Sunday 8am - 4pm, Year-round

Park Slope 5th Ave. Farmers’ Market
Fifth Ave. & Fourth St., near PS 51
Sunday 11am - 5pm, Year-round

Red Hook Farmers’ Market
Red Hook Farm, 580 Columbia St., across from IKEA
Saturday 10am - 4pm, June 18 - October 29

Seeds in the Middle/Crown Heights Farmers’ Market
Hamilton Metz Park, Brooklyn Albany & Lefferts Ave.
Thurs. 3pm - 7pm, September 15 - November 17

Sunset Park Greenmarket
4th Ave. btw 59th & 60th St.
Saturday 8am - 3pm, June 25 - November 19

The Foodshed Farmers’ Market
388 Atlantic Ave. btw Hoyt & Bond St.
Sun. 11am - 5pm/Tues. 4pm - 8pm, Year-round

Urban Oasis Farmers’ Market
Market Pavilion (blue tent), 681 Clarkson Ave.
Wed. 2pm - 5:30pm, July 6 - November 9

Weeksville Heritage Center Farmers’ Market
1698 Bergen St. btw Buffalo & Rochester Ave.
Saturday 9am - 4pm, July 9 - October 29

Williamsburg Greenmarket
Havemeyer St. btw Broadway & Division St.
Thursday 8am - 4pm, July 7 - November 17

Williamsburg Waterfront Greenmarket
N 6th St. & Kent Ave.
Saturday 9am - 5pm, May 21 - November 19

Windsor Terrace Greenmarket
Prospect Park West & 15th St. (inside park)
Wednesday 8am - 3pm, May 4 - November 23

List current as of February 6, 2012
Up-to-date information available online at:
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Kimberly A. Rubin for creating the maps, and Liana Sterling & Theresa Hassler for carrying out the data collection and analysis. Thanks to the government agencies for proving us the necessary data.

ABOUT THE NEW YORK CITY COALITION AGAINST HUNGER
The New York City Coalition Against Hunger represents and is the voice for the more than 1,200 nonprofit soup kitchens and food pantries in New York City and the more than 1.4 million low-income New Yorkers who live in households that can’t afford enough food. The coalition works not only to meet these residents’ immediate food needs but also to enact innovative solutions to help society move “beyond the soup kitchen” to ensure economic and food self-sufficiency for all Americans.

Moving Society Beyond the Soup Kitchen
50 Broad Street, Suite 1520
New York, NY 10004
Phone (212) 825-0028
Fax (212) 825-0267
www.nyccah.org

ABOUT THE BROOKLYN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
The Brooklyn Community Foundation’s mission is to improve the lives of people in Brooklyn by strengthening communities through local giving, grantmaking and community service. The first and only one of its kind in Brooklyn, the Foundation was founded in 2009 to support the borough’s most effective nonprofits in five Field of Interest Funds: Arts for All, Caring Neighbors, Community Development, Education and Youth Achievement, and Green Communities. Thanks to a start-up gift from the Independence Community Foundation, 100% of all donations to the Brooklyn Community Foundation are tax deductible.

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