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Marjorie's Melting Pot

It would be so easy to go to one store for all of my shopping needs, but I am the first to admit I'm a high maintenance food shopper. I have a weakness for ingredients, and what most women spend on shoes, I spend on groceries. Here are a few of my favorite food haunts:

Arax Market and Sevan Bakery (Watertown, Mass.)

Mt. Auburn Street's Armenian stores have been a favorite destination of mine since I was a child. Many of my ingredients come from these few blocks of family-run businesses where I always feel welcome. My essentials:

Aleppo peppers
Bulgarian feta
Diva cucumbers
Fig, sour cherry and rose hip jams
Lebanese tahini
Saffron threads

Christina's Spice and Specialty Foods (Cambridge, Mass.)

I shop here as often as I can for those hard-to-find ingredients that take the flavors in my cooking to new heights. My essentials:

Green chili pepper salt
Tangerine rock sugar
Fresh nuts

Jin-Mi Oriental Foods (Newton, Mass.)

Finding the ingredients for my *Chinese Hot and Sour Soup* is easy, with everything available in this little shop. My essentials:

Bamboo Shoots
Lily buds
Lychee nuts
Water chestnuts
Wood ears and dried mushrooms

Lobsters USA (Hummarock, Mass.)

You will never find fresher seafood anywhere than at this cozy beach hideaway on Boston's South Shore. My essentials:

Clams
Lobsters
Mussels
Scallops

- more -

Newton Farmers' Market (Newton, Mass.)

Twice a week, between July and October, I come here for tasty local produce and homemade specialty items. My essentials:

Peaches
Goat cheese
Golden raspberries
Heirloom tomatoes
Herbed vinegar

Shaw's River Street (Waltham, Mass.)

I pass over my neighborhood Shaw's for this one, which has a "Shop the World" section in which I could spend hours. My essentials:

El Salvadorian cream
Italian cippollini onions
Mango concentrate
Dried beans and legumes

Whole Foods Market (Newton, Mass.)

This is where I find myself buying most of my produce when the farmers' market closes for the winter, and the butcher and I are on a first name basis. My essentials:

Heirloom tomatoes
Iggy's French bread
Irish butter
Madagascar vanilla
Meats and poultry
Valrhona chocolate

Volante Farms (Needham, Mass.)

Homegrown lettuce is the secret to any fabulous salad. I'm lucky to know most of the employees that work here, and we always exchange recipes and tips. My essentials:

Baby tomatoes
Butter crunch, romaine and red leaf lettuces
Beach plums
Cherry-raspberry pie
Cinderella pumpkins
Radishes

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