

# MARKET *Makeover*

## 25 BEST PRACTICES for Farmers' Markets



**ASAP**  
Appalachian  
Sustainable  
Agriculture  
Project



This project received support from  
USDA's Risk Management Agency

# Introduction

*What are the most pressing challenges facing your farmers' market?  
How might a "market makeover" help to attract customers,  
improve operations, or reduce risk?*

This toolkit describes twenty-five best practices for farmers' markets. These provide guidance for making market improvements and dealing with common issues. Not every suggestion outlined here will apply to every market—most will.

A "Resource & References" section has been included with source materials as examples and to provide more in-depth information for review.

Identifying best practices is an ongoing process and there is much to learn from one another along the way. If you have suggestions, comments, or questions, please share.

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# FARMERS' MARKET MANAGEMENT

## ***Who is responsible for farmers' market management?***

Markets operate under a variety of circumstances and management options including:

- Informal, loosely managed vendor groups.
- Defined vendor leadership with assigned roles for vendors and varying levels of rules and regulations.
- Professional management employed by the market with vendor oversight operating under a structured set of rules, regulations, and procedures.

*The best practices listed here can be implemented effectively under any management model.*

A key constraint affecting every market, vendor, vendor group, and manager is the time-consuming nature of effective market management.

Short-cuts in management, inattention to effective communication, inadequate resources, etc. will undermine the success of your farmers' market.

### ***Formula for successful management:***

10% rules and regulations  
85% management  
5% consequences

## BEST PRACTICES

**1 Hire a professional market manager**  
Often the manager serves as a "market assistant" handling set-up duties, operational support, and promotional efforts rather than managing rules, vending, and site use. To be effective, managers should have clearly defined roles with appropriate levels of authority to act on the market's behalf.

**2 Set clear conditions for vending and membership**

- Defined criteria for participation – e.g. local, producer only vs. limited resale, etc.
- Structure and process for governance including rules, enforcement, and consequences.
- Agreed to expectations for vendor conduct, professionalism, and compliance.
- Vendor grievance procedure.
- Minimum vendor requirements for contribution of time, energy, or resources in support of market operation and management.

**3 Establish consistent vendor communication and contacts including weekly "market rounds" vendor check-in and regular email communication**  
An ounce of preventive communication is worth a pound of after-the-fact problem solving. Keeping in touch reduces vendor discontentment resulting from common pitfalls - lack of information, hearsay and gossip, unattended to market issues or concerns, and vendor detachment from the decision-making process.

**4 Delegate vendor selection to the manager or a non-vendor review committee**  
Market vendors are not the ideal panel for deciding vendor selection. The challenge of reviewing and selecting vendors requires weighing the needs and prosperity of individual vendors against the overall success of the market. This function should be governed by selection criteria applied and evaluated independently.

**5 Gather market numbers to track success**  
Hourly customer counts and weekly vendor sales reports provide reliable measures of market success. This information allows a market to 1) inform vendors, 2) adjust fees and budgets, 3) document economic and community impact, and 4) evaluate marketing and promotional efforts.

## RESOURCES & REFERENCES

### ***Farmers Market Rules and Regulations Checklist***

*A generic list of general content areas with specific topics to be considered for inclusion:*

#### ***Governance***

- description of representative oversight, definition of roles and responsibilities, provisions for rule review to correct, update, or amend

#### ***Management***

- relationship to oversight, definition of roles and responsibilities

#### ***Vending***

- application information and fees
- review process – product mix management guidelines, seniority/renewal preference, site visits or inspections
- vendor/product eligibility (e.g. producer-only, limited resale, local)
- vendor status (e.g. member vs. day vendor) and categories (e.g. farm, value-added, art/craft)
- requirements and expectations
  - posted prices
  - attendance and absences
  - tardiness
  - at market vendor representatives
  - behaviors – professionalism, courtesy, integrity
  - compliance with local, state, and federal regulations and laws
  - licensing, inspection, and permit requirements and documentation

#### ***Operations***

- dates/hours of operation
- location
- scheduling
- site use management and space assignments
- miscellaneous (e.g. dog policy)

#### ***Keeping the peace***

- procedure/process for dealing with complaints and rule violations
- informal vs. written notification, warnings
- consequences – suspension, fines, removal
- grievance process

#### ***Risk management***

- vendor insurance
- hold harmless provisions



## RESOURCES & REFERENCES (continued)

### ***Manager's Role***

*Common responsibilities of the market manager may include:*

- o vendor recruitment – distribute, collect, and review applications
- o complete farm or production site visits as needed.
- o evaluate applicants and admit vendors based on selection criteria
- o develop and implement site use plan
- o promote effective communication within the market
- o oversee daily operations, address concerns, resolve issues
- o enforce market rules and regulations
- o receive and refer formal grievances
- o collect fees, establish budgets, maintain financial records, and issue reports
- o implement advertising, promotion, and marketing plans

### ***Vendor selection and product mix management***

*Possible criteria for selection guidelines:*

- o preference given to vendors with local residency or production and to foods made with locally produced ingredients or featuring local farm products
- o category targets (e.g. 60% farm, 30% value-added, 10% art/craft)
- o diversity of product mix
- o abundant and consistent supply of product
- o product selection that enhances the appeal of the market by providing quality, convenience, selection, and variety
- o past vending performance and compliance with rules

### ***Sample statement of professionalism as condition for vending***

The market requires that all vendors comply with standards of professionalism that promote open communication, mutual respect, and the best interests of the market. Disruptive actions or remarks that undermine the shared success of any or all of our community of vendors are unprofessional and unacceptable. Failure to comply with these standards could result in suspension or removal from the market.

### ***Formal grievance process***

- o Grievance submitted in writing or by email to manager or oversight group
- o Receipt acknowledged
- o Oversight group reviews grievance, determines additional steps, resolves issues
- o Decision communicated to vendor(s) and documented (no appeal, decisions are final)

# FARMERS' MARKET REGULATIONS

## ***What is the market's role in monitoring vendor compliance with local, state, and federal regulations?***

Markets do not issue permits, inspect production, set standards for processing, establish labeling requirements, etc. and should not assume responsibility for regulatory enforcement.

HOWEVER, a market must take steps to ensure that vendors are in compliance with product regulations and requirements.

A manageable approach to assuring regulatory compliance requires that vendors retain individual responsibility for their products, production, and vending.

## ***What regulations apply to markets and market operations?***

Most regulations involved with market operations involve provisions for public safety and the permitting of site use.

Elements may include:

- canopy weights and flame resistance standards
- open flame restrictions (for cooking demos)
- on-site restrooms requirements
- site planning for emergency access, parking, and traffic control
- event or temporary use permits
- sampling guidelines or regulations

## BEST PRACTICES

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### ***Vending agreement provisions***

The signed market application or vendor agreement must include a confirmation, as a condition of participation in the market, that vendors retain responsibility for compliance with all permits, inspections, licenses, and regulations governing their products, production, and business practices.

7

### ***Documentation***

Vendors must document all permits, inspections, licenses, etc. and may be required to provide written confirmation of requirements and details provided from regulatory contacts.

8

### ***Market support***

Provide contacts, resources, references, and training opportunities to vendors in support of regulatory compliance.

9

### ***Annual checklist and updated contacts list***

Maintain a pre-opening checklist for operational permitting and preparations. Renew contacts and confirm any changes in rules and regulations. Share market constraints and requirements with vendors as part of an annual pre-market orientation.

## RESOURCES & REFERENCES

### ***Sample product guidelines***

The Product Guidelines documentation developed by Ashe County Farmers Market (reproduced on following pages) offers a basic framework for capturing and sharing product regulations with vendors.

One important feature of this example is the references to regulatory agencies and contacts available to vendors for questions and follow-up.

# FARMERS' MARKET RISK MANAGEMENT

## ***Who is liable?***

Liability has legal and circumstantial implications that are beyond the scope of best practices. There are, however, steps for markets to consider that may assist with reducing or managing liability.

## BEST PRACTICES

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### ***Hold Harmless***

Vendor agreements should include a hold harmless provision as a condition for vending. (see Resources & References section)

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### ***Liability Insurance***

Maintain adequate market liability insurance and require individual insurance coverage as appropriate for each vendor's products, production, and business.

Establishing specific insurance requirements for vendors is often handled by setting a minimum coverage standard that applies to everyone. Another option is to require each vendor to determine the level and amounts of coverage appropriate to their farm or business.

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### ***Risk Management***

The following procedures are useful in identifying unsafe conditions and responding effectively:

- Develop a safety checklist.
- Conduct regular site inspections to ensure adequate safety precautions are in place for customers and vendors.
- Prepare an emergency contact list and response plan.

## RESOURCES & REFERENCES

### ***Sample hold harmless provision***

(consult legal authority)

Each vendor participating in the market shall be responsible for any loss, personal injury, deaths, and/or other damage that may occur as a result of the vendor's negligence or that of its servants, agents, and employees, and hereby agrees to exonerate, hold harmless, indemnify and defend the market, its successors and assigns, from and against any and all losses, damages, claims, suits or actions, judgements and costs, and attorney fees which may arise or grow out of any injury or death or persons or damage to property in any manner connected with the vendor's products, operations, or vending at the market.

### ***Insurance assistance***

Comprehensive insurance assistance and advice is best confirmed on a case-by-case basis through contact with an agent, broker, or insurance company.

NC Cooperative Extension offers an overview on "Insurance Basics" for farm operations (reproduced on following pages) that frames issues and topics of interest for farmers to consider.

### ***Managing Risks and Liability Guide***

"A Guide to Managing Risks and Liability at California Certified Farmers Markets" (title page and table of contents reproduced on following pages), can be accessed online. While this resource was prepared in reference to markets operating in California, it offers a helpful look at market safety and insurance. The publication includes practical resources including a "Farmers Market Safety Checklist" and "Accident Report Form".

The guide is available to download online at: <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/docs/publications.asp?view=16>

# FARMERS' MARKET FOOD SAFETY

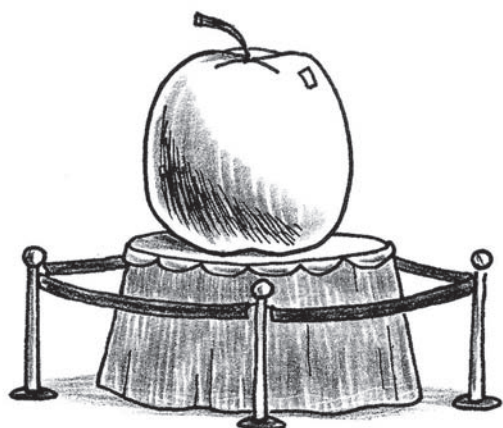
## ***What can markets do to promote food safety practices for vendors and their products ?***

Vendors retain primary responsibility for the safety of their products and practices.

HOWEVER, it is in the best interest of the market to take basic steps to ensure the safety and well-being of customers.

"Food Safety for Farmer's Market Vendors" published by University of Nebraska - Lincoln Extension (reproduced on following pages) lists "the ten most important factors contributing to food-borne illnesses in the United States" followed by recommendations for the preparation and sale of safe food.

Product specific food safety practices are not included here. The following focuses on key elements of food safety for markets in general.



## BEST PRACTICES

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### ***Safe sampling requirements***

Vendors who offer samples of their products must comply with market guidelines for the safe handling and presentation of food samples. Market rules governing samples vary but all aim to ensure that every contact point for sampled foods must be clean and sanitary – hands, dishes, utensils, work surfaces, and storage.

A comprehensive "Hand Washing and Food Sampling Requirements, Guidelines and Procedures" guide (reproduced on following pages) has been developed by Marin Farmers Market Association. Markets must assess the time and resources required for safe sampling and require vendors to adopt effective precautions if sampling is to be allowed.

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### ***Safe temperature control for storage, preparation, and sale of food products***

It can be challenging for a market to monitor proper temperature controls for every vendor and their products.

Markets or vendors needing specific product guidance should make initial contact with NC Cooperative Extension for referral to references and contacts.

Materials, contacts, and resources identified should be referenced for ongoing vendor training and access.

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### ***Managing food safety***

Markets should be active in providing food safety information to vendors – through workshops, online references, and compliance standards.

While knowledge of specific food safety requirements and compliance with established standards remains the primary responsibility of individual vendors, market management must be empowered and expected to take immediate steps to address concerns and to prohibit unsafe food practices.



# IMPROVING VENDOR SALES

## ***What can vendors do to increase market sales?***

There are a variety of resources available to markets and vendors that provide guidance, tips, and advice for improving sales at market.

## BEST PRACTICES

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### ***Product presentation and display***

Basic and essential elements for vending include:

- business or farm name
- clearly displayed prices
- product pre-weighed, bunched, paired, and packaged for customer convenience
- product organized and placed to highlight variety and abundance

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### ***Sampling***

Sampling allows customers to experience the quality of local, fresh produce and products.

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### ***Connection with customers***

Greet every customer, make eye contact, and offer assistance. Customer service requires attentiveness to the needs and expectations of every shopper.

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### ***Value-added extras***

Offer suggestions and provide information to customers that enhance the value of products. Recipes, possible uses, storage tips, unique tastes or product characteristics, etc.

## BEYOND BEST PRACTICES

*Exceptional vending efforts can lead to exceptional sales results. Here are three “extra efforts” that will pay off in sales.*

### ***Featured or highlighted items***

Offer something special, something featured every week. Create an expectation for customers that draws them back to see what’s fresh, what’s new, or what’s featured throughout the market season.

### ***Passion for your product***

Conveying genuine enthusiasm for your product can be contagious to customers. Sharing interest, insights, and passion will translate to increased sales.

### ***Suggestive selling***

As customers make their selections draw attention to other desirable items they have not noticed and might want to consider. Invite add-on purchases – “What else can I get you? We have just-picked strawberries and a fresh salad mix.”

See ***What Sells, What Sells More*** on next page for a snapshot of the best practices listed here.

## RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Three excellent references recommended for market vending (reproduced on following pages):

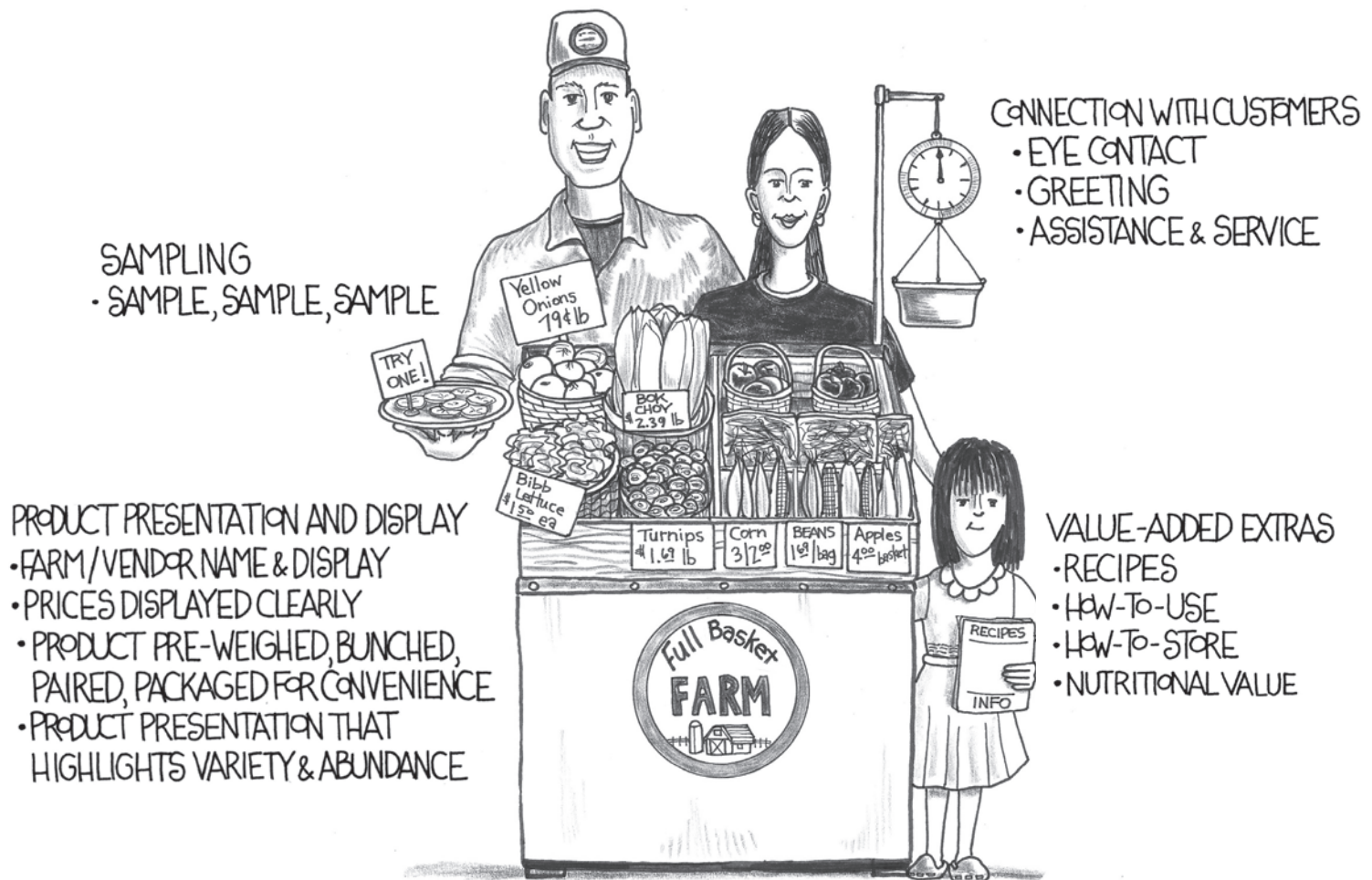
***Maximizing Your Sales*** – Farmers Market Federation of New York

***Vendor Tips for Increasing Sales*** – New Mexico Farmers’ Markets

***Some Thoughts on Selling at Farmers Markets*** – The New Farm

Topics include: Display, Signage, Create a Herding Effect, Product and Presentation, Sampling, Pricing, Customer Service, Promotion

# WHAT SELLS



## WHAT SELLS MORE



# MARKETING, OUTREACH, PROMOTION, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

## **What can markets do to attract more customers?**

### **M-O-P-S**

There are four elements for customer development.

1. **Marketing** – ads, print materials, signs, media coverage, etc.
2. **Outreach** – market representation at community events and locations
3. **Promotion** – at market features including:
  - music and entertainment
  - children's activities
  - cooking demonstrations
  - special events
  - shopper incentives
  - merchandise (t-shirts, totes, mugs)
  - SNAP, credit, debit token program
4. **Social media** – e-newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, website, etc.

## RESOURCES & REFERENCES

(reproduced on following pages)

**Marketing the Market** – KRC Sustainable Agriculture Management Guide

**Farmers Market Special Event Ideas** – Farmers Market Federation of New York training manual

**2011 Customer Survey** – Asheville City Market

## BEST PRACTICES

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### **Give customers something to talk about**

This begins with the basics: quality, variety, and abundance offered by vendors who are committed to providing service. Efforts at marketing, outreach, and promotion will not be successful without a group of outstanding vendors with quality products.

21

### **Print materials and signs**

Print an annual market rack card, door hanger, post card, or flyer for distribution prior to opening and during the market season. Design and place effective market signs and banners that identify the market's location and provide clear direction to parking access.

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### **Community events**

Set up a promotional market booth at a minimum of three community events a year – festivals, fairs, celebrations, etc.

23

### **Media coverage**

Establish a media contact list and commit to a regular schedule of news-worthy, local interest submissions. Ask for advice on how best to provide information – offer “pre-packaged” articles, farm & vendor features, food coverage, interviews, etc. Print-ready photos can improve chances for media coverage. **KEEP IN TOUCH** with contacts to build relationships of mutual support.

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### **Customer contact**

Choose a method of reaching out to customers with market updates and promotions – maintain a calling list for a pre-opening reminder, gather email contacts to send weekly e-newsletters, or establish a web or social media online site for postings and information.

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### **Customer surveys**

Ask your customers about their market experience – what they like and don't like, product feedback, and “how can we improve” suggestions.

## Product Guidelines



To permit fair and equal opportunity for all sellers and to ensure quality products for buyers, the following basic rules of operation must be followed. They may be revised and updated as needed. We want to work with you and welcome your concerns and ideas at any time.

### **Packaged Foods-Baked Goods, Jams, Pickles**

1. Pre-wrapped foods displayed for sale must be adequately protected at all times to prevent adulteration of the product.
2. Kitchen Inspection & Water Sample: For all processed food items, seller must provide properly labeled products and proof of kitchen inspection, including water sample report from your home. The Food and Drug Protection Division of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture handles the inspections. Contact Ed Lukeman at (919) 733-7366 for an inspection of your kitchen. Water samples can be tested at Jefferson Water Services. Contact Tim Church at (336) 246-2165.

A copy of your kitchen inspection and annual water test must be kept on file with your Producer Certification with the Ashe Farmer's Market.

3. Food items must be labeled prior to sale with at least the following information:

- A. Common or usual name of the product*
- B. Net contents, i.e. net weight in ounces or pounds and ounces if the product is solid or semisolid; net contents in fluid ounces if the product is liquid*
- C. List of ingredients in the product by decreasing order of predominance by weight of each ingredient*
- D. Name and address including zip code of person responsible for the product*
- E. Dry ingredient products, i.e. rubs, marinades, cake mixes, etc. cannot be sold unless processed in an approved kitchen (NCDA—Food & Drug Protection Division) as this is considered a processed food item*
- F. Fresh or dried herbs (packaged separately) can be sold without an approved kitchen inspection if packaged in food grade containers*

4. Foods requiring refrigerator, i.e. cheese cakes, shall be stored at a temperature of 45 degrees F or below. Frozen foods shall be maintained frozen. Good rule of thumb is if the grocery store refrigerates that product—we should too.

5. Bread: According to NCDA regulations, the following apply if you plan to bring hot fresh bread to the market:

- A. Bread must be prepackaged in a bag made for food storage/packaging to sell at the market*
- B. And of course, all of the inspected kitchen and water testing regulations apply to bread as a processed food.*

6. Molasses & Honey: All molasses and honey fall under the labeling required but are not subject to kitchen and water requirements unless value added, i.e. butter, syrup, etc.

7. Acidified or pickled products: (i.e. salsa, pickles, relishes, beans, corn) may only be sold by sellers who have successfully completed a course on the proper acidification of foods provided by North Carolina State University or whose product has been prepared in a commercial kitchen supervised by a person who has completed the course.



8. Jams & Jellies :The sale of food products with a high osmotic pressure (high sugar content) such as jams, jellies and preserves are permitted. All jams, jellies, and preserves are to be processed in boiling water bath according to current USDA guidelines to ensure safety. Contact Ashe County Extension Center at (336) 846-5850 for this information.

9. Packaged food products may not contain meat or cheese either cooked or raw unless prepared under the supervision of a USDA Inspector per USDA regulations.

10. Recalling of Products: It is recommended that the producer provide a way to recall his/her products from buyers should the need arise. Some examples:

*A. Number each container to indicate the batch (corresponds with number/record you keep at home).*

*B. Asking people to sign a log when they purchase the item(s) (you could ask customers to do this and have a drawing once a week and give away a free product).*

11. Food cannot be prepared on-site at the Farmers Market.

Should questions or particular problems arise concerning processing or labeling, contact the Food and Drug Protection Division of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture (919) 733-7366 or the Ashe County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension (336) 846-5850

## **Meat**

1. The Market Manager and a member of the Board of Directors reserve the right to make an on farm inspection of any vendor selling meat.

2. All vendors selling meat at the Market must retain a copy of their USDA Meat Handler's license and provide a copy to the Market Manager.

3. Meat should be kept in coolers or freezers while at the Market.

*A. Coolers or freezers must be clean, undamaged, undented and free of rust.*

*B. Freezers/refrigerators should be less than 40 inches tall.*

4. Meat which is frozen when picked up from the processor must remain frozen.

5. Meat may be sold fresh (not frozen) only if picked up fresh from the processor within a 72 hour period. Vendor must provide Market Manager with a dated slaughter receipt to prove when meat was processed.

6. All meat sold must be processed, packaged and labeled according to USDA guidelines.

7. Purchase of Animals for Slaughter

*A. Meat from animals purchased at livestock sales may not be sold at the Market*

*B. Animals (with the exception of poultry and rabbits) purchased for slaughter should be on the vendor's farm for at least 3 months prior to butchering the animal and sale of the meat at the Market. Poultry and rabbits should be on the vendor's farm at least 6 weeks prior to slaughter.*

*C. Producer should keep records of livestock purchased and processed. The Market Manager and Board of Directors reserves the right to ask for proof of purchase/breeding of animals for meat sold at the Market.*

8. Meat may not be marketed as "humanely raised", "free range", "pasture raised", "naturally raised" or "grass fed" if the animals are confined in a feed lot or building.

## **FISH**

1. Fresh fish may be sold at the Market provided the fish are caught and cleaned within twelve hours of being sold.
2. Fish must be farm raised-wild caught fish are not allowed.
3. Fish must be on ice and water/liquid must be able to drain away from fish from harvest to time of sale.

## **EGGS**

1. Eggs must be kept under refrigeration at or below 45 degrees while at the Market.
2. Eggs should be in clean, undamaged and properly labeled cartons.
3. Labeling:
  - A. Eggs must be labeled with the producer's name, address and phone number*
  - B. Eggs should be labeled as "mixed", "ungraded", "fertile" (if fertile) and with the quantity.*
  - C. Eggs may not be labeled as "free range", "cage free", "humanely raised", "pastured poultry", "all natural" or "naturally raised" if the animals are confined to a building and/or dirt lot.*

## **DAIRY-Milk and Cheese**

1. Dairy products may not be sold at the Market unless the vendor/producer is a certified, Grade A dairy under compliance with USDA regulations.
2. The Market Manager should have a copy of the producer's certification on file.
3. Dairy products should be sold in appropriate, clean, food grade containers.
4. Labeling:
  - A. All products should be labeled in accordance with USDA guidelines.*
5. Dairy products should be kept refrigerated while at the Market.
  - A. Coolers and/or refrigerators should be clean, undamaged, undented and free of rust.*
  - B. Freezers/refrigerators should be less than 40 inches tall.*

# Insurance Basics



## value-added & alternative agriculture

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### OVERVIEW

Every business owner faces risks. A typical risk is that a business becomes unprofitable and must close. Other risks include the danger of a visitor or customer becoming injured on your property, an employee getting hurt on the job or crops failing because of adverse weather.

Insurance is a tool that helps farmers reduce their exposure to risk. The purpose of insurance is to reduce the impact that an adverse event will have on your bottom line. Therefore, in order to offer the best possible coverage, it is important for you, the producer and business owner, to talk with your insurance agent and review how you might be exposed to a high-risk situation.

### REVIEW YOUR EXPOSURE

Your goal is to make sure that you are covered by the right kinds of policies and at a coverage level that provides you with sound protection. The types of risks vary by operation, so do not assume a one-size-fits-all approach to insurance coverage will work best for you.

A good starting point is to conduct an insurance review with your agent. The purpose of the review is to help your agent understand the type of operation you have and to make certain that you understand all of the areas where you could potentially be at risk (have exposure) for a lawsuit or loss.

### TYPES OF COVERAGE

Three basic kinds of coverage are generally necessary for farm operations: premises liability, crop insurance and products liability. A premises liability policy protects the property owner from injuries that are incurred by a visitor on the property. Property owners are expected to take all necessary steps to reduce the likelihood that an accident may occur. A policy may not cover a policyholder if the injury is shown to be the result of the policyholder/property owner's negligence, so it is important that a property owner show that efforts have been made to reduce the risk of injury.

Crop insurance is available to protect the producer from the loss of revenue due to the loss of a crop as a result of an adverse event. USDA's Risk Management Agency is encouraging producers to move toward the purchase of revenue insurance, which protects the producer's income, as opposed to only insuring against the loss of a crop.

Products liability insurance provides protection for producers who sell product that has had some processing, such as the processing of fruits into jams or jellies, or the making of preserved foods, such as pickles.

### FARMERS' COMPREHENSIVE COVERAGE

A farmers' comprehensive policy will cover the home, buildings and farm-specific activities on the property. Included in this coverage are:

- Unprocessed (raw) farm product
- Pick-your-own operations
- Roadside stands at the property

### COMMERCIAL LIABILITY COVERAGE

Certain non-farm activities may change your insurance needs such that you may require a commercial liability policy. "Non-farm" activities, processed farm products, non-farm receipts, public exposure on your property and/or selling produce grown by others are all examples of activities that require a commercial policy.

### OTHER COVERAGE NEEDS

If you have 10 or more year-round, full-time employees, or any employees under the H2A program, you are required to have workers' compensation insurance. Even if not required to carry workers' compensation coverage, you may wish to opt in to protect you in the event of an employee injury. You may also wish to discuss an umbrella liability policy with your agent. This type of

policy protects you against a severe loss, and typically offers coverage beyond the usual limits offered in automobile and general liability policies.

**Check with your insurance agent to determine the appropriate coverage type and limits for your operation.**

## READ THE EXCLUSIONS

While it may not make good bedtime reading, it is essential that you read your policy when it is issued. Pay particular attention to the section called "Exclusions." This section details what is not covered.

Contact your agent with any questions you have about your policy. If you question or dispute your coverage after reading your policy, request that your agent get you an explanation in writing by an authorized official at the insurance company's home office. Keep this written explanation with your policy documents.

## REDUCE YOUR RISK

There are some very simple, everyday things that you can do to reduce your risk and your exposure.

First, walk your property daily, especially during seasons when activity is high. Make sure walkways are free of clutter, loose stones or exposed roots. Nail down loose boards and sand wooden surfaces. Store pesticide containers in locked sheds. Keep equipment locked away from activity areas. Use clearly worded, easy-to-read signs to instruct and direct visitors to your location.

Second, establish safety procedures, document them and train all of your staff. In addition to procedures related to safe equipment handling and safe pesticide use, instruct your staff to wash hands and use care when handling raw produce.

Third, keep good documentation of your on-farm activities. Maintain a log of daily inspections. Keep good records of pesticide use. Record the dates you irrigated crops, especially those that are sold raw, and note the source of the irrigation water.

Fourth, have clearly marked parking areas that, if grassed, are mowed regularly to avoid fires caused by catalytic converters on automobiles. Identify an entrance and exit that give customers a clear view of the road. Choose parking and driveways that minimize pedestrian exposure to moving vehicles.

Finally, establish rules regarding children and pets. Your goal is for every farm visitor to enjoy his or her time on your property. Help parents remember to keep an eye on their children. Pet owners may also need a reminder that your operation, especially if you grow and sell raw produce, cannot be pet-friendly for health and liability reasons. Where pets are permitted, be firm about your leash requirements and owners cleaning up after their pets.

## A FINAL WORD

In order to assure that you have the coverage you need, it is very important that you communicate with your insurance agent. Remember, you are paying your premiums with the expectation that you will be covered if you file a claim. Make sure that you are dealing with an insurance broker/agent who is licensed to do business in North Carolina. (See box below.) Your agent needs to understand what you are doing to make sure you are appropriately and adequately covered. Ask lots of questions – the only 'stupid' question is the one that isn't asked!

### Is this Insurance Company Licensed to do Business in NC?

North Carolina insurance companies do not provide insurance for every type of farm-to-consumer sale. An example is the sale of custom-slaughtered meat. Purchase of insurance to cover these activities from an agent, broker or company that is not licensed in NC **will not give you coverage**. You can check the types of insurance a company is approved to sell in the state by visiting: [http://infoportal.ncdoi.net/run\\_reports.jsp?REPT=INSCMPLOA](http://infoportal.ncdoi.net/run_reports.jsp?REPT=INSCMPLOA) and clicking on the links to "Contractual Liability" and "General Liability."

## RESOURCES

For more information:

NC Department of Insurance – <http://www.ncdoi.com>  
USDA Risk Management Agency – <http://www.rma.usda.gov>

North Carolina Industrial Commission (information on workers' compensation) -<http://www.comp.state.nc.us>

**Note: This leaflet is for informational purposes only and is not to be construed as offering legal advice or as recommending a particular type of insurance or insurance provider.**





# A GUIDE TO

## Managing Risks and Liability at California Certified Farmers Markets



Small Farm  
Center



# A GUIDE TO Managing Risks and Liability at California Certified Farmers Markets

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## Food Safety for Farmer's Market Vendors

Julie A. Albrecht, Extension Food Specialist

Factors that cause food-borne illnesses and recommendations for preparing and selling wholesome and safe food products at Farmer's Markets.

Farmer's Markets provide opportunities for producers to sell food products for added income. This food should be wholesome and safe. Vendors at Farmer's Markets are responsible for the safety of the products they offer for sale. If customers are unhappy with the products they purchase from a stand, they will not be back. Word of mouth advertisement from a bad experience may not be good for future business.

The Nebraska Food Service Code has regulations for Temporary Food Service Establishments providing that Farmer's Markets can be inspected by the Department of Agriculture or local health departments. Inspections are rare, but if complaints are made or if a reported illness results from food sold at a Farmer's Market, inspection and/or investigation may result.

Potentially hazardous foods should not be sold through a Farmer's Market. These include: meat and poultry; milk and milk products, including pastries with cream or custard fillings; and home-canned low-acid foods, such as vegetables and meats.

What food handling practices contribute to food-borne illnesses? If we look at the cause of food-borne illness outbreaks, we have some clues where microbial contamination can occur.

The ten most important factors contributing to food-borne illnesses in the United States are:

### 1. Improper Cooling.

Foodborne microorganisms grow best at temperatures between 41°F and 135°F. Foods left at room temperature for more than two hours provide the ideal conditions for microorganisms to multiply rapidly.

Hot food stored in large containers in refrigerators or freezers does not cool quickly. Microorganisms again have conditions which favor rapid growth. Store foods in small shallow containers. Refrigerate foods promptly.

### 2. Lapse of 12 or More Hours Between Preparation and Eating.

Microorganisms need time to grow and multiply. By reducing the amount of time between preparation and eating, you can reduce the chances of any microorganisms present growing to large numbers.

### 3. Colonized or Infected Persons Handling Foods.

Staphylococcus bacteria is found naturally on our bodies. If we have sores or pimples, these areas have higher numbers of this bacteria. Persons who are ill also have higher numbers of microorganisms that may lead to food-borne illnesses if they handle food.

### 4. Inadequate Reheating.

Cooked foods may become contaminated after heating. If these foods are not reheated to at least 165°F, microorganisms may not be destroyed.

### 5. Improper Hot Holding.

Temperatures below 135°F encourage the rapid growth of microorganisms in food.

### 6. Contaminated Raw Food or Ingredients.

Foods which come into contact with dirt and manure (eggs and produce grown with manure as a fertilizer) will contain a large number of microorganisms. Cracked eggs also are considered contaminated. Wash foods to remove dirt and manure.

### 7. Foods From Unsafe Sources.

Illnesses have been reported from eating fish or seafood obtained from unsafe water.

### 8. Improper Cleaning of Equipment and Utensils.

Food left on work surfaces, equipment and utensils helps microorganisms survive. When the equipment or utensil is used, microorganisms will be transferred to the food.

### 9. Cross Contamination From Raw to Cooked Foods.

Do not allow juices from raw meat and poultry to come in contact with cooked food. Raw fruits and vegetables also can contaminate cooked foods.

### 10. Inadequate Cooking.

Consuming undercooked meats and poultry has resulted in food-borne outbreaks. The most serious cases of food-borne illnesses due to inadequate cooking result from not properly processing home-canned low-acid foods. The spores of the botulinum microorganism can survive boiling

water temperatures. Improperly canned low-acid foods may contain the deadly toxin that is produced when spores grow into bacteria and multiply.

### Providing Safe Food

**The food you prepare and offer for sale must be safe for the consumer.** When customers spend money for food, they have the right to expect that it will be safe and wholesome.

Here are recommendations to help you prepare and sell safe food:

#### Preparation of Food

1. Wash hands often when handling food. If you have sores on your hands, use plastic gloves.
2. Do not allow persons who are ill to handle food.
3. Use clean dishes and utensils for food preparation.
4. Sanitize the work surfaces with which food may come in contact.
5. Shorten time between preparation and the sale of the item. Items should be made less than 12 hours before being sold.
6. Prepare several small batches of a baked item rather than making double and triple batches.
7. Store food in food grade containers or packaging materials. Garbage bags are treated with mold inhibitors and these chemicals are not food grade. Old bread sacks and grocery bags may be contaminated from food previously stored in these bags.
8. Store foods at the proper temperature — maintain your refrigerator at or below 41°F and freezer at or below 0°F.

#### Sale of Food

1. Keep sale area clean; sanitize surfaces.
2. Keep garbage containers covered; avoid accumulation of waste and debris.
3. Use utensils to handle food. If plastic gloves are used to handle food, remove them to handle money and other non-food items.
4. Keep raw food separated from prepared foods; wash fresh fruits and vegetables. If washing fruits (raspberries) or vegetables (potatoes, onions) reduces their quality or increases spoilage, remove visible dirt.
5. Protect foods from dust, sneezing and handling by customers. Use appropriate packaging or dust/sneeze guards.

6. Maintain proper temperatures. Keep cold foods, cold: 41°F or below. Keep hot foods, hot: 135°F or above. Protect food from condensation.
7. Prevent rodents, insects, birds, animals, etc., from having contact with food.
8. Store chemicals (cleaning solutions) away from food. Avoid using chemical insecticides to control insects.
9. Do not reuse disposable items such as plastic bags, plastic spoons, etc.
10. Label food with your name, address and any storage requirements.
11. Ice used to keep food cold should not be used for human consumption.

#### Sanitizers

Good housekeeping is important. Many types of cleaning and sanitizing solutions are available. Below are solutions made with chlorine bleach for washing dishes and cleaning food contact surfaces. Store chemicals away from food.

#### Washing Dishes:

1/2 tablespoon chlorine bleach per gallon of water.

#### Washing Food Contact Surfaces:

1 tablespoon chlorine bleach per gallon of water.

#### Resources

For more information, contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture or local health departments (Lincoln-Lancaster, Douglas, Hall, and Adams).

Your local Extension office can provide publications on home food preservation and horticultural topics.

#### References

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Systems for Retail Food and Restaurant Operations. J. Food Protect. 53:978, 1990.

Food Service Code. Nebraska Department of Agriculture. 2007 Recommendations of the Food and Drug Administration.

UNL Extension publications are available online at <http://extension.unl.edu/publications>.

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Issued April 2007

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

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**MARIN FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION'S**  
**HAND WASHING AND FOOD SAMPLING REQUIREMENTS,**  
**GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

Providing samples at Certified Farmers' Markets allows consumers to try a product before purchasing it. However, unsafe sampling methods can adulterate or contaminate food and result in food borne illness. The California Uniform Food Facilities Law (CURFFL) requires that basic sanitation practices be followed when samples are dispersed at farmers markets.

To that end MCFMA has created a handout that was developed with the help of Marin and Alameda County Environmental Health Services(EHS) to give all vendors the basic sanitation practices for healthy and legal sampling within MARIN FARMERS MARKETS.

**1. HAND WSHING STATION**--If a vendor is sampling food at the market the vendor is required to have a hand washing station. The hand washing station is required by Marin and Alameda County Environmental Health Services(EHS). The basic items required for a proper hand washing station are:

- A container of potable water (4 to 7 gal. capacity) with a free-flowing hands-free dispensing valve.
- One 5 gal.waste water bucket.
- Paper towels-as many rolls as you estimate will be needed for a typical market day.
- Liquid hand washing soap in a pump or squeeze bottle.

*Please see attached illustration.*

a. If all your samples are prepared in an approved kitchen and single use utensils are used once by the customer, an individual hand washing station is not required but only if the hand washing facilities designated by the market management are consistently used before the food is sampled.

**2. FOOD SAMPLING SET UP**--Samples can be prepared several ways. They can be prepared, stored (refrigerated) and brought to the market or they can be prepared at the market. If they are prepared at the market all vendors are required to have:

- A cleaning, rinsing and sanitizing station.
- A hand washing station.
- A knife and a proper cutting board.
- Appropriate number of containers with appropriate sneeze and handling protection.
- Disposable latex and plastic gloves.
- Approved disposable single use utensils for distribution of samples to customers.
- A plastic bag lined waste basket for sampling preparation waste and sampling distribution waste disposal. *Please see attached illustration.*

**3. THE CLEANING, RINSING AND SANITIZING STATION**--Please see the illustration of examples of proper set up. Here are several important **requirements** of a proper station:

a. All cutting boards and other utensils must be able to lie flat and/or totally submerged in wash and sanitizing basins in this set up. After cleaning, rinsing and sanitizing allow cutting board and utensils air dry.

b. The sanitizing solution is one tablespoon of household bleach to every gal. of water. In this bleach/water solution allow cutting board and utensils to be submerged for 30 seconds. Allow to air dry.

c. **REMEMBER: CLEANING is a process that removes dirt, grease and food debris. Detergents and soaps are used in cleaning. SANITIZING is a process that kills disease-causing bacteria with bleach (not detergent or soap).**



d. Utensils and hand washing water shall be disposed of in a facility connected to the public sewer system. This means waste water must not be dumped on the ground, grass, the pavement or down the storm drains. All waste water must be taken home with vendor or poured into the potties of the portable restrooms until they are full.

e. The “washing, rinsing and sanitizing station” and the “hand washing station” must be set up before preparing any samples that may be offered to a customer.

f. All waste generated from sampling preparation and sampling in general shall be taken away from the market and disposed of by the vendor. Please do not use the trash cans at the market. These trash cans are for general use within the market and on market day only.

**REMEMBER: Only after both the hand washing and utensil washing stations are set up can the vendor prepare his samples for distribution.**

**4. PREPARING AND DISTRIBUTING SAMPLES**--Here are the important requirements and guidelines.

a. All food shall be stored at least 6 inches (15 centimeters) off the floor or ground or under any other conditions that are approved.

b. Produce intended for sampling must be washed with potable water to remove any soil material in order that it is wholesome and safe for consumption. Your hand washing station can also be used for produce washing. **Please take special note** that Watermelons, Cantaloupe and other melons must be washed and sanitized in a large suitable container with a mild bleach solution before cutting for sampling.

c. Thoroughly wash your hands before the market and as necessary to prevent contamination of the food.

d. If all your samples are prepared at an approved kitchen and single use utensils are used once by the customer, an individual hand washing station is not required but only if the hand washing facilities designated by the market management are consistently used before the food is sampled.

e. Keep all samples in a container with hinged lid or behind other approved sneeze and handling protection. Each vendor has the responsibility to protect against contamination of samples from sneezing or touching. If you cannot assure your sampling methods can meet this standard you will have to consider a new method or discontinue sampling all together. In Marin County it is approved to provide a cup or other holder of toothpicks next to the hinged container for customer sampling. For the sampling of various nuts a shaker bottle is to be used as a dispenser. See attached illustrations.

f. Use disposable plastic gloves when cutting product for sampling. **DO NOT REUSE GLOVES AFTER TOUCHING CONTAMINATED SURFACES OR MONEY OR PRODUCE.**

g. Use tooth picks, wax paper, paper sampling cups or disposable utensils to distribute samples. In this way each vendor and his workers can prevent the hands of customers from touching and contaminating the food. **EACH VENDOR’S DISPENSING METHOD MUST PREVENT CONTAMINATION BY THE CUSTOMER.**

h. In Marin County sampling tongs can be used in only two cases. First when the vendor is distributing the sample to the costumer and second when the covered sample container has a small opening from which the tong’s handle extends and can be safely used to obtain sample by a customer. Please see sampling illustration.

i. Use only plastic (nonabsorbent) or approved hardwood cutting boards or disposable paper plates for cutting produce for sampling.

j. Know where the approved toilet and hand washing facilities are located.

k. No live animals, birds or fowl shall be kept or allowed within 20ft (6 meters) of any area where food is stored or held for sale. This does not apply to guide, signal or service dogs when used in the manner specified in section 54.1 of the Civil Code.



## **5. REGARDING SAMPLING FOR FOOD PURVEYORS AND VENDORS**

a. All food purveyors and vendors should follow the same sampling guidelines for health and safety that are detailed above for the Certified Farmer's Market, especially with regard to hand washing and washing/sanitizing of all items and utensils used in sample preparation. Remember it is your responsibility to be sure the method you use to dispense samples is safe from contamination.

b. If you bring cold product to the market for sale the EHS requires you keep it cold at 41°F or below. That means you probably must ice it above and below.

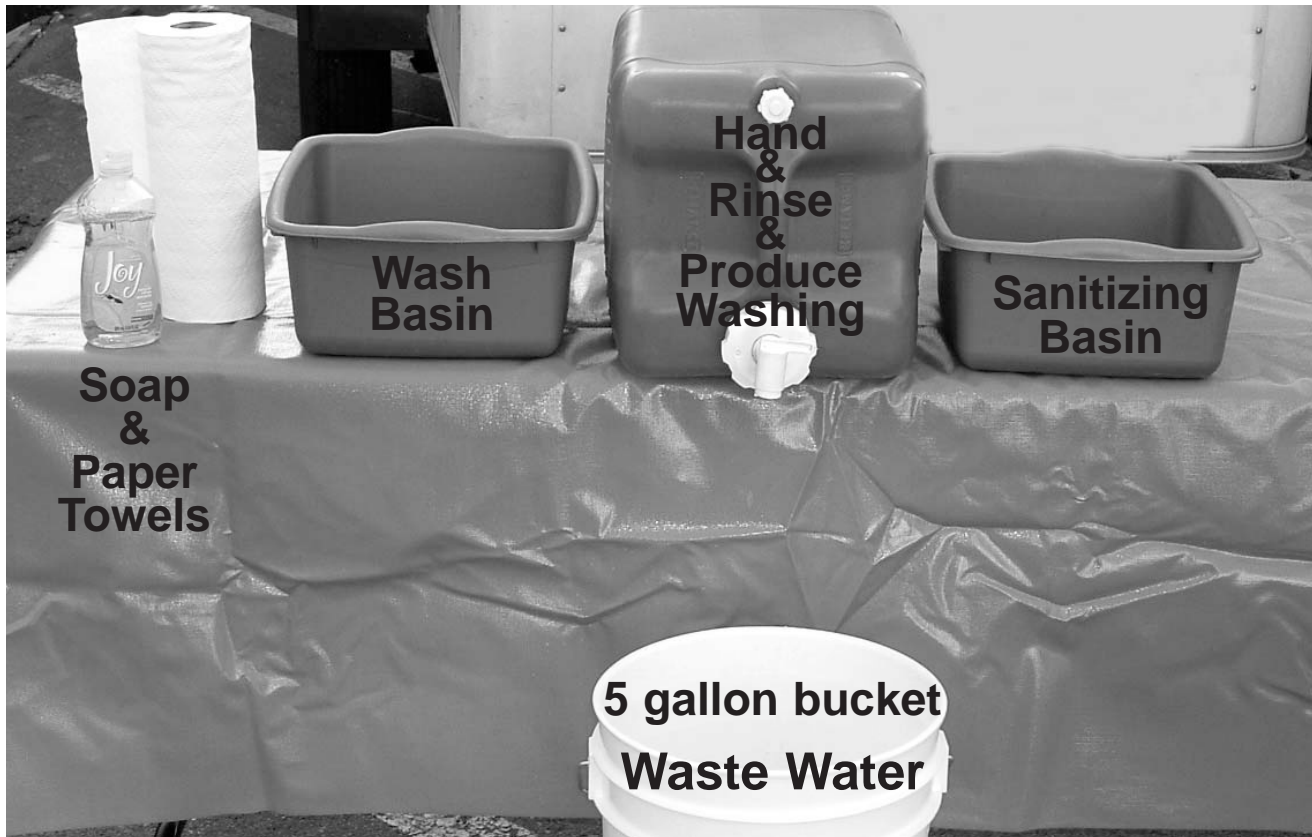
c. Any product you warm at the market must be warmed to 135°F or above.

## **6. VIOLATIONS, CITATIONS AND FINES**

Violations of proper sampling and hand washing requirements are subject to re-inspection fees by Marin County or Alameda County Environmental Health Services (EHS). There is no fee for the 1<sup>st</sup> inspection and the re-inspection.. The 2<sup>nd</sup> re-inspection is accompanied by a fine of \$100.00. A 3<sup>rd</sup> re-inspection may be accompanied by a fine of up to \$300.00.



**“Hand Washing” and “Cleaning, Rinsing, and Sanitizing” Station  
Example #1**



**HAND WASHING AND “CLEANING, RINSING AND SANITIZING STATION” STATION**

1. Required basic items for proper handwashing station.
  - a. A 4 to 7 gal. potable water container with a free-flowing hands free dispensing valve.
  - b. One 5 gal. waste water bucket.
  - c. Paper towels--as many rolls as you need for market day.
  - d. Liquid handwashing soap.
2. All vendors that prepare and distribute samples are required to have a handwashing station by Marin and Alameda County Environmental Services.
3. Hand washing and other cleaning waste water must be disposed of in a facility connected to the public sewer system or in the potties of the market portable restrooms. Not in the grass, on the ground or pavement or in the storm drains.
4. The hand washing water dispenser can be used to wash produce for sampling.

**“CLEANING, RINSING AND SANITIZING” STATION:**

1. All cutting boards and non disposable utensils used for sampling must be able to lie flat and or totally submerged in the wash and sanitizing basins. After cleaning, rinsing and sanitizing allow cutting boards and utensils to air dry.
2. A sanitizing solution is 1 tablespoon of household bleach per gallon of water. Allow submerged items to remain in solution for 30 seconds. Allow to air dry. Sanitizing is a process that kills disease-causing bacteria.
3. Produce intended for sampling must be washed with potable water to remove any soil material in order that it is wholesome and safe for consumption. Cantaloupe, watermelons and other melons should be cleaned in a very mild bleach and water solution.
4. Both the “Hand Washing” and the “Cleaning, Rinsing and Sanitizing” stations must be set up before samples can be prepared and distributed.

**“Hand Washing” and “Cleaning, Rinsing, and Sanitizing” Station  
Example #2**



**HAND WASHING AND “CLEANING, RINSING AND SANITIZING STATION” STATION**

1. Required basic items for proper handwashing station.
  - a. A 4 to 7 gal. potable water container with a free-flowing hands free dispensing valve.
  - b. One 5 gal. waste water bucket.
  - c. Paper towels--as many rolls as you need for market day.
  - d. Liquid handwashing soap.
2. All vendors that prepare and distribute samples are required to have a handwashing station by Marin and Alameda County Environmental Services.
3. Hand washing and other cleaning waste water must be disposed of in a facility connected to the public sewer system or in the potties of the market portable restrooms. Not in the grass, on the ground or pavement or in the storm drains.
4. The hand washing water container can be used to wash produce for sampling.

**“CLEANING, RINSING AND SANITIZING” STATION:**

1. All cutting boards and non disposable utensils used for sampling must be able to lie flat and or totally submerged in the wash and sanitizing basins. After cleaning, rinsing and sanitizing allow cutting boards and utensils to air dry.
2. A sanitizing solution is 1 teaspoon of household bleach per gallon of water. Allow submerged items to remain in solution for 30 seconds. Rinse and air dry. Sanitizing is a process that kills disease-causing bacteria.
3. Produce intended for sampling must be washed with potable water to remove any soil material in order that it is wholesome and safe for consumption. Cantaloupe, watermelons and other melons should be cleaned in a very mild bleach and water solution.
4. Both the “Hand Washing” and the “Cleaning, Rinsing and Sanitizing” stations must be set up before samples can be distributed.



## Sampling



Essential required items for proper sampling: disposable single use utensils, covered sampling container, a knife and cutting board, disposable latex or plastic gloves, tongs and waste basket w/liner.



Vendor should provide containers with hinged covers to prevent food contamination from customer by touching samples.

Marin County EHS approves of the method pictured above. The customer can obtain a sample with the toothpicks next to the covered container

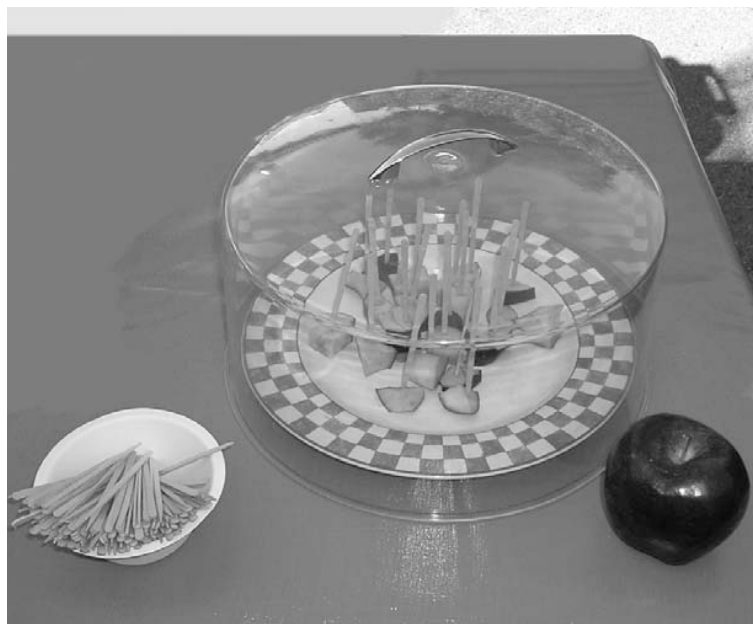


In this example the vendor gives out a sample using tongs.

This method provides the best way to keep the sample from being contaminated.

The vendor is in complete control of his sampling process and this method is highly recommended by the Marin and Alameda County EHS.

## Covered Sample Set-up

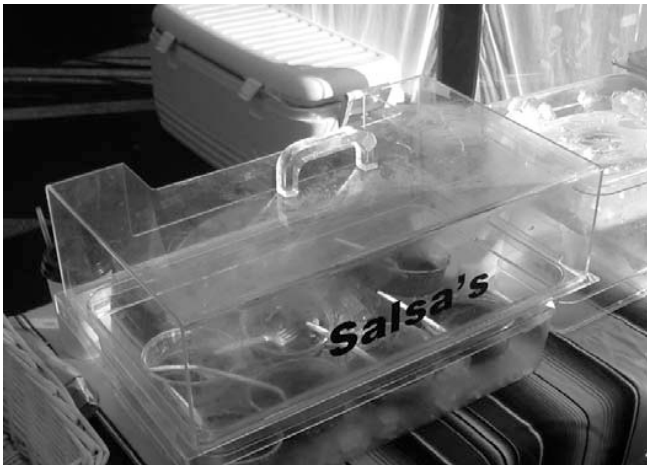


Here is another example of how to protect your samples. Notice the samples have tooth picks already so customer does not have to touch the sample. The cake cover acts as a sneeze protector.



If you are sampling nuts of any kind, you must use a nut-shaker similar to the ones pictured above.







## Maximizing Your Sales

Customer's come to a farmers' market for many reasons: freshness, quality, abundance and variety of product and farmers to choose from. But as farmers, we are all competing for the same consumer's attention, with similar products. So how do we set ourselves apart from our neighbor and maximize our own sales.

### Display

Your display should create attention and draw customers to your table. A well groomed display will appeal to the customer's senses, create excitement, increase sales and will also allow you to get higher prices because people will perceive a higher value in your products.

- Abundance – create the look of abundance. Stack high, use layers, or a wide presentation if you're using baskets. The fuller a display, the more appeal it has and the less able people are to resist purchasing the product. A small display, or one that is not full, looks picked over and gives customer's the impression that the best is already gone. All that's left is the dregs.
- Continuously restock and condense the display as you begin to sell out – impression of fullness
- Color coordinate your display. Mix up colors. Reds next to greens next to yellows. A colorful display is eye-appealing and therefore draws attention to your table. (example, diagonal design of beans, berries and squashes)
- Table covering – color of cloth and small pattern so as not to dominate the products displayed. But it creates a clean, professional look to your display.
- Keep things neat and orderly, both in your displays and behind your table – safer, appearance of cleanliness, healthier and more appealing
- Tarp covering, white works best, light and airy, red & blue are darker underneath and cast produce in unnatural and unflattering light
- Put something on the table to draw attention if your product cannot be adequately displayed, such as meats that are displayed in closed coolers– pictures, bouquet of flowers, unusual signage can draw attention to your table
- Aroma, crush herbs to release their scents. Apple producers can use cinnamon oils to dab the table to create an appealing aroma.

### Signage

Signage is critical to success – a sales display without signage is just a display because there are no sales. Customers are not comfortable asking for prices – it makes them feel committed to the sale before they know if they really want it. Instead of asking, they will walk on to the next vendor who has made the effort to put out signs.

- Each product needs a price sign, in bold, easy to read lettering.
- Sign should also include additional information, minimally what the product is.

- Informational signs can be as good as having an additional sales person if they include enough information
- Signs should be placed up where customers can see them, even if they are 3 deep at your table. Large enough to be read from the aisle.
- Coloring – avoid white background – it draws the eyes away from the product; black on yellow; green, red or black on off-white
- Laminated signs don't wear out as quickly, can be cleaned and if you use a grease pencil, can be changed.
- Always include a sign with your farm name and location so people know who you are and can begin to identify with you. Keep this sign high and prominent.

### **Create a herding effect**

Customers do not like to be the only one at your table. Rather they are attracted by others already at your table – they want to know what the attraction is. So create a herding effect and sales will rise.

- Sampling sells products. Rather than putting samples on a plate for people to pick up, have someone invite customers to try a sample by handing them a fresh piece with tongs. (This cuts down on the grazing effect and only those who show an interest are invited so as not to be annoying) Once this gets started others don't want to be left out and soon you'll be sold out.
- Offer recipes, cooking instructions or preserving instructions, especially for new products and varieties. Customers love to try a new recipe, so as they pause to look over a new recipe, they'll purchase the ingredients, but they'll also help to create the crowd at your table.
- Demonstrations – can you do a demonstration such as a beehive, a fishtank, a craft demo, etc. that will create attention?
- Step out from behind your table and get things started if necessary.

### **Your product**

All the display and merchandising techniques and customer service in the world will not overcome bad product.

- Product should be first quality, anything less should be marked as such and not given prime display space.
- Product should be fresh. That's one of the key reasons people come to a farmers' market. If we don't satisfy that need for customers we'll lose them to the competition.
- All produce should be thoroughly washed before it comes to market. Clean produce looks more appetizing and actually will command a higher price again because it has perceived value. *(able to sell 17 bushels of squash at \$2 each, while a neighbor with unwashed squash could only move 2 bushels of the same squash at 75cents)*
- All products should be displayed up off the floor – no matter what it is. Nothing is appealing on the floor even though we know it grew on the ground, it was a muddy mess 2 hours ago – the customer doesn't need to know that.
- Intersperse popular items with other products to encourage customers to view your entire display. *(i.e. Chinese greens placed next to Swiss Chard introduced customers to a new green and created interest and sales for a lesser known product.)*
- Display similar products together; i.e. root crops together, varieties of peppers together, etc *(It creates a great visual – large, abundant display.)*
- Set yourself apart from your neighbor by growing a wide variety of products; i.e. 5 types of eggplant or 8 varieties of hot peppers. *(By offering a wide variety of choice it creates excitement for a product and it's harder for customers to resist trying at least one variety of the product each week. For example, 5 varieties of eggplant, created excitement for newer varieties like miniature, white and pink eggplant.)*



- Add value to your products. It can be as simple as painting a face on pumpkins, drying gourds and making birdhouses of them, or making jams and jellies from your produce. Value added products command a higher profit margin. *(a simple gourd birdhouse created enough attention that we sold bushels of gourds at \$4 each so customers could make their own.)*

## Pricing

This is probably the area where I've seen the most failure at farmers' markets. Many farmers are afraid to price their products for what they are worth and then keep their prices there. Remember, price what the market will bear, not what you would be willing to pay. Most customers would be willing to pay far more than what you would for the same product.

Some key points about pricing:

- Price is a perception of quality. When you price your product too low, customers perceive it to be of inferior quality.
- Don't try to undersell the supermarkets. Customers will pay for high quality, fresh produce, direct from a farmer, even if the price is the same or slightly higher than the supermarket.
- You know your prices are too low if you sell out early or if no one complains.
- Use mix & match pricing to encourage larger sales *(ie cucs/zucs/yellow)*
- Use multiple pricing strategies to encourage larger sales; i.e. 3/\$100 rather than 35 cents each
- Do not reduce prices at the end of the day. It only teaches people to come at the end of the day to get bargains. You don't get the prices you need to maintain your farm and family, you don't significantly increase the amounts of product you sell to make up the difference in price and your early customers get angry if and when they find they paid more for the same product. And they DO find out.

## Promote yourself

Promoting yourself is about customer service. And good customer service creates loyal customers who shop with you and only you, every week. So,

- Smile and be friendly
- Let customers get to know you. Farm and family pictures along with your farm sign allows the customers to get to know you. Wear clothing with your name on it or name tags. As they become acquainted with you, they develop a loyalty to you. Once this occurs, they won't buy the products you sell from anyone but you.
- Get to know your customers. Learn their names, their kids names. As they approach, call them by name. Again, it makes them feel a part of your family and they develop a loyalty to you.
- Learn your customers shopping habits and cater to them. Again, they develop that loyalty. *(purple cauliflower customer)*
- Invite your customers to come back. "I'll see you next week" makes them feel they are appreciated and they look forward to coming back next week. It makes them a more frequent shopper.
- When you're busy with customers, take a moment to acknowledge those waiting. "I'll be right with you" even just a good morning. This simple acknowledgement may mean the difference between them waiting the few minutes for your attention, or walking on to the next vendor down the market aisle.
- When you are not busy with customers, get busy with your display. Rearrange, restock, anything to give the appearance of busy. Customers are attracted to busy people. Those that are standing around, sitting on the tailgate, are not inviting to customers and they will walk on.
- Do not eat or smoke at your table. If you must, take a break from your booth and do these things elsewhere. People don't want to buy from someone with a cigarette or chewing on a sandwich.
- Are your clothes clean and neat, your hair clean and combed? If not, you're not maximizing your sales. Don't come to market straight from the fields. Customers expect their food and their salespeople to be neat and clean, even if you were in the fields harvesting just an hour ago.

- Always educate your customers about your products. Talk knowledgeably and share information with them. They are interested in how their food is grown and harvested, agricultural issues (as long as they are not controversial), and how to prepare and preserve the foods they are purchasing. Encouraging their connection to agriculture fosters their continued support of the industry and consequently your sales. (*Discussion of washing solutions and sanitizing practices was remembered by one customer, who now buys from me first before she looks at others tables.*)

The right combination of product, display, merchandising techniques, pricing and customer service will help you to increase your sales at farmers' markets. You'll not only be able to get a higher profit margin, but you'll increase customer traffic in your booth and increase the size of each customer's purchase. It takes time to implement and perfect the techniques that will work for you and show customers your new and improved salesmanship skills, but it will build over time and you will know the effects – where it counts – on your farm's bottom line!

Diane Eggert  
Farmers Market Federation of NY



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[Commercial Kitchens](#)

[Organic Rules](#)

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## Vendor Tips for Increasing Sales



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### Vendor Tips for Increasing Sales

#### 1. Keep Customers in Front of Your Stall (Sampling, Eye-Catching, Broadcasting)

##### SAMPLING

- The Herding effect is important
- Don't say, "Do you want a sample?" It's easy to say no. Instead, say, "Have you ever tried...?" They slow down. **You want people to slow down at the stall.** The bigger the stall, the easier it is to get them to stop.
- Sample your best, ripe produce.
- Do a comparative tasting at your own stall.

**SAMPLING TIPS:** Piles with toothpicks = grazing, free food for people, they are gone (Do not do this.) You want to keep people at the stall. Sample one slice at a time or out of your hand: time to tell them 3 things about your product (where it is grown, how it is grown, etc.) Use a gloved hand for sanitation or a 12-16 inch tong and be sure to follow the proper [sampling guidelines](#).

**SOMETHING EYE-CATCHING:** Put something unusual at your stall - kohlrabi (looks cool), a huge pumpkin, etc. It gives you something to talk about, makes people slow down when passing your stall.

**BROADCASTING:** When you talk to the crowd

Example: Does anyone know how to... (i.e., putting corn in the dishwasher). End sales with, "See you next week!"

#### 2. Provide Great Customer Service

- Educate customers about the varieties, how they are grown, etc.
- Have tips on how to cook or freeze food.
- Explain how to make items last longer. Customers will buy more.
- Make sure to have enough help so that customers do not have to wait too long. Devise a system that helps you identify the order customers have arrived in.
- Memorize your regular customers' names and greet them with a smile. Try memorizing two new names per week.
- Educate yourself about what the other vendors at the market have so that you can be of help when customers are looking for certain items. It will also give you ideas for your own stall.

#### 3. Increase Dollar-Per-Customer Purchasing

- Put up signs: "Next week...xxx...will be in."
- Offer new varieties (you want to feed the family every week)
- Try having some selections pre-packaged in family sized portions
- At busy markets you need to reduce transaction time. Have some items pre-weighed, pre-packaged.
- Mix and match techniques (Bakers dozens, give them the 13th free); some already in pints; bulk sells more.
- Salsa pack: tomatoes, onions, cilantro, peppers, etc. (Value added-already packaged)
- Mixed pepper pack (pretty, eye-catching)
- Try creative packaging: Nuts packaged in plastic that is in the shape of a carrot ("Easter gift")
- Soup mix: Pre-package everything the customer will need for the soup

#### 4. The Key to Direct Marketing is Repeat Buying

- Know your market. Know your Customers. Are people browsing or are they there to quickly get things they need?
- Think from the customers' point of view.
- Maintain consistent freshness, supply and quality. (Only bring stuff you are proud of.)
- Farm identity: Use farm name and logo so they know who to come back to. Use as much labeling as possible.
- Consider frequent buyer programs (works well for things like flowers). Give them a punch card, and after 9 purchases, the 10th is free. (or something similar)

#### 5. Merchandise Your Stall

- Make a focal point to draw people in.
- Pile produce up. Tilt the containers. Have it artfully "spill over" from nice containers. Get produce out of tubs and boxes. Use bi-level merchandising.
- Think in terms of colors, shapes and textures. Balance aesthetics with practicality.
  - Use contrasting color tablecloths.
  - Display items that go well together visually and when prepared. Think about complimentary colors like the red of tomatoes and the green of basil. They go together in all sorts of ways. It's enticing!
- Show prices! Tell varieties. Laminate your signs so you can write new prices, etc.
- Use big signs for branding. Take a picture of your farm. Put the name of farm on it. Laminate. Put on paint stir sticks.
- Consolidate items as they are sold to give the appearance of abundance, even when there is not abundance.
- Keep things well organized.
- Use product props like farm equipment, an old wheelbarrow, etc.
- Make an investment to have a nice display.

**Don't forget why people are coming to the market:** freshness, flavor, from a farm, friendly atmosphere. Use this information in your signs.



## Some thoughts on selling at farmers markets

22 lessons in running a successful farmers market stand, from someone who's been in the business for almost 25 years ... starting at age 9.

By Nina Planck, founder of the Regional Food Council

*The RFC is a non-profit dedicated to developing the market for local foods.*

*For more information, you can contact Nina at [planck@rcn.com](mailto:planck@rcn.com).*

Posted May 11, 2004

In 1999, I created the first farmers markets in London, England. The first market opened with 16 farmers selling fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, cheese, bread, plants and wine. Today, London Farmers Markets runs 13 farmers markets (12 are weekly) in London all year-round, serving about 115 farmers and food producers whose total sales at the markets are about \$5 million per year.

These suggestions for marketing at farmers markets were originally written for the farmers selling at the London markets. Most had no experience with direct marketing.

These ideas, revised for American farmers, rely on my experience selling at farmers markets in the Washington, D.C. area since 1980. My parents still make a living selling vegetables at farmers markets only. In 2003, we attended 14 farmers markets each week. My mother is a demon farmers marketer and I learned a lot from her. I am never happier than when I'm filling baskets, changing prices, talking about tomato varieties or what to do with fennel, and taking money. I also look at markets as a customer, cook, journalist, farm advocate, and market manager.

**The Plancks are very good at marketing now, but we used to be hopeless.** Farmers markets were new in our area in 1980. We had to figure out how to do everything. In retrospect, it's clear that we weren't quick. It was years before we displayed our produce attractively (see archival photos below). It was years before we wrote good signs—and laminated them so that they weren't ruined by rain. It was years before we stopped growing—and trying to sell—things customers didn't want.

Many of the examples below are about fruit and vegetables, but the principles apply to everything you see at farmers markets, including plants, flowers, and bread. I also include specific comments for meat, dairy, and poultry producers.

You are welcome to distribute this to market organizers, farmers, and food producers—or anyone else who is interested in the market for local foods.

These are things we know work well. We are still learning. Do what works for you.

### 1. The more information the better. Prices are the bare minimum.

Customers love signs and explanations. You must label everything with a name and a price. For some reason, food without prices doesn't sell well. Many people are too shy to ask directly about prices. But there is much more you can say.

How much does it weigh? How do you cook it? What is it called? How hot are the chilies? How is it different? Where is your farm? Why is it scarce? (WE HAD A FROST) Why do the apples have spots? (WE DON'T USE FUNGICIDES) One of my mother's most effective signs: WE GROW REALLY GOOD BEANS.

#### Suggestions for other handouts:

- Write a description of your farm (location, acres, ownership, family history, crops, animals, climate, workers). Write a description of your methods of production. Are you organic? What does integrated pest management mean? What does grass-fed beef mean? Why is it better than grain-fed? What breeds do you raise? Why? If you answer a question often, write it down. Save your time and help shy customers who will read a sign but won't ask you a question.
- Bring articles and information about your farm and its role in agriculture. When an agribusiness meat processor recalls tons of beef because of E coli, or E coli is found on organic lettuce, be ready to answer questions from customers. Tell them what you know about agriculture, food safety, or animal welfare. Good customers want to learn about farming and foods. You must help them.
- A brochure with cuts and prices is particularly helpful for meat, poultry, and cheese producers, especially when your prices and cuts are steady throughout the season.
- Recipes are the indispensable hand-out.

### 2. Charge what it's worth. Is it superior, rare, organic?

Better food is worth more. When you have a superior product (better than the supermarket or even the farmer next door), charge more. Some customers are price-conscious and some aren't. When you give away good produce at rock-bottom prices, customers often buy the same amount



anyway. The refrigerator is only so big and a family only eats so much.

If your product is rare (a scarce variety or the only one on the market), charge what it's worth. If your product is organic, price accordingly.

Customers do expect value for money. Give them bargains when you have a lot of something, or if it's inferior (too small or slightly bruised or too old).

When you do have a bargain price, promote it with large signs, visible placement, multiple locations, and polite suggestions.

Offer discounts for volume. We typically sell squash and zucchini for \$1.60/lb, or, when it's scarce, \$2/lb. That's not cheap. But if you buy 5 lbs or more, it's \$1/lb. We also sell slightly more than 5 lbs in a gallon basket for \$5. We move a lot of squash that way to price-conscious shoppers who like squash. We still get top price from the people who want just three zucchini.

### **3. Value for money is always right.**

It's not a question of high or low prices. A good market—and a good stand—has high-end treats, less expensive foods in larger quantities, and items in between. It's a question of the right price. Your prices may change during the market, from week to week, and throughout the season. Don't be afraid to change prices. When you do, you must change the sign immediately and tell all your staff. It helps to make an announcement about a price reduction as you change the sign. People like to know.

If it doesn't sell, the price is probably wrong. Or the customer does not want that product, or isn't attracted by the way you're selling it.

### **4. Give samples.**

People love to try things. Teach them about your favorites. If you're tired of Golden Delicious apples and prefer Mutsus, say so. Twenty years ago we started to teach people that pickling cucumbers are wonderful in salads. They have thinner skins and better flavor than standard American cucumbers. We kept searching for new varieties. Now we grow Armenian, European, and Middle Eastern types which are better yet. We sample them all and many people tell us they are the best they've tried.

I often give away a new variety, such as the fluorescent purple eggplant Neon, just to encourage customers to try unusual things.

### **5. Suggest ideas—especially when it's familiar or in surplus.**

People often just don't know what to do with things they see. Tell them how you like to cook it. They often want to try something new, especially with familiar, well-supplied vegetables like zucchini.

When you have a glut, customers feel overwhelmed by the surplus and ever-lower prices won't inspire them. You must give them more ideas. Such as:

Go beyond zucchini bread! Try zucchini soup, zucchini pasta, zucchini frittata, grilled zucchini. For a simple and beautiful dish, peel zucchini with a vegetable peeler and dress with olive oil, lemon, parmesan and pepper—zucchini carpaccio.

Another good sign: HOW to MAKE the MOST of a SURPLUS. Here you tell them how to preserve things easily and on short notice. For example, when I come home with more fresh herbs than I know I can use in three days, I toss them in the food processor with olive oil and salt. Thick or thin, the herb paste is great on vegetables, bread, fish, poultry, and meat.

### **6. Eat your own food.**

Nothing is more discouraging to me than hearing 'I don't know what it tastes like' from a farmers' market worker. All staff—those who work on the farm and those who only sell at farmers markets—should eat the food. Restaurant staff have wine and food tastings for staff so they can answer diners' questions fully and—yes—subjectively.

### **7. Give customers personal opinions.**

You must be able to answer objective questions—is this apple sweet or tart, does this onion store well, is this cut of meat good for the grill? However, customers also appreciate personal comments. If you have favorites, say so. If the customer is asking about apples but you don't especially like apples, be honest ('I'm not a great apple eater, but people say these have the strongest flavor') and stick to objective descriptions ('Good for baking'). The customer will admire you for it.

### **8. Tell them how to keep it.**

No one likes to waste good food (or flowers). If you tell customers how to keep what they buy

fresher longer, they won't fret about buying too much. For example, make a sign saying:

### **HOW to KEEP LETTUCE**

Wash, spin dry, and wrap it in a damp kitchen towel in the fridge for several days.

## **9. Quality is everything.**

Ultimately, farmers markets will not succeed simply because we are farmers and the folks down the road are not. They will succeed because the produce is superior to what consumers can buy elsewhere and the price is right. If your peaches are green or mealy, your corn is immature, your beans are tough, your meat is poorly packaged, your bread is stale, your lettuce is wilted, or your tomatoes are tasteless, customers won't come back. Taste your products. Do they measure up?

In a customer survey we've taken at a popular London farmers' market, freshness and quality were the top things customers volunteered in answer to the question: What's good about a farmers' market?

No other answer—not meeting the farmer, not saving family farms—came close. Customers did cite these (and other) considerations, such as organic foods. Value for money was also at the top. But freshness and quality were tops—and freshness is really a form of quality. Which means that quality and value for money are the main reasons people come to market.

We are lucky that farmers' market customers are discerning: that's why they shop at the farmers' market. But with regular exposure to fresh, seasonal, high-quality produce, they will become more discerning, not less. You cannot give them the same old apples week after week, or uneven quality, or bad prices—and expect them to come back simply because you are a farmer. They will shop elsewhere.

## **10. Choose good varieties and breeds.**

Supermarkets offer the same cosmetically perfect bland foods, from apples to bread to cheese. We need to offer something better, and different. The sweetest strawberries, hand-made bread, pastry with real butter, raw honey, fresh eggs, marbled, well-hung beef.

I don't believe there is a better-tasting strawberry than Earliglow. It is smaller than other commercial varieties, and its season is early, but we charge more for Earliglows than most farmers do for varieties I find sour and watery. If you grow a good variety or raise a good breed with some noticeable downside (Earliglows are small), don't hide it. Explain it.

For processed foods, use good ingredients and tell customers why your jam or cheese or bread is different—it's hand-made, cured properly, or not treated with chemicals.

Flavor is the most important quality in food. But there are other ways to distinguish your product from the supermarkets. It should be fresher because it hasn't traveled far. It should be exactly the right maturity and texture—something supermarkets often get wrong because of transportation needs (hard pears, mealy tomatoes). Rarity itself can be a virtue. Grow traditional and unusual varieties and breeds.

If your product has any good quality—plum tomatoes makes thick sauce, a breed of beef is good on the grill because it's lean, a donut peach is easy to peel—say so.

## **11. Have something to sell all season.**

This is especially critical for fruit and vegetable farmers. It's not worth coming to market only to sell asparagus for three weeks a year. To make a good return from markets, you need to have spring, summer, autumn, and winter crops. Extend the season with covers, by growing cold weather crops, or planting several batches of carrots for a steady supply of young carrots if they are popular. If you want to sell seriously at markets, you may need to change your growing patterns.

## **12. Sell a variety of products.**

A stand with one product (only sausages, potatoes, or juice) holds the attention of customers for only a moment: either they want the one thing you have to sell or they don't. Sell a variety: many different vegetables, even in small quantities, flavors of juice, cuts of meat. Customers will stay longer and spend more.

## **13. Bags.**

Place bags everywhere within easy reach of customers. Customers are blind when it comes to bags. This is a farmers' market mystery.

#### 14. Work with the manager

If you have a problem or suggestion, tell the manager. Are the market hours right? Do you have requests from customers for something no producer is supplying? Tell the manager about your farm. The manager serves you and represents you to the public.

#### 15. Cultivate regular, loyal customers.

We aim to build a base of customers who shop regularly at farmers markets. We don't want 10,000 one-time-only purchases from the occasional passer-by. We want 100 people to shop 100 times at farmers markets. Or 1,000 people to make 10 purchases. We want people to come to market to spend \$10 – 40, not \$2.50. That means people who are doing the weekly shopping at the farmers' market, often for a family, week in, week out. This usually means people who come for quality, not for rock-bottom prices.

You must remind customers that the market is open every week. Encourage them to bring friends, colleagues, family, and neighbors to the market. Tell them about other farmers markets you attend.

#### 16. Pile it high and fill it up.

You must restock constantly. Consider carefully who takes money and who restocks at market. Some people are better at one job than the other.

##### The Smallest-Container Rule

The produce you have should always be in the smallest container in which it fits. If you start out with a crate of apples, keep it full throughout the whole market. If you have only half a crate left, find a smaller basket. By the end of market we often have one fennel bulb in a small basket, a few bell peppers in a quart box, squash in a gallon basket. Customers dislike buying the last of anything—it looks like the dregs. The smaller container looks like abundance.

#### 17. Don't be afraid of competition.

A good market has a balance of producers with a balance of produce and prices. Good markets shouldn't have too many producers or too many large operations. For one thing, such markets become impersonal. There shouldn't be more producers than the customers can support, or more producers of one food than demand for it. But the best markets have plenty to offer customers.

Farmers markets are a basic form of cooperative. You all agree to sell by the rules for a few hours each week agree. You are stronger together than alone. Why?

Every market needs a critical mass of producers or customers won't bother to come to market. They'll go to the supermarket instead, where they know they can 'get everything.' To attract good customers, the pork farmer needs the vegetable farmer, the honey seller needs the baker, and the egg producer needs the fruit grower. Imagine how little business we would do if each stall were on its own street corner instead of all gathered together at the farmers' market! Regular customers especially expect to be able to do a full week's shopping. Regular customers spend more money than passers-by.

This also means that one vegetable or fruit stall is not enough. Customers want—and deserve—a mix of produce, prices and styles. No farmer is guaranteed a monopoly. It seems like a paradox: at market, the farmers need each other—and they also compete with each other. So how do you compete? Specialize. Do what you're good at. Tell the customers why you're different and better. Set your own standards. Always charge what it's worth.

We faced new competition in those early years, and we still do. If a farmer is out-selling, underpricing, or out-producing you, these are things you can do:

- **You can compete on price.** This has limited usefulness. Many farmers at the London markets know markets that collapsed under competitive price-cutting. The farmers' market has to work for all the farmers. Customers will not come to a market with only one stall still standing after a price war. Price-cutting for the sole purpose of grabbing market share—i.e., to drive the other producers out until you are the last one standing—is not the answer. It's anti-social, it rejects the cooperative spirit among producers, and in the long run, it's self-defeating. It does not mean that each customer buys more. It leaves every farmer with lower sales. It does not attract or maintain regular customers. It is the lazy way to compete—customers want freshness, quality, and value. Give it to them.
- **You can compete on quality.** You can stop using sprays or grow a better-tasting vegetable or even a slightly different product: in Virginia, we grew smaller melons when we were out-produced on the standard large melon by warmer farms with sandier soil. People living alone preferred a one- or two-serving melon. You could grow baby leeks or red lettuce instead.
- **You can sell that item at another farmers' market.** The more markets you attend, the more choices you have, and the better you will know what sells where, what competition you can beat, and what your niche is.
- **You can stop competing and sell something else.** Find your niche. You don't have to

- grow what your neighbor is growing. Specialize and diversify.
- **You can perfect your act.** This is marketing. That means better signs, better sales, nicer and faster people serving customers, a better display, more recipes and samples. If you need to sell a lot of eggplant, put it in four places. Put produce in different boxes and baskets. Use creative pricing (not under-pricing).

In the long run, the answer to competition is stability. The goal at any farmers market serving producers and consumers. Ideally this is accomplished through a regional network of markets managed by the same organization. That means enough markets for the producers, enough producers at each market, and enough choice for customers. Each producer's business becomes more stable as the markets become more regular.

Stability doesn't mean that in five years you will be growing what you're growing today, or that customers will buy it. See the rest of these notes: you will grow new things, try new sales techniques, get more customers, and learn things from new producers. (There will be new producers.)

The early stages of a new farmers' market can be hard for everybody, including market organizers, producers, and customers. It is not stable from the very beginning. But it will be, if market organizers and producers are patient.

## **18. Make chilled foods visible.**

Meat, poultry, dairy, and egg producers, and those selling chilled processed food like egg pasta, have particular challenges in display. You need to show off your food just as the peach and tomato farmers do, piled high and colorful and seductive. Sometimes a meat or poultry farmer seems to be selling nothing at all. There is a sign with prices—or should be—but no food in sight.

At many farmers markets, including London Farmers Markets, there is access to electricity. Farmers use chilled glass display cabinets, which look beautiful and allow them to sell fresh meat, sausages, meat pies, smoked fish, cheese, and more.

Meanwhile, most producers sell fresh or frozen meat from plastic cooler chests. No one can see the lovely foods. They can't choose their own. They can't browse without making a commitment, and they find that embarrassing. These are all barriers to more sales.

I admire the set-up of a buffalo producer, Cibolla, who sells at the Falls Church Farmers' Market in Virginia. Cibolla has created the sense of a butcher shop in the open air. They have created a U-shaped stand to invite customers in without making a commitment, so browsing is possible. Customers are invited to rummage through the plastic bins for frozen meat, so self-selection is possible. (Their marketing materials are also excellent.) One improvement they might consider: a nice color photo of each cut on the chest. The white plastic containers aren't very distinctive.

## **19. Bring photos of your farm.**

Bring not only your food, but also your farm to market. Pictures of crops, animals, processing (say, making cheese), and workers with crops and animals are interesting and charming to non-farmers and bring life to your stand. Pictures also reinforce the message that we are all linked to farmland through food.

## **20. Be cheerful and active.**

A bored, sullen person behind the counter is fatal. Without being a hyper sales-monster, be enthusiastic and friendly. You must move about the stand. Walk to the front of your stand every ten minutes for the customer's view. Pick up trash, even if it's not yours. You must demonstrate your high opinion of your products. You cannot be ignorant about products. You must give customers a reason to buy. Avoid sarcasm, indifference, smoking, music, and the impression 'I just work here.'

## **21. Perfect your marketing equipment.**

Growing vegetables or raising animals is only half the battle. Do not neglect the infrastructure of marketing. Have a good sign box with magic markers, blank paper, tape. We organize signs by product in a small plastic recipe box. The PEPPERS file, for example, contains all the pepper signs (bell, hot, frying) with various prices and quantities. When you get to market, you need only choose the sign you need.

Our market report tells how much you brought, what price you sold it at, and when it sold out. When we're loading for next week's market, we have a good idea of what the market can sell. We refer to the market reports year after year.

Bring enough change to get you through the early \$20 bills. Experiment with tarps until you find the right one. Bring wet towels to keep lettuce from wilting in the heat. Use white side tarps to keep everything shady. Make sure every market has the baskets, boards, and tables it needs. (We use a check list.) Our marketing equipment is modular; it works at every market. Usually it has two purposes: it's part of the load itself and it becomes part of the display.



## 22. Some modest numbers.

Like most small business owners, farmers seldom discuss how much they make. My parents, Chip and Susan Planck, have always believed that the success of farmers markets depends on the success of farm businesses. We hope that by sharing information about sales, we can encourage more farmers to sell at farmers markets.

On August 29, 1999, my parents were in England to visit my first London farmers market in Islington. Our summer college-age farm workers selling vegetables at Dupont Circle, in Washington, DC made \$4800 in four hours. It was a market record (since surpassed).

- Among many other things, they sold 1250 lbs of tomatoes for \$2/lb—about \$2500, or half the total sales. They sold out of tomatoes.

Lesson 1: **Specialize.** (We grow 25 varieties of tomatoes.)

Lesson 2: **Grow the best varieties.** (If it isn't delicious, we don't grow it.)

Lesson 3: **Give samples.** (Our customers ask for tomatoes by name.)

Lesson 4: **Treat it properly.** (Our tomatoes are ripe and unbruised.)

Lesson 5: **Charge what it's worth.** (We are not fancy, but customers think our tomatoes are worth \$2.40/lb. Some of our prices are higher than the supermarket or the stand next door, some lower. Between you, the competition, and the customer, you learn what it's worth.)

- They sold 6 bushels of basil, about 180 bunches the size of two hands at \$2 each.

Lesson 1: **Grow what the customers want.** (We used to try to sell whole basil plants, with the muddy root and all the stems still on, for \$1. Now we cut just the leaves, wash and bunch them and make ten times more money per plant.)

Lesson 2: **Grow high-value crops** on small pieces of ground. (Basil is also light and small to carry to market.)

Lesson 3: **Grow something the supermarkets don't.** (Basil in supermarket pots dies before you can use it; the cut basil is old, over-watered and over-fed with nitrogen. It doesn't last and it's bland.)

The Plancks pay a fairly substantial fee at this market. We are glad to do it. With markets like this one—and thirteen others, including somewhat slower weekday markets—my parents are able to farm for a living. Average annual sales from 1998 to 2002 were about \$325,000 and in 2003, a bad year for weather, sales were a record high of \$350,000. (The biggest expense is labor, about \$110,000.) They sell only at farmers markets and have no other income. Farmers markets saved our farm.

That is why we have worked hard, not only to sell more vegetables, but also to convince customers and communities that farmers need a stable network of well-managed farmers markets in every suburb, town, and city. Every farm selling direct has different means and needs, but we all rely on convincing customers to buy local foods. It is notable how diverse farmers markets are. Many farms smaller and larger than ours—in acreage and sales—rely on farmers markets too.



# Marketing the Market

*"Marketing is the whole business, taken from the customer's point of view." - Peter Drucker*

## Coming Together

*How can the market, vendors, media, local business and the community collaborate to create a thriving, vibrant marketplace each week?*

**Page 2**

## Maximize Your Business



*What factors draw shoppers in and which can send them running?*

**Page 3**

## Focus on the Market Experience

*Are you doing all you can to make your market a welcoming, lively and convenient place to shop?*

**Page 4**



## Getting the Word Out



*What are the best methods to get the buzz going about your market?*

**Page 5**

## Market Newsletters

*Paper or e-mail: which is right for your market and what do shoppers want you to include?*

**Page 6**



## Connecting with Your Community

*Much can be gained through partnerships with your community. What might work for your market?*

**Page 6**

## Marketing Principles

*Most markets have precious few advertising and promotion dollars and therefore need to seek the biggest bang for their bucks. Even if your market is blessed with a large ad budget, you will want to spend it effectively. The following general principles of marketing can be helpful in guiding your market in getting the most from your money.*

### 80/20 rule

Keep the 80/20 rule in mind: 80% of your business comes from 20% of your customers. (Koch, 1998). Getting to know the names and preferences of this core group solidifies their commitment to your market and helps to ensure they keep coming back week after week.

### Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth is far more effective than paid advertising. If a market is well organized, customers will perform the bulk of advertising and marketing in their conversations with friends and acquaintances (Corum, 1999). Encourage frequent shoppers to bring their friends and family and offer them flyers to share.

### Get Covered

An industry rule-of-thumb is that editorial coverage is seven times as valuable as paid coverage (Corum, 2001). Your market's money might be best spent by hosting special events. If your event is based on market products and offers something for consumers (demonstrations, recipes, giveaways), chances are the local media will cover it. That article or radio

story will be noticed and remembered more than an advertisement.

### Advertise Wisely

Effective paid advertisements rely on repeated messages with a simple, consistent message delivered through a medium (newspaper, radio station, TV station, sign) that your targeted customers use regularly. On average it takes at least six exposures before a consumer responds to an advertisement. Your market might want to consider prominently placed, uncluttered signs as your first marketing priority. Having a logo or a clip art image you consistently use to symbolize the market will increase the likelihood your shoppers will notice and remember your ads and signs.





## WHO ARE YOUR PARTNERS?

Farmers' markets are multi-leveled partnerships. Beginning with the farmer's connection with the land; if care is not exercised, the land may lose productivity. The vendor is in partnership with the market; and again, if care is not exercised, productivity may suffer. There are also interdependent partnerships between the market and shoppers, media, local business and the community as a whole. When we ignore anyone of connections, the market and its vendors may not achieve their potential.

Through marketing the market, many of the preceding relationships can be strengthened. When vendors make the effort to market the market as a whole (see ideas at right), the market is able to fully realize its promotions—be it special events, newsletters, media coverage or other activity.

The market can, in turn, market its vendors to a wider audience. Farmers can be profiled in newsletters and on the web, included in media kits, and celebrated in special market events. Once the community learns details about a vendor, it's more likely they will spend their dollars with that person. Markets have every rea-

son to highlight specialty producers—they're what make the market unique.

The market and local media also have every reason to collaborate. If you are hosting a special event, that is something the community will hopefully be interested in and the media will take notice. The market can be an asset to the press, as well. By creating a media packet (see page 5) and building relationships with reporters, the market can save the day when news and story ideas are slim.

If attendance at your market is sizable, local businesses should appreciate the traffic you bring to the area. Considering approaching these businesses with ideas for cross-promotions. Ask stores to place market posters in their windows and offer to distribute store coupons good only on market day.

And finally the market's partnership with its shoppers. Convenience is the buzzword of the day—grocery stores are open 24-hours a day, carry every imaginable fruit and vegetable, and even offer complete ready-to-eat meals. Are you making it as easy as possible for folks to shop with you? (see page 4)





## Selling is a Job Interview

*It's true! Shoppers generally have little idea of what it takes to bring your products to market. If your product display has caught their eye, they then turn that eye on you. What image are you conveying? Like it or not, they evaluate the care you've taken with your appearance and apply that to the care you take with your product. Are you "saying" what you want people to "hear"?*

- Remember you represent your farm
- Offer friendly, knowledgeable service: remember names, invite them back next week
- Aim for a short wait time; when things get busy, acknowledge those waiting
- Be a picture of health and cleanliness
- Go in costume if it's your style and not too outrageous
- If you aren't experiencing a comfortable atmosphere at the market, neither are your customers
- Be enthusiastic
- Avoid eating and smoking

## Salesmanship

*Every so often, step outside your stall. Walk the market as a shopper and evaluate what customers are drawn towards. Some vendors always attract a crowd; take time to notice what you might be able to improve about your own presentation.*

- Keep active
- Place your scale up front to avoid turning your back
- Orient cover to give shade to your customers
- Know your products: how are they grown or made; how to best store and ways to prepare them
- Build loyalty: give some free extras for your best customers
- Offer recipes and interesting facts
- Give away a new offering for your shoppers to sample; ask them to come back next week with feedback
- Notice what's already in their bags—what might you have to complement their purchases
- Offer a sample: "Have you ever tried ..." then follow-up with an interesting fact about the product
- If you get a complaint comparing your price with a competitor's, respond politely with "I believe they know the value of their product."

## Stall Display

*Everyone has a personality; your challenge is to make yours come to life through your choice of colors, materials and props. Chances are someone else offers similar products and you want shoppers to notice you.*

- Keep it high and watch it fly—your products gather more attention when your display has many levels beginning with crates raised off the ground up and ending with an element at about shoulder height
- Restock after each rush—when things begin to look sparse, start consolidating
- Employ color contrast to enhance eye appeal—if most of your available products are of a similar color add props or purchase a bouquet from a flower vendor
- Use signs: farm name, state prices next to product, add product characteristics

## Vendors Marketing the Market

*Katherine Kelly and Joan Vibert, vendors at Kansas City's Brookside Farmers' Market, offer the following possibilities for vendors to contribute to the success of the market as a whole.*

- Promote special events to customers
- Use your personal networks to promote the market as a whole
- Do mailings/e-mailings to your own customer list—toot not only your own horn but that of the market as well
- Include the market in all personal business promotions: business cards, flyers, mailings
- Encourage customers to sign-up for the market email or mailing list
- Promote customer interactions at the market to build a sense of community
- Involve customers in special market events
- Recruit new vendors
- Announce the market on your voice mail
- Volunteer for market duties
- Recruit customers to help with market organization, to serve on the board or to plan a specific market event
- Ask customers to serve on the market board





## Create a Vibrant Market Experience

*The goal is to draw as many shoppers as possible on market day. After recruiting sufficient vendors who can bring the freshest local products, you might want to focus on making the market an exciting and interesting place to be.*

*Numerous factors can contribute to a lively marketplace including sights, sounds and aromas...*

- Invite musicians and “pay” them a gift of market produce and products
- Create a Chef at Market program where the chef creates dishes with market products—try to offer shoppers a sample
- Consider activities like theater, balloons, play equipment, face painting, petting zoos for kids
- Provide places to eat and sit along with shade
- Invite school bands and tours
- Explore having a market during evening-in-the park concerts
- Host parades such as a Halloween Costume March
- Decorate the market
- Make whatever you provide beautiful ... bouquet for restroom ... nice seating
- Recognize that aromas of ready to eat foods such as BBQ or sausage biscuits are a big draw
- Provide a “Community Booth” for local not-for-profits to share information with the community

## Serve Convenience

*While farmers’ markets may have the highest quality products available in town, our shoppers are accustomed to all the conveniences of the modern grocery store. Consider if your market is doing all it can to address the following issues:*

- Convenient hours
- Ample, close parking
- Manageable packages
- Assistance with carrying large purchases
- Shade and shelter
- Eliminate congested areas
- Accessible for the elderly
- Tasty breakfast with a place to sit, eat and talk
- Clean, accessible restrooms

## Signs and Banners

*Signs and banners can be significant investments for a market. If designed with care and sited well, they can also be invaluable marketing tools in informing passersby of your locations, days and hours of operation. Working with a professional increases your odds of crafting durable, effective and attractive products. Keep the following in mind when creating your next sign or banner:*

- Use a simple, consistent logo or image
- Use an easy to read font
- Present information in a clear, logical sequence
- Overload them too early with too many messages and they will give up
- Confuse them and they will ignore the message
- On market days, utilize yard-type signs at key intersections to guide customers
- Consider seeking sponsors





## Getting the Word Out

*Your market's atmosphere is vibrant and much thought has been given to the needs of your customers. Now it's time to focus on letting your community know who and what can be found at your market. Studies show that your best avenues to achieving this goal are word of mouth and media coverage. While advertising can be effective, it requires a significant advertising budget—on average it takes at least six exposures before a consumer responds to an advertisement.*

### Media Promotion

- Prepare a preseason press kit that includes information about the upcoming season—dates, locations, hours, a list of market products, a chart outlining when fruits and vegetables are in season, a schedule of special events as well as a short history of the market and a few vendor profiles
- Follow up with a phone call
- Submit a great photo
- Send out press releases for special events or when key crops (sweet corn, tomatoes, peaches) come into season
- Take time to build relationships with key media personnel—find out if the food section editor is interested in a recipe of the week, see if the garden writer needs leads on the new and hot perennials.
- When someone from the media contacts you offer, “How may I help you?” and be sure to follow through with requests, promote creative story angles and upcoming special events
- Take advantage of community calendar listings in newspapers, on radio stations and websites
- Send a gift basket to the editor (check first, some companies don't allow this)
- Acknowledge coverage by sending a thank you or bouquet

### Word of Mouth Advertising

- Consistently satisfy customers—they will rave about the market to friends, family and coworkers
- Turn core customers into ambassadors—ask if they would share flyers with friends and coworkers
- Reward bringing a friend—every time they bring someone new, enter them into a monthly market basket drawing
- Consider selling T-shirts, caps, tote bags—they are great walking billboards for the market
- Solicit letters to the editor from your shoppers, nutritionist, and others that recognize the benefits of local agriculture

### Participate in Community Events

- Create a promotional display for your market to exhibit during garden and home shows and health fairs—don't forget to have flyers about the upcoming season to hand out
- Enter a market theme float in parades
- Create a produce display for the county fair
- Offer to read an agriculture-themed book during story time at your public library, local bookstore or school classroom



## Bring the Market to Your Shoppers Electronically or the Old Fashioned Way

*Market newsletters are a great method of reminding your shoppers of why they love the market. The trend in this type of communication is the e-newsletter delivered via email. Many companies offer e-newsletter services with affordable rates based on the number of subscribers on your list. And they make the process of creating a newsletter fairly simple. When compared to traditional newsletter costs, copying and mailing, e-newsletters are a bargain. Plus if you have access to digital images, color photos can bring your market to life. Whether you go with paper or electronic distribution, keep the following points in mind:*

- Include a banner with market name, logo, date and contact information and be consistent in style and with your publication schedule-monthly, weekly
- Highlight upcoming events
- Share what is currently available and offer tips on selection and storage
- Incorporate farmer profiles, and news from your vendors
- Bring readers into the “family” by soliciting recipes and testimonials
- Offer your vendors the opportunity to include coupons or special offers-they’re an excellent way to move abundant product
- Include a sign-up box on your website and those of the city and any of your sponsors
- Recruit readers for specific market volunteer opportunities-coordinate for special events, web design, graphics work to create flyers, even writing the newsletters themselves

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Kansas Rural Center Publication MG10A.1

The authors of this publication are Jerry Jost and Mercedes Taylor-Puckett. The Kansas Rural Center provided support with USDA’s Risk Management Agency provided funding.

The Kansas Rural Center is a private, nonprofit organization that promotes the long-term health of the land and its people through education, research and advocacy. The Kansas Rural Center cultivates grassroots support for public policies that encourage family farming and stewardship of the soil and water. The Rural Center is committed to economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially sustainable rural culture. For more information, contact the Kansas Rural Center at P.O. Box 133, Whiting, Kansas 66552 or (785) 873-3431.

## Connecting the Community to Your Market

*Chances are your market is one of the biggest weekly gathering spots in town. Sharing this forum with your community can earn your market goodwill and provide countless marketing opportunities. Whether you provide a stall that not for profit groups may use or offer to collect excess produce for a food pantry at the end of the market day, reaching out to the community can really pay off.*

### Partnerships

- Consider designating a weekly stall to a worthy group-you can decide whether it can be used for informational purposes only or if you will permit fund-raising through raffle tickets, bake sales, etc...either way, groups will be delighted to have access to your shoppers and will most likely bring out folks new to the market
- Partner with a food pantry or soup kitchen to highlight the issue of hunger in your community-host a food drive or glean excess market produce to donate
- Collaborate with a local restaurant or cooking school-have a “shop with the chef day” where shoppers can tour the market with a culinary expert to learn tips and receive recipes
- Invite your county’s extension office to participate-Master Foods graduates can offer food preservation information and the Master Gardeners give great horticultural advice
- Don’t forget to publicize these appearances in a media release

### Local Businesses

- Banks are required by law to do a certain amount of community service. Talk to the neighborhood bank and ask them to sponsor a special event, musicians, flyers or mailings
- See if local merchants will put market posters in their windows or consider placing flyers in shopping bags
- Inquire with the city about including flyers in municipal bills

## **FARMERS MARKET SPECIAL EVENT—IDEAS**

**Remember— the only limitation on ideas is your imagination.**

**Organizations to contact for events at your market:**

Along with the following list of suggested groups (which is just a “short” list), keep your eyes and ears open for suggestions!

Grade School, Middle School and High School  
Bands  
Band Booster Clubs  
Drama/Mime Groups  
Jr. College/College bands  
Local musicians, musical groups  
Disc jockeys  
Art groups/local art councils  
Cub Scouts  
Girl Scouts  
Boy Scouts  
Eagle Scouts  
Camp Fire Girl & Boys  
Horizon Club  
Big Brother/Big Sister  
YMCA/YWCA  
Tae Kwondo Groups/Martial Arts Academy  
Local sports groups (Little League, Soccer,  
Football, T-ball, etc.)  
Dance and Gymnastics groups  
Master Gardeners  
Men’s Garden Club  
Women’s Garden Club  
Quilting Group—display/demonstration  
Weavers Guild  
Pork Producers  
Egg Producers  
Turkey Federation  
Beef Producers  
Corn Producers  
Soy Bean Producers  
Fruit & Vegetable Growers Assn.  
Dairy Council  
Department of Natural Resources  
County Conversation Board

Farm Service Agency  
Animal Rescue League, or City Pound, County  
Animal Shelter  
Zoo  
County Extension Office  
FFA, 4-H  
American Heart Association  
American Cancer Society  
American Lung Association  
American Dental Association  
Hospital—(Nutrition or Dietary Dept.)  
American Ophthalmology Assoc.  
American Podiatry Assoc.  
Medical School or Local Clinic  
Fire Department  
Police Department  
Schools  
Church groups, choirs  
Chefs/Restaurants  
Radio/TV stations  
Armed Forces (Coast Guard, Army, Navy, Air  
Force, Marines, ROTC, Jr. ROTC)  
Veterans Groups  
Community Economic Development groups  
Chamber of Commerce  
Resource, Conservation, and Development  
(RC&D)  
County Extension Office  
Kiwanis  
Rotary  
Lions Club  
Local Farmers Federation  
Community Church and/or Church Coalition  
City or a department within the City



**The following is a very limited list of event suggestions.**

How you make them into your own event is up to your creativity!

Celebrate Opening Day, Middle of the Season Day, Last Market Day, etc.	Scrambled Egg Breakfast; Afternoon Market Cookies/Coffee
Celebrate a Vegetable or Fruit Day (e.g. Broccoli Day, Strawberry Day, etc.)	Chili Breakfast
Market Birthday/Anniversary—host a birthday/anniversary party for your market	Spaghetti Breakfast
Cooking Demonstrations	Popcorn giveaway
Arts & Crafts Day—Christmas in July	Agri-sculpture, Play with Your Food—art forms made from vegetables/fruits
Essays/Photo/Drawn Pictures —tie in with any type of promotion	Children’s Produce Tractor Pull
Recycling Collection Point	Hands-on Art Affair—play and craft time for children
Eyeglass Collection Site for the Lions Clubs	Collection for a mission or homeless shelter
Food Drive	Cucumber/zucchini races
Clothing Drive	Family Picnic Day—July
Kids’ Parade	Free plant giveaway
Unusual/ugly vegetable contest	Cooking demonstration
Coupon “cents off” for a particular featured vegetable at that day’s market	Ice Cream Social
Market Bucks	Contests—pie eating, seed spitting
Market Basket giveaway	Bicycle Safety Day, Bicycle Rodeo
Produce tasting	Pep rally for football game
	End or beginning site of an organized 5K, 10K race or fun-walk

**National Days/Weeks/Months Observances during a Market Season**

The following pages are lists of nationally declared days, weeks, or months celebrated during the months of a typical market season (May–October). Any of these could be an event/celebration at your market. Make your market THE place in your community for informative activities and events during the market season.

Information taken from *Chase’s Calendar of Events*, an annual publication (you can check your local library reference desk), *also see:* <http://www.butlerwebs.com/holidays>

**Examples:** You’ve selected National Healthy Vision Month (May) as an event. Contact your local Lions Club and ask them to come to the market and provide a collection box for used eyeglasses—and allow them to promote their organization. Be sure to put out press releases—also do signage at your market prior to the event to remind people to bring their unused eyeglasses. OR May 25 is National Tap Dance Day—get a local dance studio to come and perform!

**MAY NATIONAL  
DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE**

National Beef Month	National Bike Month
National Barbecue Month	National Older Americans Month
National Egg Month	National Physical Fitness & Sports Month
National Hamburger Month	National Strawberry Month
National Clean Air Month	National Salad Month

National Asparagus Month  
 National Book Month  
 Eat Dessert First Month  
 National Salsa Month  
 National Tennis Month  
 National Military Appreciation Month  
 National Historic Preservation Month  
 Mother's Day (second Sunday)  
 Armed Forces Day (21st)  
 National Tap Dance Day (25th)  
 Memorial Day (the last Monday)  
 National Police Week (third week)  
 National Tourism Week (second week)  
 National Safe Boating Week (fourth week)  
 National Emergency Medical Services (EMS)  
 week (third week)  
*(May is filled with health awareness campaigns. These are just a few. You might think about having a health fair or health information table at your market).*  
 National Osteoporosis Prevention Month  
 Better Sleep Month  
 National Mental Health Month  
 National Allergy/Asthma Awareness Month  
 National Women's Health Care Month  
 National Arthritis Month  
 National Correct Posture Month  
 Healthy Vision Month  
 Better Hearing & Speech Month

## **JUNE NATIONAL**

### **DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE**

National Dairy Month  
 National Safety Month  
 National Turkey Lover's Month  
 National Perennial Gardening Month  
 National Zoo & Aquarium Month  
 National Fresh Fruits & Vegetables Month  
 National Accordion Awareness Month  
 National Rose Month  
 National Adopt a Shelter Cat  
 National Rivers Month  
 Summer Solstice (21st)  
 Flag Day (14th)  
 Father's Day (third Sunday)  
 National Yoyo Day (10th)  
 National Little League Baseball Week (third week)

## **JULY NATIONAL**

### **DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE**

Anti-Boredom Month  
 National Ice Cream Month  
 National Baked Bean Month  
 National Hot Dog Month  
 National Picnic Month  
 National Recreation & Parks Month  
 National Culinary Arts Month  
 Independence Day (4th)  
 National Farrier's Week (third week)

## **AUGUST NATIONAL**

### **DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTICE**

National Farmers' Market Week (second week)  
 National Inventor's Month  
 National Back to School Month  
 National Peach Month  
 National Immunization Awareness Month  
 National Smile Day (first Monday)  
 National Mustard Day (6th)  
 National Sisters Day (7th)  
 Herbert Hoover Day (Sunday nearest Aug 10th)  
 National Clown Week (first week)  
 National Simplify Your Life Week (first week)

## **SEPTEMBER NATIONAL**

### **DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE**

National Piano Month  
 National Library Card Sign-Up Month  
 National Chicken Month  
 National Honey Month  
 National 5-A-Day Month  
 National Cholesterol Month  
 National Potato Month  
 National Rice Month  
 National Organic Harvest Month  
 National Sewing Month  
 Prostate Cancer Awareness Month  
 Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month  
 National Hispanic Heritage (Sept 15–Oct 15)  
 Deaf Awareness Week (third week)  
 National Farm & Ranch Safety & Health Week (third week)  
 Labor Day (first Monday)  
 National Grandparent Day (first Sunday after Labor Day)  
 First Day of Autumn (22nd)  
 Talk Like a Pirate Day (19th)

## **OCTOBER NATIONAL**

### **DAYS/WEEKS/MONTHS OF NOTE**

National Pork Month  
National Apple Month  
National Fire Prevention Month  
National Breast Cancer Awareness Month  
National Adopt a Shelter Dog Month  
National Dental Hygiene Month  
National Popcorn Month  
National Cookie Month  
National Roller Skating Month  
National Eat Better—Eat Together Month  
National Lupus Awareness Month  
National Animal Safety & Protection Month  
National Stamp Collecting Month  
National Crime Prevention Month

National Chili Month  
National White Cane Safety Day (15th)  
National Children's Day (9th)  
World Smile Day (7th)  
Columbus Day (12th)  
National Grouch Day (15th)  
World Food Day (16th)  
United Nations Day (24th)  
Make a Difference Day (22nd)  
Halloween (31st)  
National Chemistry Week (third week)  
National Forest Products Week (third week)  
National School Bus Safety Week (third week)  
National Massage Therapy Week (last week)

### **PRODUCE TYPICALLY AVAILABLE AT MARKETS—Create a promotion around these:**

#### **EARLY–MID MAY TO MID–LATE MAY**

Bell Pepper  
Blueberries  
Cabbage  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Greens  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Snap Beans  
Squash  
Tomatoes

Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon

#### **EARLY–MID JUNE TO MID–LATE JUNE**

Bell Peppers  
Blueberries  
Cabbage  
Cantaloupe  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Greens  
Green Beans  
Lima Beans  
Onions (Green)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Okra  
Snap Beans

#### **EARLY–MID JULY TO MID–LATE JULY**

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Blueberries  
Cabbage  
Cantaloupe  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (Green)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon

**EARLY–MID AUGUST TO MID–LATE  
AUGUST**

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Blueberries  
Cantaloupe  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (dry)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon  
Winter Squash

**EARLY–MID SEPTEMBER TO MID–LATE  
SEPTEMBER**

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Cabbage  
Cantaloupe  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Green Beans  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (dry)  
Peaches  
Peas  
Pumpkins  
Squash  
Sweet Corn  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Turnips  
Watermelon  
Winter Squash

**EARLY–MID OCTOBER TO MID–LATE  
OCTOBER**

Apples  
Bell Peppers  
Cabbage  
Cucumbers  
Greens  
Lima Beans  
Okra  
Onions (dry)  
Peas  
Pumpkins  
Rutabaga  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes  
Turnips  
Winter Squash



**1. How close is Asheville City Market to your home?**

- |  |                                      |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than a mile | <input type="radio"/> 5 to 10 miles  | <input type="radio"/> 30 to 50 miles |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 to 2 miles     | <input type="radio"/> 10 to 20 miles | <input type="radio"/> Over 50 miles  |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 to 5 miles     | <input type="radio"/> 20 to 30 miles |                                      |

Please enter your 5 digit zip code

**2. How did you get to Asheville City Market today?**

- |                           |                           |                            |                              |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Car | <input type="radio"/> Bus | <input type="radio"/> Bike | <input type="radio"/> Walked |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|

Other (please specify)

**3. How often do you shop at Asheville City Market?**

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> First-time shopper | <input type="radio"/> Every other week | <input type="radio"/> Less often than monthly |
| <input type="radio"/> Weekly             | <input type="radio"/> Once a month     |   |

Other (please specify)

**4. How much do you usually spend at Asheville City Market in one day?**

- |                                      |                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than \$10 | <input type="radio"/> \$50 to \$75   | <input type="radio"/> \$150 to \$200  |
| <input type="radio"/> \$10 to \$25   | <input type="radio"/> \$75 to \$100  | <input type="radio"/> More than \$200 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$25 to \$50   | <input type="radio"/> \$100 to \$150 |                                       |

**5. Check payment options you have used at Asheville City Market.**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credit or Debit Tokens | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP/EBT Tokens        | <input type="checkbox"/> none of those listed                    |

Other (please specify)

**6. Which of the following are obstacles to shopping more than you currently do at Asheville City Market?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Market schedule - day or time | <input type="checkbox"/> Product selection or supply |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation to/from market | <input type="checkbox"/> Product prices              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access and parking            | <input type="checkbox"/> No obstacles                |

Other or comments

**7. List products you would like to see (or see more of) at Asheville City Market.**

Over to complete survey

**8. When shopping at Asheville City Market how important are the following?**

	Very important	Less important	Not important
Credit or debit token sales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SNAP/EBT token sales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product presentation and display	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Abundance and variety of product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product sampling and recipe ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cooking demonstrations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special events (recycling bazaar, cat adoptions, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guest booths (Master Gardeners, Rose Society, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Live music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health and body care products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nursery and non-food plants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local art & crafts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**9. In your opinion, what can be done to improve Asheville City Market?**

The following information may be useful in securing funding to plan a permanent market location. Your assistance is appreciated.

**10. Please check the box that includes your age.**

- ☐ 18-24    ☐ 25-34    ☐ 35-44    ☐ 45-54    ☐ 55-64    ☐ 65-74    ☐ 75 +

**11. In what range does your household's annual income fall?**

- ☐ Less than \$20,000    ☐ \$60,000 - \$79,999    ☐ \$150,000 - \$199,999  
☐ \$20,000 - \$39,999    ☐ \$80,000 - \$99,999    ☐ \$200,000 or more  
☐ \$40,000 - \$59,999    ☐ \$100,000 - \$149,999    ☐ do not wish to respond

**12. Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed**

- |                                    |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> grade school | <input type="radio"/> undergraduate        | <input type="radio"/> doctoral               |
| <input type="radio"/> high school  | <input type="radio"/> some graduate school | <input type="radio"/> do not wish to respond |
| <input type="radio"/> some college | <input type="radio"/> masters              |  |

Other (please specify)

**13. Please check the category that best describes your ethnicity.**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> African American               | <input type="radio"/> Hispanic               |
| <input type="radio"/> American Indian/Alaskan Native | <input type="radio"/> Middle Eastern         |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Pacific Islander         | <input type="radio"/> other                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Caucasian                      | <input type="radio"/> do not wish to respond |

Other (please specify)