How to Be a Farmers’ Market Vendors
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Best Practices for Farmers’ Market Vendors

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Farmers’ Market = a place where vendors come together to direct market their products to the consumer.

Farmers’ Markets benefit local communities by:
– Helping small farms remain financially stable
– Creating jobs
– Providing education on healthy eating thereby improving nutrition
– Serving as a collection point for food banks, food pantries, etc.

Farmers’ Markets benefit local communities by:
– Serving as an incubator for new businesses
– Helping keep food dollars local
– Benefiting surrounding businesses by attracting potential customers
– Providing access to fresh foods to low income residents (WIC, SFMNP)

• Ohio Farmers’ Markets
• Benefits to Your Community
• Strategies for Success As a Vendor
• Best Practices
• Current Resources Available

• There are currently 180 identified farmers’ markets in Ohio.
• 31% of farmers use farmers’ markets as their only method of marketing.
• 79% of farmers selling at farmers’ markets have less than $10,000 in annual sales.
**Best Practices for Farmers’ Market Vendors**

**Best Practices**
- Set S.M.A.R.T. goals
- Track profitability
- Create Attractive Displays
- Add Value
- Participate in WIC, SFMNP, and EBT programs

**Track Profitability**
Work backwards. Decide how much income you would like to generate from the market and then decide on which crops and products to produce to reach that goal based on market research.

**Goal:**
To generate $10,000 for the season. Market runs 25 weeks per season.

$10,000 / 25 weeks = $400/week

Let’s assume you sell sweet corn @ $5/dozen

$400/week / $5 = 80 dozen

**S.M.A.R.T. Goals**

- S – specific
- M – measurable
- A – attainable
- R – realistic
- T - timely

**Set goals as to what you want to accomplish.**

Example, you want to generate $10,000 in sales and have decided sweet corn is your chosen crop.

But, you won’t have sweet corn for 25 weeks. You will have it for 8 weeks.

$10,000 / 8 weeks = $1250/week

$1250 / $5.00 = 250 dozen/week

Your production is 200 dozen/week.

8 weeks x 200 dozen x $5.00 = $8000.

$10,000 - $8,000 = $2,000.

The remaining $2000 will come from?
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- Consider regulations (federal, state, and local) when deciding on new products
- Evaluate consumer wants and how you can fill that want
- Participate in programs such as EBT (electronic benefits transfer), WIC, SFMNP, etc.

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Pricing
- Price is a perception of quality.
- Don’t try to undersell supermarkets.
- Don’t reduce prices at the end of the day
- You know you are priced too low if
  1 – you sell out early
  2 – no one complains about your price!

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Top reasons consumers shop
#1 Freshness
  Taste
  Access to local foods
#2 Supporting local farmers

The Ohio Survey of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Issues

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- Design displays to be eye-catching and draw customers in
- Easy to read signs with prices
- Offer quality products
- Educate consumers on how to use the product
- Ask consumers what other local foods they would purchase

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Be Creative

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- Monitor quality to ensure consistently high quality products
- Ask for feedback from your consumers
- Have a plan in place to deal with quality issues
- Properly train employees
Pile it high and watch it fly!

For eye appeal, mix up the color

Table coverings accent a display

Increase customer reach with layers

Use aroma to draw attention…
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Sampling sells product…

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Every product needs a price sign…

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Build customer loyalty. Let customers get to know you…

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Consumer education such as recipes, cooking demonstrations, health and nutrition information.

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Add in Customer Service

- Always educate your customers.
- Hold packages
- Take orders
- Let your customers know what’s coming next week
- Look at your presentation, both display and yourself, from the customer’s point of view.

invite your customers back!
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Take full advantage of current resources
Growing! Ohio Farmers’ Markets
   • Providing the training managers and vendors requested
   • Providing training and one-on-one technical assistance
   • Small Business University
   • Customizable marketing materials
   www.ohiofarmersmarkets.osu.edu

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Farmers’ Market Management Network, Inc.;
a cooperative to assist markets both large and small. www.fmmn.org
Supporting the growth and sustainability of Ohio Farmers’ Markets through collaboration:
   • To share best practices
   • To provide solutions to challenges
   • To advocate for sound policies and regulations for the benefit of our members
   • To share resources for cost-effectiveness

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Additional Resources
   • OSU Extension
     www.ohiofarmersmarkets.osu.edu
   • USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
     http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/
   • Ohio Department of Agriculture
     http://www.ohioproud.org/
   • Farmers Market Coalition
     www.farmersmarketcoalition.org

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References:
Shared Wisdom: Selling Your Best at Farmers’ Markets, Executive Producer: Steve Miller
Funded by USDA AMS, New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Madison County
To request a copy of the DVD contact:
USDA, AMS, Marketing Services Branch by phone (202) 720-8317 or http://ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets

Q&A

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