

Payson Community Farmers Market Vendor Hints and Tips

This guide is a collection of wisdom from several successful Farmers Markets. Please use it to help prepare yourself to get the maximum enjoyment and profit from our market.

Pricing

Thoughts to Consider

- Post prices.
- Price above wholesale, but usually below retail.
- Don't compete with other market sellers.

Buyers patronize farmers markets not only for high quality but also for economy. Statistics show **quality** is frequently cited as a reason for shopping at farmers' markets over low price. Since there's no middlemen to pay, selling below retail generates greater profits to growers, providing costs are carefully controlled. Sometimes, if quality and demand justify, pricing at or even above retail may be appropriate.

Where wholesale market prices are available, a good plan might be to add 10-15% to the wholesale price to establish the selling price. Prices may also be less of an obstacle if smaller-sized packages are available. If food stamps are accepted, prices will have less effect on sales.

Market sellers should be very careful not to engage in price wars with each other, or consumers will expect it and wait. Establish a fair price and stick to it. The price cutter may sell out (at little or no profit) and go home; regardless, fairly priced quality produce will always sell.

A typical comparison of supermarket and farmers' market prices indicates:

Item	Farmers' Market Price as % of Supermarket's
Tomatoes	68
Summer Squash	62
Onions	63
Potatoes	76
Bell Peppers	73
Cucumbers	88
Beans	82

Packaging and Grading

Thoughts to Consider

- Sell quality produce.

One advantage of the farmers market is customers come from the local area. This permits the offering of ripe, ready-to-eat produce which might be rejected by wholesalers who would need to receive it at a less-mature stage to permit handling and shipping.

Only good produce should be offered for sale at a farmers market, but, it is unnecessary to offer only U.S. #1 grade as required with wholesale or institutional markets. It is better for sellers to take any picked-over residual “junk” home than try to move it at bargain basement prices. Price cutting games are won by the consumers, not by the producers.

Attractive displays with readable information are great helps in selling. In addition, follow these pointers:

- use contrasting colored items to call attention to each offering (examples: red peppers beside zucchini, corn beside carrots, bell peppers beside yellow squash);
- be sure produce is clean (no dirt);
- don't display items with defects, such as insect damage or spoilage;
- use large bulk displays if possible
- offer more than one package size.

Be sure containers are attractive and clean. When selling by weight, be sure the package actually contains enough produce to meet the weight specified. Weight does not include the container. You can also use a “container” to measure the amount of products to be sold, and then keep the container for the next sale. (i.e. \$5/box of tomatoes).

Building a Clientele of Shoppers and Sellers

Thoughts to Consider

- Sell consistent quality.
- Be friendly and interested in customers.
- Establish policies helpful to sellers.
- Sell regularly and stay at the market.

The best way for a seller to succeed in a farmers' market is to develop repeat customers who return time after time. When the seller sells regularly, preferably from the same location, and comes each Saturday, or the same Saturday each month, customers learn to associate the seller with quality and concern and so patronize that seller repeatedly.

Success is not selling out quickly, but rather having enough produce to permit steady selling all day. Much is lost by sellers who lose patience and leave the market quickly. The most fruitful selling is done after the impatient sellers leave.

Friendliness with customers will open opportunities to suggest new uses for produce, thereby encouraging more sales. Recipes, proper handling guidelines, storage suggestions, and utilization procedures all show that the seller cares about the customer. After all, it is the seller's produce, and there should be some pride and sense of accomplishment in delivering a quality product to the market.

A clientele of sellers can be developed by: fairness in dealing with each seller; making it convenient to sell in the market in terms of layout, times of operation, good facilities, and parking; and, developing a faithful, growing customer group. Catering to low volume sellers may be appropriate since most sellers produce on only a few acres.

Customers

Thoughts to Consider

- Be prepared to meet consumers' needs.
- Strive for regular, repeat business.
- Set hours and days of operation with consumers in mind.

A careful study of potential consumers will help plan the market for their greatest convenience. Some markets are not patronized by potential consumers because: hours of operation are too early; market hours coincide with working hours, a considerable number of potential customers pay for food with food stamps or credit cards. Unless the market is able to accept food stamps or the individual sellers can accept credit cards, those segments of consumers may not patronize the farmers' market.

Studies indicate that customers give these reasons for shopping at farmers' markets:

Why Customers Shop at Farmers' Markets	Percent
Want fresher, better quality produce	46
Want cheaper price	14
Want larger quantities	13
Enjoy the market	10
More variety	9
Know the farmer	5

What to Bring on Market Day

1. Your space number and map – write down your space number when you receive your assignment. Bring a market map to help you locate the space.
2. Your space fee
3. Your products
4. Canopy
5. Canopy weights sufficient enough to hold your canopy in place
6. Tables, tablecloths, racks and/or shelves and other display equipment
7. Signage – you must bring a sign telling customers the name and location of your business. All of your products must have their prices clearly signed.
8. Plastic and/or paper bags, boxes, flats for customer purchases
9. Broom and dustpan for clean up
10. A certified scale (if appropriate)
11. Cash box and plenty of change
12. Promotional materials and business cards
13. Trash cans (you must take your garbage with you at the end of the day)
14. Pens, pencils, chalk, markers, calculators
15. Personal comfort items such as hats, scarves and drinking water
16. Smiles!

Practice setting your booth up at home! Work out all the logistics before you come to the Market. We can't stress this enough! Do not come to market and try to put up your canopy for the first time- it can be very frustrating! Practice in advance -- this will help your first real market day to run smooth and be less stressful.

Once you decide to make the commitment to selling in a farmers market, ask yourself:

- Is the Market a good fit for me?
- Do I clearly understand and agree with the rules of the Market?
- How am I going to compete against existing vendors? How will I stay competitive?
- How do I begin to build a customer base?
- Who will my employees be and how will I train them to sell my product?
- What am I going to do with fresh market product that doesn't sell? Do I have alternatives such as stores or farm stands to move unsold product after Market? Can I turn some of my unsold product into value added products such as jams or syrups so that it doesn't go to waste?

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
- 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 too 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