

The best of

"I have often thought that if heaven had given me a choice of my position and calling, it should have been on a rich spot of earth, well watered, and near a good market for the productions of the garden."

-Thomas Jefferson

Selling Outdoors

1991 - 1997

The newsletter of the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets

\$5

Including articles on...

- Ideas for Signs and Tags
- Dealing with Customers
- Scales
- Tips for Selling Produce
- Handy addresses and websites
- Starting a Farmers' Market
- Setting up at Market
- The Maine Farmers' Market Law
- Reports from the Markets
- *Plus several completely new articles*

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997

"We farmers and gardeners who sell at the state's Farmers' Markets are few and clustered in small groups. We are spread over many miles, but we have much in common. We need to share these things to better our own lives, and to strengthen the 'culture of the farmers' markets', both for the farmers and for the customers who use the markets."

—Tom Roberts, editor

When the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets was formed in 1991, the members thought one of the ways of establishing an identity for the organization was to publish a newsletter. For six years the quarterly publication *Selling Outdoors* was sent to all farmers' market members we knew of in the state, supported by the dues and fees collected by the Federation from the member markets. Over the years more than a dozen farmers' market members from one end of the state to the other expressed their views or reported on their markets in the newsletter's pages.

This volume represents a collection of some of the best articles that appeared in *Selling Outdoors* from the first issue in 1991 to the most recently published issue in 1998.

We hope you enjoy reading (or re-reading) at least a few of them, and we hope this volume helps raise everyone's general awareness and appreciation of the worldwide movement to sell food as locally and directly as possible that we are all part of.

Also included are the text of two of the brochures MFFM published, "So You're Thinking of Starting a Farmers' Market?" and "What do I need for Setting Up at Market?" along with articles which amplify their messages.

In 1992, the Maine Legislature passed a law defining what a farmers' market is. The law was written by several active market participants, and the text of the law is included herein, along with some commentary.

The farmers' market community is indebted to the market members who shared their thoughts with us: Ben Wilcox of Dixmont, Ellie MacDougall of Wells, Ed Lindsey of Charleston, Kate Slattery of Bethel, Bob Bowen of Brookswille, Dick Keough of Hebron, Jeanne Boelsma of Bethel, Ellen Tarbox of East Lebanon, Mike MacFarlane of Ellsworth, Ann Bennett of Cornish, Annette Austin of Springvale, Silas Weeks of Eliot, Sue Sergeant of Brunswick.

We would also like to acknowledge the assistance given by the several Co-operative Extension Service offices and the Maine Dept of Agriculture who have been helpful in making farmers' markets the success they are today.

About the editor: Tom Roberts moved to a blueberry farm on Twitchell Hill in Montville in 1971. From 1980 to 1994, he was a co-manager of Peacemeal Farm in Dixmont. Since 1995 he has operated Snakeroot Organic Farm in Pittsfield with his partner Lois Labbe. Tom started attending Brewer Farmers' Market in 1983, and now attends the Pittsfield and Orono markets, while Lois attends the market in Unity. Tom was a founding member of MFFM.

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* = New articles for 2000.

Note for the 2011 Edition: Since the original publication of these articles some 15 years ago, much of the contact info has gone sorely out of date. Keep this in mind while reading herein.

The Pound Weight of the Real

by Stanley Crawford

About 1985, for reasons somewhat obscure to me at the time, I decided to go back to the farmers' market on my own, leaving responsibility for the retail shop in Rose Mary's hands. The first years back at the markets I had little to sell besides garlic and onions. Nor was it easy for me to do it alone. I had come to depend on Rose Mary's melodious, questioning voice which always causes people to pause and look up from what they are doing. I had been the grower and the driver, the organizer of boxes, the packer and unpacker of pickup and station wagon, the one who put up and took down the stand. And the one who stood back and let her do the selling.

The first summers at the Santa Fe and Los Alamos markets were trying. A customer who later became a friend described how I would sit or pace behind my little stand of onions and garlic, a tall and forbidding presence, an angry or despairing expression clouding my face. In fact I was miserable. I was a solitary island of self-absorbed gloom surrounded by people buying and selling and having a good time at it. Eventually after sufficient pain I learned to busy myself when things were slow by straightening the stand or the back of the truck and chatting with neighboring farmer-sellers. Eventually I learned not to put my ego out there with my produce, and to engage with my customers as people, not as money dispensers, and to pay attention to what they were saying—or rather, how they were uttering the stock phrases and platitudes that accompany any exchange. It took me several seasons to see the markets as places of

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 sociability and conviviality and thus as relief from the more regimented and solitary aspects of the farm. And as I relaxed, customers began to feel at ease and would stop to chat and browse through the produce. Whether they bought or not became less important. What they were looking for or needed or liked or disliked became more interesting, and even whether they wanted to be pitched to or not, along with all those other signals they will emit, saying everything from "I know exactly what I want" or "I just want to know how much I owe you" to "I need somebody to talk to."

[Excerpted from page 181 of A Garlic Testament. Seasons on a Small New Mexico Farm by Stanley Crawford, Edward Burlingame Books, Harper-Collins Publishers, 1992, 241pp., ISBN 0-06-018207-S. This is a work by a writer with several books to his credit, so the prose of this book, which often comes arduously to many a farmer, flows quickly and is fun to read. Nevertheless, the perspectives given let the reader know that this author really has gotten dirt under his fingernails and is not just writing from an armchair view. You'll be reminded that the cultures of small scale agri-culture have much in common from New Mexico to Maine. If you are considering any of the aliums as a specialty crop or are looking for some fresh, detailed perspectives on small farm living, I recommend this book to you. - ed]

Customers from Hell

by Tom Roberts

Now of course we all realize that CUSTOMERS are the very reason for the existence of a farmers' market. Without customers, and customers in sufficient numbers, farmers markets are no more than the produce displays in the Ag Booths at the county fair, instead of the vibrant marketing centers of local farm products with roots in ancient history older than the coining of money itself. Customers are essential. But all customers are not created equal. Their appreciation varies considerably for the time and work you've invested leaving the farm to bring into their neighborhood the freshest and best quality farm products available. Most customers are just darlings, and you earnestly thank them for coming to shop just as they thank you for bringing them your harvest.

However, from time to time there will appear customers who seem to have been sent there to test your ability to handle difficult situations, who make you begin to seriously suspect that you have chosen the wrong line of work, or who suggest that you are stealing from the public by charging more than 20 cents a pound for anything. The problem may be ignorance of farming with its problems and seasons, or it may be sheer rudeness to you as the "clerk" upon whom they can take out their frustration (probably compensatory behavior for being low in someone else's pecking order.) They may be shopping with their own set of problems and frustrations in the back of their minds, wishing simply to push a few buttons, get tonite's supper, and be on to the next of the day's errands. They do not appreciate knowing the farmer who grew their

food, or talking to a real human being instead of institutional functionaries who know little of what they are selling.

Fortunately such customers are fairly rare, but it is not unknown for two or three to appear in rapid succession. These folks are what I call the "Customers from Hell." It is how you handle the Customers from Hell that builds both your character and your reputation as a direct marketer, and even how you feel about yourself at market. Here are several examples gathered from my own experience over several years:

1) It is a busy morning with a lengthening line of customers standing on the hot pavement, when someone comes in from the side declaring they are in quite a hurry, and would just like this one item, handing you the money. As you take time out from the customer in line to wait on them, the Customer from Hell spots one or two more things they hadn't seen before, and before you know it, is taking all of your attention from the one in line who waits her turn...

2) A well dressed woman arrives in a Volvo probably worth several times more than your market truck and all of its contents, and asks the price of your seedlings. Without looking at their quality, she huffs that you are too high, and that across town she can get them for 25 cents less, and walks away. Are you really too high? Should you offer to lower your price for her? Not at all. She may be telling the truth or lying to get you to come down. In either case, if you have determined that what you ask at this location is a fair price given the amount of work you've put into your seedlings and their quality, then stick to it. If she is open to a discussion of quality, variety, vigor, etc, then you can explain the value she'd be getting. But

apologizing for your prices and lowering them "on demand" is a sure route out of fanning. Let her spend another hour of time and several dollars in gas to drive across town to save a quarter. It's her pride or yours.

3) Every direct marketer has been asked to save a peck of peas at the first of the season for a regular customer. Occasionally someone asks you to save them one for next week, saying they'll be by in the late morning to pick it up. By mid morning you are out of peas, telling customers you have none. By mid afternoon, you put out the "saved" peck of peas to sell. Next market the Customer From Hell arrives all apologetic, but asks if you could save them another peck of peas. Such episodes are one reason I have a fairly consistent "first come, first served" policy. If I have to get up at 4:30 a.m. to load and drive to market, they can get there by 8 or 9 a.m. to get a product before it's all gone.

4) A potential customer stops at your stand, admires your berries, and asks the price. You tell her your strawberries are \$3.00 a quart. She then spies more berries on display a few stands away. She asks YOU how much HE is selling berries for, and you tell her \$2.50 a quart. She then marches over and buys two quarts of his less expensive berries, then heads back to her car. Should you have lied and told her you didn't know their price? (Of course every good marketer knows what everybody else at the market is selling by both price and quality.) No, this is one you just grin and bear (and share chuckles with that other strawberry grower over.) Looking at it philosophically, perhaps your "truth in marketing" reputation just went up a notch.

5) A seller with wet raked blueberries has not organized her selling operation to the ex-

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 tent that she has bags available to customers. A Customer from Hell walks past my clean dry berries selling for \$1 more a quart to purchase the wet ones. Then he returns to my stand to ask for a bag from my display to put their berries in. I did not have an appropriate response this time (it caught me from left field), but I believe I will explain to him outright next time why I feel this is very rude.

Some shoppers demand more of our time than others. Sometimes they are slower than the rest of us for reasons of age, illness, or style, and demand more attention from us while they are shopping. Or they may be the talkative type who may have a lot to say of interest to you (or maybe just to them!)

But luckily for us all, for every Customer from Hell there are dozens of Customers from Heaven who make you feel like a highly valued member of society doing some very important work, which of course you are! They will even help you set up your stand while they wait for you to get out what they came for. The majority of shoppers are not casual shoppers; rather they are PROFESSIONAL shoppers. They are performing their regular job and doing it to the best of their ability. Many do it especially well, spreading good feelings when they arrive and as they depart. It is those we should learn from, making everyone's day a little more pleasant with good humor.

Why Leaving Attracts Customers

by Tom Roberts

I am sure you have noticed. And I am sure you have commented to others in your market. In our market it is a commonplace understanding among those who have attended any length of time. The phenomenon in question is this: No matter how long a lull in customers you have endured, as soon as you start to pick up your display to go home, at least one customer, and more likely several, will immediately show up, asking for whatever it was you just put away. There are endless exaggerated variations to this, such as what they want will be what you put in first and is hardest to get at; that after seeing it, they will not really want it after all, or they will think your price is too high, and so on.

Although there may be some truth to some of these variations on the central theme that "starting to pack up attracts customers", it is the core phenomenon that I wish to address here. I have heard several theories put forward, some casual and some serious. Some members feel that perhaps customers are waiting just out of our sight for us to reach such a deep level of discouragement in selling our wares that we will give up and start to go home. At this moment, the shoppers-in-waiting will spring into action expecting to get the best possible deals. I do not believe most shoppers plan their purchases with such precision, nor do I feel this would result in the best prices anyway.

Some members believe that Murphy's Law governs most of what happens in their lives and the phenomenon in question is just one more example of this. I don't believe this

is a helpful view of things. Still others speculate that casual passers-by get hooked by a Now-Or-Never need to stop when they see you breaking camp.

After watching customer flow for eight years at market, I have developed a theory which I believe will explain, completely and scientifically, this phenomenon. My reasoning comes in two parts to fully understand it, so bear with me. First, as all traffic planners know, the movement of people left unregulated will not reach an even flow, but rather develop an ebb and flow, or a "pulse effect". When things are busy at the market, this is represented in lines at your stand getting variously longer and shorter. When business is slower, the effect can be seen as customers coming in pulses; after a lull, several cars will pull up at once and you'll be flooded with customers for a few minutes, soon to again be followed by a quiet spell.

This is probably familiar to everyone who's attended a market, or has even watched an intersection. The second part of my explanation requires applying this knowledge of the "pulse effect" to a sleepy afternoon when you have partly sold out and are debating whether to go home. Soon two cars pull in to buy; before they leave, another pulls in. After ten minutes, they are all gone, and you are left wondering again when to go home. What finally makes up your mind is sitting there awhile with nothing happening (while you think of all you could be doing back at the farm.) So you begin to pack up, when lo and behold, your very actions seem to attract another round of customers! Now you see what really has happened is that you used the pause between "pulses of customers" to make up your mind, and inadvertently timed your

picking up just as another pulse was due to begin!

The solution, of course is to decide during one of the lulls that IMMEDIATELY AFTER the next pulse, you will begin to pull up stakes, and not wait out the lull.

Customer Comments

The following are written comments by farmers' market customers made during the weeks of August 10 to 31, 1992 on "Save the Market" petitions at various farmers' stands at the Brewer Farmers' Market. At that time, the City Council declared the market open to all comers.

Please keep the market as is. It is superb! Thank You! - A.L., Brewer

The Way it is. - C.C., Brewer

Market is fine - Brewer City Council should find something else to do like run the city instead of fighting with farmers! - M.M., Brewer

I trust the produce I purchase at the Farmers Market and feel the quality will be jeopardized badly by mixing the peddlers with the farmers. - C.M., Bangor

Keep it the way it was, or make outsiders become members. Should stay an association. -P.C., Bucksport

Please leave as it has been since organized. I've been a customer since it began, always treated fairly and courteously. - L.S., Bangor

We have certainly enjoyed having you here. It gives us something to look forward to all winter! - A.C., Brewer

Leave it as it has been! -P.W., Dixmont

Have had good luck with the way it is, please keep it this way. - J.W., Dixmont

Keep it the same, please. - B.C., Dixmont

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We need it bad. -R.M., Brewer

Why change a great thing? - N.K., Brewer

Why change a good thing?! - A.W., Brewer

It's tough enough as it is. - G.A.W, Brewer

We need it!!- M.L., Brewer

I think the Brewer City Council is wrong, wrong, wrong to meddle with the market!! I like knowing the produce is locally grown by the people who are selling it. I can buy much of the produce up the street at Doug's at a cheaper price, but I like being able to talk to the people who supply the produce about different varieties (there's no one at Doug's to answer those types of questions) and I like the pride the growers take in their produce. Send the peddlers up to the shopping center to sell their goods at Doug's. -D.B., Brewer

This is a great farmers' market the way it has been. Don't ruin it by lowering the quality. -M.H., Bangor

Keep it the way it is. - S.C., Millinocket
Don't change. Keep it for Farmers only. Produce is great.- H.G., Millinocket

The farmers' market is good business for Brewer. Retain it as a quality market. - P.W., Brewer

Don't change a thing. Keep politics out of it. - B.K., Hermon

The Farmers Market - as it is- is a terrific community asset. Please don't change it. - C.B., Bangor

Brewer should pay more attention to more important business and leave the farmers market alone. -G.W., Bangor

A real asset. Council should leave the market alone. Would be tragic if the market left. Have been trading here for many years and think it is great. Keep politics out of it. -T.P., Brewer

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Brewer should reward the people who have put days, weeks, months into being consistent, dependable and high quality. There should be sensitivity towards the working farmer and this venue for marketing the crops. This is their livelihood and that's rewarding the free enterprise. Johnny-come-lately hobbyists should market their over abundance in other ways. -L.S., Bangor

Farmers only!-J.M., Brewer

For sure no buying for resale! Let the farmers bring us fresh produce! -K.G.R, Old Town

We want Fresh Produce. -C.S., Brewer

I like the fresh food and the friendly people. The flowers are great, too. Please stay. Thank you. -B.U., Hampden

I expect locally grown fresh produce only! - W.U., Orono

We value the farmers' market as it is. - R.N., Bangor

I enjoy the fresh, good priced produce. - J.G.

This area needs the farmers' market. Don't kill it please! -L.F., Bangor

Nature's way/Simple & Truthful. Let's keep it that way! - L.D., Medway

Yeah to fresh produce! This is the way food should always be! Keep it going! -J.S., Orono

Keep the quality. -L.V.A, Orrington

The market should be allowed to establish standards to maintain the quality of the produce sold! -M.G., Bangor

What would we do without you farmers! Let the people of Brewer sell out of the front of their homes. -J.B., Brewer

We need all of the farmers, not just the Brewer farmers. -P.O., Brewer

We need you badly.-P.M., Brewer

Where else would we go to get fresh produce. -M.J.S., Eddington

. Keep the market!! Brewer needs this! - M.M., Brewer

Keep it like it is! -E.D.M., Brewer

The market brings customers from away to the shopping centers and other businesses of Brewer, too! Let it be! -T & B. V., Brewer

Keep the market - it's great! -Rev. R.E.H., Brewer

Leave the market as it is - wonderful! - J.B.W., Bangor

This is a great place to trade. -I.H., No. Hampden

Don't change it. It's just right as it is. - C.E., Bangor

Gets us to shop in Brewer. Otherwise we would shop in Bangor. -G. & L.M, Bangor

A well organized market. Please don't tamper with it. -L.S., Bangor

Keep the farmers market in Brewer. -P.A., Brewer

Keep the farmers market as is. -A.K., Brewer

I am quite dependent on this market, both for fresh local produce and for socialization and friendly relationships. I shop here in addition to using several other Brewer businesses. If I weren't coming to the market, I probably wouldn't bother to cross the river. -M.T., Bangor

For years, when I lived in Bangor and Orono, I came to Brewer to buy at this farmers' market. I then did other shopping in area stores. If the market were not here, I would be buying in places other than Brewer. Keep the Farmers' Market here, as it is, with the high caliber quality and locally grown produce. It brings business into the city. - E.G., Brewer

The Brewer Farmers' Market is the mainstay of young and old alike. Why mess with a good thing! Leave it and all the people associated with it alone. -M.L.H., Orono

I regret the meddling of the Brewer City Council in the running of the Farmers' market by voting to allow peddlers to sell produce that they themselves have not grown. I have been a patron of the market since its inception and have truly enjoyed the high quality of their produce. I am saddened for the councilor who apparently lost his taste buds and has found only a mite of difference between the farmers market produce and that of the supermarkets. - E.L., Bangor (from a letter to the editor in the BDN, 29-Aug-92)

Keep the quality and freshness of vegetables and fruits. - L.H., Brewer

Always good stuff when from Market People. -G. & K. T, Brewer

Nothing but the Best. -B.B., East Holden

I respect this being a Fanners' Market; think the market master is doing a great job. - H.B., Brewer

This market is a big asset for Brewer. - Brings customers to other businesses in the community. -B. & T. Y. Brewer

Please, please keep this market as it is. It now has integrity, a rare commodity. -M.B., Orrington.

This is a blessing for people who work in Brewer. -L.M., Bangor

I think the market should be restricted to people who farm for a living - not just any [Brewer] resident. - J.B.K., Brewer

NOTE: Probably seventy percent of the people who signed the petitions did not add any written comments.

Food for Thought about Customers

by Dick Keough, Brunswick Market

1. How do you feel about your customers?
2. How do your customers feel about your farmstand?
3. Do you get cash tips from your customers?
4. Do your customers give you gifts?
5. Do you give needy people a gift of your product or a discount?
6. Do you get asked to help local groups and do you? Do you get thank you letters, or donation receipts you can use for tax purposes?
7. Do you share your knowledge if asked a question?
8. Do you greet each person with a smile?
9. Do you greet each person with a good morning or good afternoon?
10. Do you point out the good things about each day?
11. Do you demonstrate the happiness in you to each customer by the warmth of the words you use in your verbal exchange?
12. Do you try to learn your customers' names and use them?
13. Do you keep a customer card file (a customer profile)?
14. Do your customers call you at home, and say please bring me ____ ? Or check on a crop?
15. Do your customers bring you a hot apple pie or a hot breakfast or hot lunch or other goodies?
16. Do you feel you are a part of a Market's success?
17. Do you feel you need to be more regulated by the state or federal government?
18. If new regulations are explained showing the need for that regulation and the benefits of

that regulation, would you feel better about the regulation?

19. Do you feel the sales people who help you at market are doing a better job of selling your product than you are?

20. If you have kids helping to sell your product, are they doing a good job? How do your customers react to the kids?

21. Do you say "thank you" after the sale?

22. Do you tell the customers the next day you will be at market?

23. Do you tell the customers of a new product you will soon have? Thank you for thinking!

The Importance of Customer Satisfaction

- It costs 5 times as much to get a new customer as it does to keep a current customer.
- 26 out of 27 customers who have had a bad experience with you won't tell you and 91% of non-complainers won't come back.
- 13% of those dissatisfied customers will spread the news to twenty or more people.
- Reducing the creation of dissatisfied customers by 5% can increase profitability in most businesses by 25% to 100%.
- The only way to retain your customers is to constantly exceed their service quality expectations, which means you must first identify those expectations and then determine how satisfied your customers really are.

The Sho of Market

by Tom Roberts

In many Japanese martial arts, there is a differentiation between the SHO (say 'show') of the art and the DO (say 'dough') of the art. Basically, the DO is the functional part of the art, how to make the movements and what they are useful for, both in terms of spiritual centering and self-defense. On the other hand, the SHO is the performance aspect of the art, the aspect that concentrates on how it looks to an observer, how nicely the movements are performed, etc. Crudely we might think of the SHO as "showing" the art, and the DO as the "doing" of the art.

One has to have the DO of the market pretty well under control in order to focus on the SHO, or "show business part" of the market. But there should be no doubt about it. In any venture dealing with the public there is a component of the "show". The show most marketers are familiar with borders on the DO, such as how to attractively arrange the produce to attract the eye and how to keep it that way during the hours of the market.

But being at market is also "show business", pure and simple. Maybe you don't like that part, or maybe you love it. Maybe you are good at the show, or maybe you are too self-conscious. But without a doubt, the market is a media actually one of the best media. The look, the feel, and the experiences people remember when they recall the market will rank at least as highly in a market's success as the quality of the food found there.

This is because going to the market is, for most customers, an extra thing to do, an out-of-the-way exercise. They do it because they want the quality produce, but they continue to do it

(remember repeat sales are the key to any market's success) because the experience was pleasant, fun, educational, something to be remembered with fondness. Something they like to do.

So how do you do the SHO? Well, remember that peripheral events are not key. Hired clowns, balloon giveaways, bands playing, and the like are not inherently OF the market. They are AROUND the market, they are frills apart from the core market experience. For many, they actually detract from the market experience.

The true "market SHO" must consist only of YOU and YOUR PRODUCE. Those are the only two props you are allowed, and customers make all their "Should I go to market today?" judgments primarily on remembrance of those two factors. Like the stand-up comedian or vaudeville act, the sparseness of the context puts the focus on you.

YOUR PRODUCE must be of exceptional quality. You must learn to compost that which falls to supermarket quality. You must learn to paint with your produce like Van Gogh painted with oils. Compose your displays, never throw them together. Carrots, scallions, beets, radishes, and not carrots, radishes, beets and scallions. Why? Think of the colors and how they interact. Display tomatoes in blue containers and never red ones. Everything displays well against brown. Don't use blue tarps (what happens to the color of your produce under a blue tarp?). Wash your produce before it gets displayed; don't display soil. You should be able to discuss for five minutes why you have set out everything as you have each day. On overcast or rainy days make big exhibits of wilt-ables in full view up front, because today they won't wilt. Pile carrots

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 bunches and multicolored lettuces so high that passing cars will screech to a halt and pull in to buy. Build your shows with such an attitude, and your customers will be impressed. How do you know? Because they will tell you in so many words.

YOU are also a very important part of your display. Are you grim or unconcerned, wishing you could be somewhere else (and showing it)? Is it cold or rainy and you are uncomfortable? Is it 90 degrees in the shade and keeping your produce looking good is a constant juggle? Do you think a customer wants to know all about it? Probably not. Occasionally a customer wants to talk shop with you, but this is the exception. Mostly they want to know how you can help them, and they have already gone out of their way to arrive at your stand, so it is time for the show to begin!

Return the favor of their coming here with courtesy and humor, regardless of how you feel inside. They don't know they are the fiftieth one today to ask for the com you don't have. So hold up a cuke and say "yes, right here! Oh, isn't this corn???" Or pretend to be confused as though you never heard of such a thing as "corn". Or explain compassionately you have no corn, and the next com will be in next August. "You mean next year?" "Yes! So mark your calendar!" Use your judgment as to which approach this customer will like best. (Sometimes you will be wrong, but getting around their annoyance at your antics will be your next on-the-job training.) Snow Peas—do you know why they are called Snow Peas? 'Cause "there's no peas in 'em!" A customer walks up with several bunches of beets. You ask them, "Two Beets or Not Two Beets, that is the question!" When they tell you with a smile just how many bunches they have, you

comment that you are glad you now know the answer to that age-old question. If they approach with a lettuce a cuke and a tomato, tell them you can see a salad in their future. You soon learn to eliminate those remarks you might make that could be considered smart-alecky or rude, and to tailor your remarks to the mood of the customer. Know when to be serious and know when to be funny. Develop the instinct for it.

Your involvement in the transaction should also show that you consider them a person; that you are there to solve their problem of not having the great garden that you do. Research new ways of using produce - tempura rutabaga slices, use napa instead of iceberg in a salad or sandwich, sprinkle cut up snow peas in a salad. A simple cheery "Good Morning!" to every customer is something else they can't get at the supermarket. Besides making them feel welcome, it also acts to 'break the ice' should they wish to ask a question about the produce, but it does not solicit a commitment from them the way that the phrase "Can I help you?" does. (Note that the mega-merchant Wal-Mart is trying something similar with the stooges it puts at the entrances to greet entering customers.)

"Do you take checks?" a timid customer may ask. "Only if they are good!" is my smiling reply. And if they offer their license when they hand over the check, I remark that they will need that license to drive home, so I don't need it. "Yes, we take cash, checks, food stamps and WIC checks, but we don't take American Express!" In other words, take the tension out of the transaction. Show the customers that you are their friend, that you want to help them, and you would like to make this transaction as much fun as possible. Tell the

kids "Don't forget to bring mom (or dad) back for more carrots!" Allow, even encourage sampling of your produce. In short, by putting on an entertaining show for them, you "show" them you are glad they are there. This is a subtle and indirect message, but one that endears your customers to you. And that spells repeat business.

Over time you will build up a library of your own comments, jokes, and ways of making the buying transaction pleasant for your customers that is unlike anyone else's. Of course listening to the ways others handle their customers and the quips they make are fertile ground for your own ideas. And don't just look at your market, but notice also when you are the customer how you are made to feel good about being there. (Or not! Learn from other retailers bad examples, too For example I absolutely hate being made to wait in line at a checkout when some personal conversation is being made at the register. Avoiding doing this at my stand is often one of my biggest challenges.)

All of this is entirely apart and separate from how you are feeling that day. It is a measure of your professionalism how well you can pull this off each and every day, day after day. It is your "green grocer duty" to put the customer first, not to wear your cares on your sleeve. And, yes, it is one of the parts of the job that is emotionally draining. Show business is not easy, even if it is fun at times. It is acting because it is not simply "being yourself. You are filtering and designing your behavior for a purpose. You play the idiot, the scholar, the clown, the wit, and of course, the farmer.

It certainly means a shifting of gears from pulling weeds, trellising tomatoes, and washing carrots. The ability to center your thoughts and activity on customers for the purpose of

selling your produce will help you recognize and honor the place that ordinary people play in your activity of growing food.

Signs: Legibility & Effective Use

by Ben Wilcox

The standard advertising medium encountered by the public is quite sophisticated. Making a sign attractive and legible will align your organization in the customer's mind with other businesses successful enough to advertise. Poorly made signs will convey an unprofessional organization, which may conduct other important aspects of its business haphazardly. A well designed sign can convey "rustic" or "old fashioned" without being illegible or crudely made.

Tips to Improve the Legibility of Signs:

1) Minimize the number of words used to reduce the time required to read the sign. This goes a long way towards reducing the inherently longer horizontal dimension of words, and also minimizes your painting time.

2) (Horizontally) condensed type styles fit more words in shorter spaces. This becomes counter-productive if the style is TOO condensed to read well.

3) Larger type sizes require bolder styles to look good on signs. Small bold fonts can be repeatedly enlarged on xerox if necessary to serve as patterns for large lettering.

4) Arrange any sign with the most important information in largest size type, and progressively "less important" info in smaller size type. Different colored print can effectively be used to divide a sign into categories of information, making it easier to understand.

5) Symbols or words + symbols convey a lot more information in a smaller space than just words alone.

Effective Use of Signs:

Locating signs in areas where the market IS NOT (such as approach routes to a town or in other areas that produce shoppers frequent) can remind people the market is open. If necessary, this can be put up just for the market day and taken down again.

Permanent signs at the market location overcomes the invisible nature of farmers' markets which are typically open only a few hours a week. Again, these promote the market at times or locations when there are no farmers present to do so.

Farm name signs are important in creating an individual identity at the market and help customers return to your booth when they go shopping. Also, they project a competent assurance that the vendor is proud to be personally associated with the quality of the produce sold.

Simple Signs

by Tom Roberts

There is a need for temporary, easy to put up and take down signs for most farmers' market situations. These may be for announcing "FARMERS' MARKET TODAY", or "FARMERS' MARKET 1000 FT" or it may be to announce your own farm's presence or just "Sugar & Gold", "Native Melons", or whatever brings 'em in. The basic design will vary depending whether you need a permanent sign or one that might change weekly, and whether it needs to be hand-carried to its setup site or just gets leaned against your truck.

SURFACE OF THE SIGNS...

The surface of the sign should start out fairly smooth. Rough wood or plywood will usually result in a poor quality, short-lived sign. Permanent signs I've seen that are effective are usually well thought out, not quickly slapped together. The cutout shape of com-on-the-cob, a strawberry or an apple help, along with the paint job, to convey the sign's message. Custom made signs that are not too commercial looking help set the tone for a "homegrown image" for your market. Yes, the commercial type where you slide the lettering in for product and price are easy, but only serve to remind the customer of the larger indoor markets, and encourage, I believe, a "low price shopper" mentality. The identity we foster should, I believe, remind customers of the farmer and her/his garden, and not of the supermarket.

BLACKBOARD PAINT.

Any size or shape sign, or any part of a sign, can be made into a blackboard with "blackboard paint". This is a slate-containing paint retailing in better paint stores for around \$9 a quart. It is painted onto a smooth wood, masonite, or metal surface, and ordinary chalk can be used to write your message. "Dustless" chalk makes a finer line, but often a wide line is what is desired. Colored chalks make a more attractive sign, and allow your artistic talents to emerge. Plain white, yellow or colored chalks erase easily, and when rained upon, may require re-doing. Poster pastels, or artist's oil-based chalks have much more brilliant colors and withstand repeated wettings with little loss of quality. However "erasing" them usually means a good scrubbing with detergent and water, so be sure what you have to say in these brighter colors will not have to be changed weekly. Sun will fade their brilliance in a few weeks, but even then they are more brightly colored than the ordinary "erasable" colored chalks.

WIPE-ABLE SURFACES.

Smooth, usually white "melanite" surfaces are used by the Good Earth Farm at the Brewer Farmers' Market to display a list of their items and prices. Non-permanent type markers in a wide range of colors are used to write like chalk onto the surface, which are then just wiped clean with a cloth when changes are needed. These messages run worse than chalk if rained upon, but if kept dry and not accidentally rubbed in transport, they will last for weeks.

SUPPORT OF YOUR SIGN...**SLOTTED BLOCKS.**

Stuck way out onto the grass to identify a naturally somewhat small display of a table of blueberries, the Beddington Ridge Farm's sign consists of two short (1 ft.) pieces of old beam (8" x 8") with a slot cut halfway into them via a chainsaw. These blocks are set a few feet apart and the 1 foot high and 5 foot long sign is slipped into the slots. The length of the blocks, which is perpendicular to the sign, could be increased to stabilize an even taller sign. Short pieces of lightweight cedar log work well also, but they will roll around a bit until the sign is placed into the slot. I have never seen one of these blow over in the wind, unless the height of the sign was greater than the length of the logs.

TIED TO A POST.

If the sign will be located somewhere that it can be easily tied to a phone pole, guard rail, sign post, etc., then you can tailor your sign to this position by drilling two holes in it about 8-12 inches apart at the same height from the ground, about half way up the sign. Then pass a rope through the holes, so that both ends of the rope protrude out the back of the sign. This rope stays with the sign at all times, and is used to tie it in position. A good

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 quality poly rope that is the same color as the sign makes it almost invisible to the reader. On Saturday mornings the Camden market uses such a sign on Route 1 to announce it's location a few hundred yards down a side street

IN A WEIGHTED APPLE BOX.

A three foot high sign whose width is exactly the same as the diagonal of an apple box is used by Peacemeal Farm in Brewer to identify their farm and specials of the day. Set out by the side of the road and weighted with nearby rocks, the apple box becomes a stand that accepts the sign being slid into it. The rocks are added after the sign is in place. A good wind is needed to blow it over.

JUST LEANED AGAINST YOUR TRUCK.

In some ways this is the ideal, for it combines most closely your display and your sign. However, your vehicle may not always be the best place for your sign in terms of attracting notice. Also, unless fastened securely, the wind knocks it over, where it may stay until you notice. And one party (who shall remain nameless here) has more than once packed up and driven away—right over her sign!

Fairfield survey indicates market signage very important

by Tom Roberts

When the Fairfield Farmers' Market started in 2000, our knowledge of our customer base was nearly zero. So we performed a simple market survey in July and early September. One of the members asked each person who stopped by the market what town they lived in, how they heard about the market, what they were looking for and whether they found it. Forty two responses were recorded.

Twenty-two responses indicated they learned about the market from our signs (a Farmers' Market Today sandwich board at each of two entrances and a banner across Main Street) or were just driving by.

Sixteen heard of us through our paid advertising in two newspapers and one radio station costing altogether around \$2,000.

Another six heard of us through the WIC program.

This told us that by far our most important and cost-effective promotion was our presence at market and nearby signs directing

people into our location. The banner and signs cost almost \$1,000, but we will still have them in coming years, so they will continue to work for us.

For the 2001 season we will be getting four Maine D.O.T. signs located at nearby intersections that are out of view of the market.

The Fairfield Market had ten members for the 2000 season. The market was initially organized by the Town of Fairfield and the Kennebec County Council of Governments with a \$5,000 grant they received and matched with \$2,000 worth of time from their employees. During the summer, the market members, most of whom met each other for the first time at the April and May organizational meetings, have become a cohesive unit which will be able to manage the market by themselves in the future.

Don't Use Hanson Hanging Scales

by Tom Roberts

The first issue of Selling Outdoors contained an article about the State Bureau of Weights and Measures ruling on the Hanson scales that are commonly used at farmers' markets. That ruling made it clear that in 1992 there should be no more Hanson hanging scales in use at markets. Although the following may cloud that issue somewhat, most market members are realizing that the powers that be are making the use of Hanson scales a legal liability to the seller.

During a protracted discussion about Hanson hanging scales at the 10-Apr-92 meeting of the Federation at the Dept of Ag's shop on the Cony Road, we invited Stanley Millay, Dept of Weights and Measures supervisor, in for a grilling. Here are some of our questions to him, and his answers: (We thank Connie Skov for her many penetrating questions that helped to get at a functional definition of weighing and packaging laws that pertains to farmers at market.)

Will Hanson hanging scales pass inspection? No, because the Hanson company has not applied for "handbook 44 compliance", which is required for accuracy in weighing fruits and vegetables at the point of retail sale. Hanson no longer manufactures scales labeled "legal for fruits and vegetables only" and intends their scales to be used only for customer estimation of

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 weights prior to sale. However, he also said scale sealers will "reluctantly pass old Hanson scales if they are old and labeled 'for fruits and vegetables only' and still weigh correctly." If a scale sealer made contact with you last year, and told you not to use your Hanson scale, then you may not use it. If the scale tester finds you for the first time this year, you have a month to stop using your Hanson scale. This is often up to the local scale sealer, not all of whom, by the way, are state employees some are independents working on a commission. Independents get some training, but field decisions are made "on the spot" and are dependent upon local circumstances. All scales that Hanson manufactures have a sticker on the box stating they are not legal for trade, but it is known that these stickers often get removed between the factory and the point of sale.

Does a seal expire? If your scale has a seal on it with a date, all this means is that your scale passed at that date. The seal is good only until the scale is no longer weighing accurately, or is re-tested. Weights and Measures tries to annually test all scales known to be in use.

How can a Hanson Scale be used in retail trade? Either by letting the customer use it for estimation of a purchase, or by using it yourself at home for weight estimation when prepackaging items for sale at market. Putting up 1 lb. packages ahead of time with a Hanson scale is OK, but a prepackaged item sold by weight must be labeled as to the weight. If the weight variation from package to package is a net negative (say on a test weighing of 10

packages the average is less than the stated label weight) then you are in violation of the labeling law, irrespective of whether you used a Hanson scale or just guessed the weights. If, however, the variation on a sampled lot is zero or positive, then there is no violation. Labels must include what the product is, who packaged it, and the net weight or volume.

What constitutes pre-packaging? Pre-packaging means you determine the weight or volume outside the customer's presence. It is the opposite of "selling in bulk". This includes putting a price tag on a pumpkin based on its weight times a price per pound, if that is how it is sold. Putting an elastic around a bunch of the product is considered prepackaging. However, the way it is sold is critical here. It is perfectly OK to then sell them by the bunch, rather than by weight or volume. Then, "what you see is what you get", with no reference to weight or volume (a bunch of radishes, for example, but you could bunch green beans, if your customers would put up with that!)

What if these laws are just ignored? The first time you are caught, you are issued a verbal warning. The second time, the state is notified and you are sent a certified letter stating the complaint. It rarely gets beyond this, but when it does, tare weight violations can carry a \$2500 fine.

Why do we use computer scales?

by Bob Bowen

When we started in the farmers market, we sold chickens and meat with a small (and CHEAP!) set of table scales. They weren't sealed for retail sales but no one caught us. And we kept checking them to assure us that we were being fair. And we tended to charge to the nearest 1/4 pound under the mark.

Well, as we grew, I was trying to figure how to make more money without raising the prices of our products and realized that if we charged the exact amount or the weight being sold, we would probably make a lot more.

One night, we sat around and figured if we sold 6,000 chickens a year (which we were) and we missed the real weight by 1/4 pound a bird, that would mean we weren't getting paid for 1,500 pounds a year. And since we were getting \$2.00 a pound, that meant we were losing \$3,000 a year. Not a bad raise for doing no more work!!

We ordered a set of dual power scales (battery or 110 volt) and we have used them for three years. Since we now sell 8,000 plus chickens, 400 turkeys, and over a ton of sausage a year, you can imagine how much we are making from these scales!!

They cost us \$400 at the time and can be bought for about that now. I wouldn't think of being without them again.

Anyone selling products that have a high price and are sold by weight, would benefit from accurate weights. And they figure the selling price also.

Now for the register!

On our farm, there are now my wife and I plus an apprentice or two that have products at the farmers' markets. We used to try to keep track of each sale, but for us, that didn't work well. In self defense, my wife bought me a dual power cash register that has ten departments that can be assigned to people or products. That way, we each have a number and the sales are run into the machine. It totals the sale and assigns a code to each item. At the end of the market, I just hit the report button and it spits out a tape with the totals of the sales by dept. Then we can pay everyone what they are due and life goes on. The only drawback is that the register can't be in the rain. And direct sun for hours will fade out the numbers for the duration. We just keep it in the shade or the truck. The scales can take light rain, but I wouldn't overdo it.

Batteries

In our case, we do four markets and found that we could go all summer with two sets of batteries as long as we managed them. No customers, no power. Finally, I ended up buying a power inverter from Radio Shack and plug them into it. It runs off the truck battery and works great. This unit costs \$70.

If you do much, these items will pay for themselves fast! I do miss the easy way we used to work. But this was a good raise.

Bob attends the Ellsworth, Deer Isle, Blue Hill and Stonington Farmers' Markets.

Creating customer bonds with presence, abundance, and generosity

by Tom Roberts

Traditional retailing wisdom says it is of the utmost importance to give customers exactly what they pay for. Any less, and you are cheating the customer; any more and you are cheating yourself.

Being rather non-traditionalist myself, allow me to offer an amended view.

Many markets and farmers have a budget for what they refer to as promotion. This consists of getting the word out about them, their products, how to find them and so forth.

I have always felt that there are two very important parts of promotion that many marketers ignore. One is presence, the other generosity.

Early in the season, or if a market is in a new location, actually being there at market, set up ready to sell, can be one of the best forms of promotion of all. There is nothing like your actual presence at market to promote your farm or market to passers-by and early season shoppers. Although this takes some money, it mostly takes commitment and time on your part. People who stop to buy or just to look, and even those who only notice you as they pass by, have made a mental note that you are there and ready to sell. And this message, after all, is a large part of any paid advertising campaign. Yet you have done it "on the cheap", and with authenticity, not

hype.

You have accomplished a great chunk of promotion through "guerilla marketing" instead of going through traditional and costly channels. And you have "subsidized" your costs through any sales you made.

Now let's hold a magnifying glass to the sales transaction itself.

Once you have brought shoppers into your market arena, the next step is to create a bond with them which goes beyond the food-for-money sales transaction. I am not saying that this transaction alone does not create bonding. It certainly does and quality of the product and cheerfulness in the process go a long way toward strengthening that bond.

As any wise merchandiser knows, abundance of the display makes purchasing more likely. We all like to pick from a big display rather than from a tiny one. Some of this comes from a sense of greater choice, but some comes also from partaking in that abundance.

Yet at the actual point of sale, where the sales transaction is taking place, there needs to be an alternative to the cold calculus of money-for-food. When the scales read a little over two pounds, I call it two pounds, whether the customer is watching or not. When they are watching, they realize they are getting a gift; and since they soon learn that I always do it that way, they don't feel as though they owe me anything. That's just a generosity with which I do business. And it becomes a generosity, like abundance, they enjoy partaking in. I see the few pennies of produce this costs me as part of my promotion budget and I believe it is a few pennies well spent. I like, too, that this

part of my promotion budget is going directly to the people who keep me in business, not to an advertising agency or commercial media.

From the customer's point of view, that personal interaction between buyer and seller, although it may only take a few moments, makes the difference between satisfaction and mediocrity; feeling good about shopping at market, or just doing another chore.

From the seller's point of view, the interaction between buyer and seller is a re-affirmation of our livelihood, a shopper's vote by dollars that we are doing the right thing by them and with our lives. We need to feel we have brought a little happiness into people's lives by the interactions we have with them.

Why do we do all this? One reason is to make more money at market, for sure. I won't deny that. If we don't do well at market, we won't be back. But if that is the only reason, then we are not only shortchanging our own spirits, but betraying the culture of agriculture itself. We do it to counteract the poisonous dominant culture that separates farmer from eater. We do it to create bonds between ourselves and the people who rely on us to keep doing what we do.

In today's world of shoppers separated physically and emotionally from their needs, sales transactions are mercilessly exploited by a greedy corporate paradigm that all too many sellers follow like it was gospel. The selling transaction is reduced to its prom value, and shoppers become simply consumers of goods. As a retailer, I have the power to display the same joy in selling that I feel in farming. And joy, like love, grows the more you give it away.

Selling by Variety:

Does it work?

by *Jeanne Boelsma, Bethel Farmers' Market*

Two main reasons customers shop at Farmers' Markets are freshness and taste. I have found that by planting specific varieties with excellent taste and other outstanding characteristics, I can enthusiastically recommend a variety, knowing the customer will be back for more.

I like to plant the sweetest, corniest flavor com varieties. When looking for a new variety, I look for ones with the se+ (sugary enhanced gene, homozygous for extra sweetness). They are easier to grow than super sweets, are almost as sweet and have a more corny flavor. Two favorites are Sugar Buns, a yellow corn (Fedco) and Platinum Lady, a white com. This year I plan to trial some "Kiss 'n Tell" from Johnny's, a promising bi-color.

I find that my customers almost all ask for "sugar and gold", a generic term for any bi-color. They think that a bi-color is the best tasting, regardless of variety. I have found it is generally useless to try to explain the genetics of corn breeding to them. When I have Sugar Buns, and they ask for sugar and gold, I tell them to buy a dozen Sugar Buns. If they don't like it as much OR MORE then sugar and gold, I will give them a free dozen the next week.

The biggest problem with the corn is, that by the time I get customers hooked on a variety, it's gone by and I have a new variety ready and have to start the process all over again. But I am finding that in the long run, customers tend to remember that the best corn they have had came from my stand, and they

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 will be back for more.

In the height of corn season, when every vendor at the market has bushels of corn, I believe it is possible to carve out a niche for yourself by offering consumers the sweetest and best tasting corn available. Tell them the variety name, be enthusiastic about it, and don't be afraid to guarantee it. you may have to give a free dozen now and then, but I believe the benefits of increased sales to other customers will far outweigh the few that may come back and tell you they have had better. There is always the chance of someone taking advantage and looking for a handout, but I have found the majority of people are honest and will tell you how much they liked it.

I also think it is worth it to sell some other vegetables by named variety, but only when I find an outstanding variety and I think the customer will definitely notice the difference. A few examples I have found outstanding are Rondino carrots (try a taste test at market, side by side with another variety), in muskmelons, Pancha is mouthwatering, juicy and incomparably sweet, with just the right amount of muskiness. It is also an attractive melon and nice size.

Yukon Gold potatoes with their flavorful taste and distinctive yellow flesh. These are varieties customers liked and remember by name. Carola potatoes are a variety I haven't tried but wanted to as it is similar to Yukon Gold, but with more disease resistance. Early Cascade tomatoes are so much a favorite among my customers, that many come directly to my stand ask for them by name. All varieties mentioned are available from Fedco Seeds and/or Johnnys.

The education of the consumer is an essential part of selling and it fits in particularly

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well at a farmers' market, where the consumer gets a chance to meet the grower face to face, to realize we are real people, and we can offer them much much more than any grocery store produce counter. People shop farmers' markets for the experience as much as the produce and we can increase our sales at the same time we are helping the consumer to become a discerning buyer.

Bagged or Bulk?

by *Tom Roberts*

I was astounded when I discovered for myself a few years back how many more carrots and potatoes would sell when I bagged them!

Carrots are a specialty of Peacemeal Farm. We begin the year with young bunched carrots in July, which continue through until late October. By late August we begin to bring in washed bulk carrots. By late September, we have differentiated our bulk carrot offerings into washed No. 1 (pretty) carrots for store displays, washed No. 2 (ugly) carrots for juicing and processing, and unwashed field run carrots for home storage. We are getting .80/lb. for No. 1's loose or \$16.00 (.64/lb.) in 25 lb. bags.

What has amazed us is that when we developed an in-between size, (\$2.50 for 3 lbs.), our retail carrot sales at the market increased by three to five times. The bag has the MOFGA Organic label stuck on it, a 1x2 Peacemeal Farm label inside the bag, and actually costs more than buying the carrots loose. We are tapping into some kind of psychology here which I am sure more sophisticated merchandising specialists have known for decades. We still leave the bulk carrots on

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display, often as much to offer samples from as to sell out of. And we make sure that there are some bags with big carrots and some with small, to meet everyone's preferences.

Similarly, we are starting to package potatoes in 10 lb. window bags, and find that this swiftly sells the small to medium sizes (2"-3") that were selling quite slowly on the stand. Where we were selling bulk potatoes for .80/lb., we get \$6.00 for a 10 lb. bag, which we are quite happy with, and our customers seem to be too.

Of course, someone might object that this adds needlessly to the packaging, yet the person buying the 3 lbs of carrots or 10 lbs of potatoes was still going to use a bag when they bought them from the bulk bin, the only difference is that now the packing process is done for them. Additionally, the potatoes displayed outdoors already in a paper bag are not being subjected to the greening effect of sunlight. Carrots in a plastic bag are not being dried out by the wind (but keep the bags out of the direct sun!)

A further objection might be that the "atmosphere" of the market is degraded by offering packaged produce rather than bulk only, on the theory that the more packaging customers see, the more like a supermarket our market will seem. To this I say that there is a big difference between the cavernous fluorescent lighted supermarket and my small stand with fresh local produce only hours old being displayed under the sky with the kindly proprietor roaming about filling the display, answering questions and offering an open roll bag to customers who are struggling to open one. Furthermore, we must remember that although both we and our Tustomers may often say what we don't like about super markets,

we should remember that supermarkets are not all bad and in fact are doing many things right. They should be one of our schools, and we should play the role of the ever-skeptical student, picking and choosing what we can glean from our competition.

Hints on Selling Fresh Produce

Extracted from a 1985 Massachusetts Co-op Extension primer -

As a seller, you represent your goods. Dress the part. Bare skin and feet, dirty-sloppy appearance and a bad attitude does not promote sales. Aside from the health consideration, the vendors appearance is part of what the customer sees. Farming is not a clean business, but a farmer can look like a farmer and still be tidy. Your produce should also be tidy.

Prepare for selling by having various selling bags, adequate change (\$25 worth), adequate containers for cash and food stamps and proper clothing for the weather forecast.

Containers used to display your products should be clean and in good condition. Invest in clean, bright splinter free units. This will improve the appearance of the produce and reduce injuries.

Selling by count is often faster than weighing, depending on the size and what the commodity is. Be sure all your produce is clean.

Remember, all produce is alive after harvest and neat things are going on inside. Reduce temperature and increase humidity on all perishable fruits and vegetables after harvest.

This will slow down respiration which results in tissue deterioration and desiccation

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 or wilting, which reduces the weight quickly. Start off with high quality and do all you can to maintain that quality even after the produce is in the hands of the consumer.

Unit Sizes for various products

Asparagus - Wholesaled in pyramid crate, 24 bunches or 24-28 lbs. Retail by the bunch or pound.

Beans - Wholesaled by bushel or hamper 24-30 pounds. Retail by the pound.

Beets - Wholesaled by the bushel or crate and retailed by the pound. A bushel should contain 12 or 18 bunches or 50 lbs.. if topped. A bushel of greens is 15 lbs. Bunches consist of 5-6 small beets, 3- 4 medium (2-2 1/2 inch diameter) or 2-3 large beets.

Broccoli - Wholesaled in bushel crate of 25 pounds or 14 bunches. Retail by the bunch or pound.

Cabbage - Wholesaled by the 1-3/4 bushel crate of 50 pounds. A crate of Chinese cabbage is 30 pounds. Retail by the pound or each.

Carrots - Wholesaled by bushel with 18 bunches or 50 pounds loose carrots. Retail with tops by the bunch, 4-7 carrots.

Cauliflower - Wholesaled in crate with 6-12 heads and weighs 30 pounds. Retail by the head.

Celery - Wholesaled in bushel box with 12 large, 18 medium or 24 small bunches. Retail by the bunch.

Cukes - Wholesaled in 1-1/9 box weighing 50-55 pounds or a carton of about 2 dozen weighing 25 -30 lbs. Retail by the pound or each.

Eggplant - Wholesale 1-1/9 box weighing 40 lbs. Retail each.

Lettuce - Wholesaled by bushel. Retail by

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 the head.

lettuce 18 heads weighing 20- 25 pounds. Retail by each. Leaf lettuce 15 pounds. Retail by the pound.

Melon - Wholesaled by box weighing 60 pounds. Retail by the pound or each. Hint: Customers will accept a higher price when by the pound rather than each.

Onion - Wholesaled in 50, 25, 20, 10 or 3 pound sacks. Retail by pound or sack.

Parsley - Wholesaled by bushel crate with 60 bunches weighing 15 pounds or 4/5 bushel with 30 bunches. Retail by bunch.

Peppers - Wholesaled bushel or 1-1/9 crate weighing 24 lbs. Retail each or pound.

Peas - Wholesale by the bushel basket, weight varies. Retail by pound. Shelled peas loose 1/2 their purchased weight. Sugar snap loose 2% when strings are removed. Edible pod peas lose no purchased weight. Retail prices should be based on comparative edible weight.

Pumpkin - Wholesaled by ton, 50 pound crate or pound. Retail by each or pound.

Radish - Wholesaled 48 bunches, 25 pounds, in 1-1/9 crate or 36 bunches in 4/5 crate. Retail by bunch.

Rhubarb - Wholesaled loose in bushel, 40 pounds or 4/5 bushel at 20 lbs. Retail by pound or bunch with 6-8 stalks.

Spinach and Swiss Chard - Wholesaled by 1-1/9 crate weighing 18 lbs., Retail by the pound.

Summer Squash - Wholesaled by 5/9 or 1/2 bushel crate. 1/2 bushel weighs 20 pounds. Retail by each or pound.

Winter Squash - Butternut, acorn and butternut by bushel or 1-1/9 bushel. Larger squash by ton at \$/lb. Retail by pound or each.

Sweet Corn - Wholesale is 4 1/2-5 doz. unhusked ears per bushel weighing 35 pounds.

Retailed by dozen or each. When corn is very expensive, selling by each is advantageous to customer and vendor.

Tomatoes - Wholesaled by boxes weighing 20-25 lbs. or 12 quart handled basket weighing 22-26 pounds. Cherry tomatoes 12 pints/flat, plum tomatoes 12 quarts/flat. Retail by pound.

Apples - Wholesaled by the bushel, basket or box weighing 38-42 pounds. Retail by pound, peck (1/4 Bushel) or 1/2 bushel. Variety and proper US grade size or count must be displayed. If packaged, must be labeled with name and address.

Peaches - Wholesaled in 1/2 or bushel of 48 lbs. Retail by pound.

Pears - Wholesaled in bushel box or basket weighing 50 lbs. Retail by the pound.

Grapes - Wholesaled in lug or 1/2 bushel. Retail pound or 2 qt. basket.

Strawberries - Wholesale is a master container of 12 pints or 8-16 quarts. A quart weighs 1.5 pounds. Retail pint or quart.

Blackberries - Wholesale and retail quarts weighing 2 lbs.

Blueberries - Wholesale master container 12 pints cultivated, 8-16 pints wild. Pints weigh one pound. Retail pints or quarts.

DRY MEASURES AND DIMENSIONS

Unit	Volume (cu in)	Approx. bag size
Quart	67	#2
Half Gallon	170	lunch bag
Gallon=4 qts.	268	#8
Peck=2 gal.	537	#20
Bushel=4 pks.	2150	

Sell by volume measure, bunch or count where practical. This will eliminate the need to use scales and will speed up sales.

How to Price your Products

from notes taken of a 1991 talk by Tom Toomey, of the Mass. Farmers' Market Federation

Many different considerations come into play when trying to establish your prices. What is your overhead? What are your income needs are you a full-time or part-time farmer or retired? What is the demand for your product and can you identify your customer market? Is the product needed in the community? How is your location and accessibility? What is the appearance of the stand and your products? What is your product knowledge for the customer? Do you offer conveniences - parking, handicap access, baskets, carriages, do you carry-out purchases? Evaluate your operations fixed costs: production=bills, how much it costs to produce; selling=stand costs (lights, heat, taxes), labor.

Other considerations are what kind of market is your market (roadside, supermarket or convenience store) and who are you competing with. Demographics are also important as population (volume of sales) income levels (commodity or basic purchases) and what is the local transportation (how much can a customer buy and carry-out?)

Find the top and bottom price the market will bear remembering the quality, appearance and customer demand. Analyze your operation, don't change your operation, and price accordingly. For each thing you do for your customer, your price goes up.

Because your neighbor sells his beans at \$1.00/pound doesn't mean that you should sell at the same price. Maybe his product is fresher

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 or older than yours. What is his production cost for that pound of beans-his farm may not be operated in the same manner or have the same vintage equipment as yours. Are the beans the same variety or do you have an heirloom or a culture specific product which can command a higher price.

If you limit the market, you can increase your price. Higher prices can be asked for the first crops of the season, a product during a crop failure, or a specialty crop from your farm or market.

Customers will pay a higher price for high quality fresh produce. If you can't get the price you need to make money, MOVE to another location.

Can Egg Cartons be Re-Used at Farmer's Markets?

Reggie Andrews, Division of Quality Assurance of the Maine Dept. of Agriculture (289-2161) says egg cartons may be re-used when:

a. The Grade A within the USDA shield on the carton is COMPLETELY obliterated, completely crossed out, so that it is unrecognizable. (This signifies USDA graded at a plant under inspection.)

b. On the end of the carton, the number or expiration date must be marked out.

All eggs marketed must be grade B or better, as set forth in Maine's Shell Egg requirements. What constitutes grade B?

- very rough shell disqualifies for grade B
- no cracks

- no blood spots or internal spots under candling
- no molds
- no old eggs

If the boxes are labeled by size (e.g., "large"), then they must meet the ounces defined in the Shell Egg requirements:

SIZE	Oz. per Doz.
Jumbo	30
X-large	27
Large	24
Medium	21
Small	18
Peewee	15

Who Sez Eggs is Eggs?

by Tom Roberts

That was my response in 1987 when a customer remarked that my eggs were too expensive, that supermarket eggs were less than a dollar a dozen, and that, after all, "eggs is eggs". I marveled at the wisdom imbedded in this homily, not for its truth, but for the comfort it provided the speaker when faced with a possible decision to pay more for something better.

The eggs I was offering at my stand were nest run. There were jumbo, large, extra large, medium and a few (but not many) small eggs in the same box. Some were even bluish tint because I always liked to keep a few Auricanas along with other breeds. They were from a 100-bird flock of chickens that roamed free nine months of the year in a quarter acre pen in an old apple orchard. The grasses and dandelions the birds ate kept the yolks a dark yellow and high in vitamin A. In the late summer the surpluses of the vegetable harvest

gave the birds plenty to eat; like the rest of us, they seemed happiest when eating watermelon or cantaloupe. In the winter the hens were kept in the greenhouse, in which we would add about two feet of leaves in the fall. All winter the birds would shred and mix the leaves and their droppings as they scratched for the whole grain (locally grown wheat, barley & com) I would scatter on the leaves. The winter days were a little warmer in the greenhouse, and the winter nights not quite so cold. The eggs at my stand cost \$1.35 a dozen.

The eggs at the supermarket had pale yellow yolks, probably because USDA regs recommend this. The chickens that laid the eggs lived in so-called "battery houses", with rows and corridors of cages stacked several high, each banana-box-sized cage with three birds in it. Depending on the size of the operation, between 20,000 and 100,000 birds are bought into these "layer houses" when they are 20 weeks old, as they are starting to lay "pullet" eggs. They remain in the cages until they are about a year old, or unless they die sooner (which quite a few do). As chicks they were de-beaked so they cannot do harm when they peck at each other in the overcrowded conditions, and light levels are kept low to keep fighting in the cages to a minimum. Nevertheless the most birds are picked clean of feathers by their cage-mates. They are fed a water and a mash which includes antibiotics to prevent them from dying in these unhealthful conditions. Workers who somehow tolerate the intensity of the racket and power of the stench walk the aisles daily to collect eggs. The manure is kept in pits until it can be spread on land for growing dairy corn and hay; during some months the fly problem is so bad that the birds are fed Larvadex, an insecticide

that kills the larvae of flies trying to breed in the manure. These eggs cost 89¢ a dozen for extra large size.

The differences noted here, as well as dozens of more minute details in the differences between raising battery hens and free range hens cannot be reduced to any simple dichotomy. There is no one set of differences, no one yardstick whereby a fair comparison could be made between the human (and the humane!) implications of these two methods of egg-farming.

There are cultural and economic and agricultural and environmental and spiritual and social and psychological implications involved in each of these methods of egg-farming. In battery egg-farming animal husbandry has been reduced to how to keep the animal alive while the last dollar is extracted; in free range egg-farming animal husbandry means being aware of what makes the birds happy and healthy and giving it to them. In battery egg-farming economics means producing the egg with the absolute lowest point-of-purchase price by making sure all of the other egg-production costs of human and animal health, environmental and spiritual degradation, animal and human exploitation are externalized, that is are not paid at the point of purchase. Of course the same egg purchaser will have to pay taxes to cover the costs of environmental cleanup, human health and welfare, farm grain subsidies, and so on that are generated by this kind of farming. But the important point for the economics of this kind of battery egg-farming is that these costs are not paid for at the point-of-purchase, so it looks like the consumer is getting cheap food! Which, as any big-wig food retailer will tell you, is what all consumers want.

Who sez "eggs is eggs"? I sure don't.

Displaying prices— on a blackboard or on the produce?

by Tom Roberts

Determining what price to put on your produce is certainly hard enough, but putting some price on your produce is itself an important aid to selling.

No matter how appealing your display, how luscious looking and tempting, by not displaying a price on it you are losing sales. There are shoppers who may like the looks of what you have, but out of habit will want to know what it is going to cost them before they commit to buying. Forcing shoppers to step over the psychological threshold of asking your price will discourage some of them.

There seems to be two schools of thought on how to display prices. One is to list everything you have for sale along with its price on a blackboard. The other is to place the price of each thing at the point of display. Both methods have good points, and on days when I have enough energy and time, I do both.

By watching and listening to customers, I have learned that some people want to see what you have for sale all listed in one place, and others ignore any written lists and just look for the goods.

On those days when customers anxiously wait to shop as I unload, setting up my written list allows them to mentally shop since they can see what I will be unloading. It gives them something to read and look forward to as I set up my display. This of course means I have to keep my blackboard up to date so it really

matches what I have.

Blackboards have the unfortunate habit of washing clean in the rain. You can combat this by using artists oil-based chalk, which only comes off with soap and water. They have brighter colors than ordinary colored chalk, too.

Some people write very small on their blackboards so customers have to be quite close to read it. When shopping there I have asked about a price that was right there on the board, but was in such cramped busy style that I missed it.

Once each item is set out for display, I grab my basket of tags and clip a pre-made name-and-price tag to each item with a spring type wooden clothes pin. This extra step of putting up prices (and gathering them back into the basket at the end of market) is my preferred and primary method of displaying prices. Not only do I have too many items to list them all on the blackboard, but what I have can change from market to market, so the blackboard is reserved for those items I am pretty sure of having at every market.

The material I use for the tags has changed over time. The best ones were made of stiff plastic and were originally index card file dividers. They were impervious to the rain, but eventually became brittle from being in the sun after five years or so. I have also used the backs of discontinued business cards which are convenient, plentiful and cheap, and I use a red marker to make a border around the edge each card. But they do need re-writing at least once a season after being under the rain and watering can. I am still looking for the ideal material for my price tags.

Instead of blackboards some marketers use erasable whiteboards. These also wash clean

in a rain, and I have never seen one done artistically. They always look scrawled. Some blackboards I have seen, on the other hand, are works of art. However, whiteboards are not dusty the way blackboards tend to be.

Some folks, usually those new or otherwise unprepared for market, use pieces of paper held on with masking tape, or even just masking tape with the price written on it. It has always seemed to me that this practice has passed over that fine line between funky and junky. Likewise with prices written on a piece of brown corrugated cardboard. Unless you want your customers to expect distressed produce at distressed prices, that is. I am of the opinion that we should appear to the public as professionals rather than as refugees.

Presentable materials need not cost a lot. The best blackboards I use are made of Masonite painted with two coats of flat black paint. Around the edges is a inch and a half wood border of a different color held on with drywall screws. This border also helps keep the chalk from being smeared inadvertently when handling.

I have also seen farmers who laminate computer printed color signs complete with pictures, held on with tacks or push pins. On these they use erasable markers to write prices. Generally 8 1/2" x 11", these are fun in the wind. Also, I shudder to think whose salad that lost push pin might have ended up in.

One Orono market member would give Martha Stewart a run for her money with the signs she uses in her displays. Lacquered wood stakes with painted signs indicating "carrots" or "celery" help make her display perfectly adorable. I wouldn't want to have a masking tape display next to her!

What do I need for

Setting up at Farmers' Market ?

So you've decided to try selling at a farmers' market. The gardens are weeded, the harvest is starting, and it's time to sell. What equipment and techniques will you need to help sell your produce?

This article was written by two farmers Kate Slattery & Tom Roberts from opposite ends of the state—one with 10 acres of gardens and one with 1/8 acre—who attend two markets— one large with 25 farmers open 5 days a week and one small with half a dozen members and open once a week. They share their experiences here hoping they will be of some value to new market members.

Car, Pickup, Van or Truck

Is your vehicle large enough? This is a major consideration, for not only will you have your produce and the containers you intend to display it in, but you'll also need tables or some kind of structure to keep your displayed food 6" off the ground (it's the law). Don't forget a sign with your name, address and phone, and maybe a chair to sit in. Practice packing before you are actually about to head out to market.

Display

How will you be displaying your produce? Some people use leftover produce or banana boxes from the local supermarkets; these may not hold up well in damp conditions and don't look especially attractive to potential customers. Used wooden boxes such as apple

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 boxes or grape lugs can be painted to make an attractive display. Baskets can be purchased in bushel, half-bushel, peck and half-peck sizes. Unpainted wood stays wet and cool longer when watered than painted wood or plastic. Remember to bring all sizes of baskets and containers, as this helps keep your display looking full. Display containers should blend well with and enhance your produce's appearance, not steal attention from it. Browns, brick reds, dark greens, dark blues and natural wood colors will contrast well with the many different colors of produce in your display.

Protect your produce

Containers that can protect tender produce from drying wind and sun are more desirable than those that don't. A watering can is the best way to keep your produce moist and fresh; bring plenty of water unless there is a source at your market site. Keeping your produce from wilting is an art, and once wilted it won't come back. It helps to know your produce: lettuce and radish tops wilt fast; a little longer in the sun and beans no longer snap when bent; cukes & zucchini will eventually soften in the sun, and so will even turnips and beets by the end of the day.

Tomatoes like being in the sun, but on very hot days they can be cooked while on display. If your tender produce is selling fast, you can place it in the best visual display and not have to worry about how long it can take the sun. But take care if sales slow down.

On the other hand onions, shallots, garlic, winter squashes should be kept dry and love being in the sun all day. Get to know what each kind of produce likes for its display conditions.

Shade

Where is your market located, under the trees or in the open parking lot? Shade is very important because limp, sunburned lettuce does not sell well. Since farmers' markets are held rain or shine, investing in a tarp or cover is practically essential. Many clever homemade designs for supporting tarps look quite attractive, but make sure it is wind proof. Stay away from blue tarps unless the product you are selling looks good under blue light; most produce doesn't. Beach umbrellas work well for small setups, but shade-only mesh umbrellas don't help much on a rainy day. Umbrellas are especially troublesome on a breezy day.

Volume or Weight?

How will you be selling your produce? A legal scale maybe helpful if you are to sell by weight. Some products sell better by weight rather than unit, but there is no reason to purchase a legal scale if the size of your operation does not justify the expense. You can use "lunch" type bags to sell by the bagful, or berry boxes to sell by the quart. (Dumping the produce from the berry box into a bag when sold allows you to re-use the more expensive berry box over and over.)

Listing Prices

The average customer is shy, and will not ask a price. A large, attractive chalkboard or individual price tags for each container of produce is welcomed, especially for shoppers new to the market or new to your stand. Develop a kit that comes to market with you. Include in it chalk and an eraser; tags (paper, plastic or cardboard), markers, scissors, tape and pens. Rubber bands or whatever you will be using to bunch products like radishes come in handy. A

pad of note paper for jotting down new marketing ideas or special order requests from customers, or to give your name and phone number to a customer.

Bags

Always be on the lookout for bags, of all sizes. Many customers are glad to return or donate their paper and plastic grocery bags. Reinforce this habit by always expressing your gratitude while accepting them, as there will be a time you'll run out of bags. Check out your community recycling center for an endless source of bags. Among paper bags, generally flat bottomed ones are better for produce needs; they are usually made of stronger material than the "card store" type of bag. If need be, bags can be purchased at many of the larger "wholesale-type" stores. Seedling flats may be bagged two to a shopping bag, but trays made from cardboard boxes are more efficient at transporting large numbers of seedlings. However, trays can take up a lot of space in your vehicle.

Handling Cash

How will you handle your cash at market? Having a cash box for bringing all your bills and change to market keeps everything centralized 32

Offering a volume discount on greater quantities works better than lower prices on small unit sales. Experience at farmers' markets over a season shows that sometimes the supermarkets are higher, sometimes the local farmers are, but the farmers can always have the better fresh-picked quality.

Clean, attractive and orderly

Simple things like watering and rotating

your produce can make the difference between making and losing a sale. Produce with soil on it sends most shoppers to buy elsewhere. This may mean you need to-wipe your cukes and tomatoes with a damp cloth after a rainy day to remove dirt spots. Many farmers may have good healthy soil or axle grease under their nails, but that may not encourage your neighbor to buy your produce. Above all, smile and talk to your customers, and you will get repeat sales.

Know what you are selling

You'll find your customers will quiz you on what variety you are selling, what pesticides were used, when it was picked, how long it will last, how to prepare it. When you can, let your customers pick out what they want. They will be happier with their purchase knowing they got that just-right-sized cuke.

Canopies, anyone?

At the April, 1993, Federation meeting in Augusta, Dick Keough demonstrated the set up and take down of his new 20' x 20' canopy. It is of a very simple design and looks quite sturdy, something I can't say for several other designs of canopies I've seen. It has only two different lengths of steel tubing and two types of joints, it all fits together quickly and easily. The tarp is held in place by short stretch cords, and the tarp under tension holds the whole frame together. When taken apart, it consists of one folded tarp, 16 eight- and six- foot sections of tubing and one banana box full of 9 tubing joints. This model cost only \$250 from Latham's Upholstering, PO Box 39, Route 202, Greene, Maine 04236 ph. 946-5377. Other sizes (and hanging basket poles) are available. The basic design we saw is modular in 10 foot sections. Dick ties it to his truck and stakes it down against the wind.

Lindsey Boxes

by Ed Lindsey

[When I checked out everybody's stands on my first day at the Orono Farmers' Market this year, I noticed Ed Lindsey of Sunflower Farm in Charleston had brand new boxes in his display. Upon inspecting them, I noted I had never seen anything like them before and asked where could I get some. Ed said he designed and made them himself, and, after a little prodding, he was good enough to share his design with us in this article, -tr]

Here is a market box design that combines space efficiency with display versatility.

The cost is a little over \$2.00 a box, if you don't pay yourself any hourly wage—and you

are a farmer so you don't.

I found a fellow with a small shingle mill and asked him, "Can you saw a piece of wood flat instead of tapered?" Well he said he could, so I had him make my box stock from 3/8 inch cedar, 16 inches long by miscellaneous widths. If you can imagine laying two identical cedar shingles on top of one another, butt to top—that is what the stock looks like.

I laid the pieces flat, measured and drew lines for each side and bottom with a framing square. Cut was done with a sharp hollow ground blade in a circular saw. I nailed the sides, ends and bottoms to each other with 4 penny box galvanized nails. Make sure to use box nails and not common nails so the thin wood doesn't split. Then I nailed a cedar lathe strip around all four sides of the top, sticking up half of its width so the boxes would stack without sliding off one another while riding to market—an important feature. The cedar is so soft that splitting was not a problem.

If you desire drainage, holes should be drilled in the bottom, as the sides and bottom fit tightly, especially when wet. Unlike an apple box, the ends are made of the same material as the sides, so nailing the sides directly to the bottom is important for strength and rigidity.

DISPLAY OPTIONS:

For display, a box filled with produce can be placed at an angle in an empty box—or stack of two boxes with the bottom one holding reserve produce—and tilted toward the customers at market. I put a piece of wet burlap in the bottom, pack the vegetables, put another piece of wet burlap on top, stack the boxes in the truck and mist them overnight with a 1/2 gallon per minute Fogg-it nozzle until I leave

for market in the morning. Evaporative cooling and high humidity help the goods stay fresh. The cedar wood itself absorbs a lot of moisture, which evaporates during display at market, adding its own cooling effect.

SPACE EFFICIENCY:

Stacked 4 high, 56 of these boxes could fit into the 6-foot bed of a Nissan pick-up with a cap (the higher type cap, you'll need to measure your own cap height to be sure).

They also nest the way apple boxes do, so you can fit three empties in the space of two on your return trip home, or for storage during the off season.

Ed Lindsey produces vegetables & eggs at Sunflower Farm in Charleston. He is a charter member of the Orono Farmers' Market, which he often attends with his very well behaved black lab "Olive".

Write on wet plastic bags!

by Tom Roberts

Unable to keep the tallies for several customers going in my head simultaneously, I resort to adding up a customer's purchase on their bag. In sunny weather this is easy, as we mostly use paper bags. But in rainy weather, out comes the recycled plastic bags. When they get wet, though, writing on them gets to be a problem. Now, however, we are using a pen that doesn't seem to be bothered by wet plastic bags. We found that the Sanford® SAGA medium ball point pen does the trick. They cost about 50¢ each and are well worth it when it comes to keeping things running smoothly at market.

To Tent or Not to Tent

by Tom Roberts

I've been offered a raincoat more than once while setting up on a rainy morn.

Many market members protect their stands with some kind of sun and rain protection, or "tents" as they are generically referred to.

You may be using one, or you may be considering getting one. For five years I set up as Peacemeal Farm at the Brewer Farmers' Market without a tent, then for a few seasons I started using one I made from a green poly-tarp and cedar poles. Eventually we bought a commercial rig with a take-apart pipe frame, and used that for several years.

Then I left Peacemeal and set up on my own as Snakeroot Organic Farm, and for the past two years have set up again without a tent.

This range of experience—combined with watching other market members use various makes and models of tents including EZ-Ups, pipe frames, and home-mades both clever and comical—has shaped my opinion on the use of tents at market.

What conclusions have I come to about using a tent to cover my market stand?

For some members, like those selling dried flowers or baked goods, a tent is a clear necessity. Their products require maximum protection against sun and rain.

And for farmers with large displays of greens, a tent is surely an asset on a sunny day.

Yet although we display 20 to 30 sq. ft. of wiltable items during the summer, I prefer not to use a tent.

You see, I have come to believe that a tent greatly restricts the ability to create a display based on your seasonal product mix, your location in the market, and the weather. There

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 is a tendency to think: "First I put up my tent, then I build my display in it." The tent comes first, not the produce display.

Notice how often members with tents will set up exactly the same every time with only the colors and shapes in their display changing with the season. It's as though growing, harvesting and getting the goods to market has taken all their energy, and they have none left to think about their display; so they do it again just like last time. You'll see people without tents guilty of sameness-of-display, too, but having a tent almost forces you into "thinking within the box."

It is tricky to display a large amount under a tent without putting up a "counter" between you and the customer—and between you and your produce. Some market members succumb to a creeping tendency toward the "shopkeeper" way of thinking, where they are on one side of the barrier and the customer is on the other. I believe this depresses sales. I prefer the open arrangement where the farmer and customer can interact freely within the display area on equal terms.

Tents, besides being an extra chore at the start and end of the market day, quite simply cramp your display style. I have seen some very inventive displays integrating tents—they just seem to be the exception. Most often the tent poles seem to get in the way.

I have seen people who set up under a tent the same on a sunny day as on a rainy day, and other people who set up in the rain so as to keep their produce dry and their customers wet.

On windy days, there are panicked attempts to keep tents from blowing over, and on rainy days a gust of wind empties a tent puddle onto a customer.

Tents also take up extra space in your mar-

ket vehicle, cost a bundle if you buy a commercial one, and need to be replaced or repaired after as little as two years—barring an accident, of course.

Well, then, what about setting up without a tent? Don't I get wet on a rainy day? Yes and no. If it is really pouring there are no customers anyway, I sit in the vehicle. On rainy days, I use polypropylene long underwear under light outer wear in the summer and under woolen outerwear in colder weather. Polypro is unique in that it can be wet but doesn't feel wet like cotton does. Using this clothing, one can stand all market day in a light rain and become quite wet without becoming miserable. Polypro really changes your attitude toward wet weather. If it rains hard for a short period, I don a raincoat, but off it comes as soon as the rain lets up, because when people see you in a raincoat, they think it's raining too hard to shop outdoors.

Setting up produce display depends on where the sun or wind is coming from, what you want to sell most of, whether it's sunny or overcast, and what direction the customers are coming from. It helps if I don't also have a tent to fit the display into. Not having a tent allows me to take full advantage of overcast days by making large displays of wiltables right out front where they catch the eye.

On hot sunny days I use my tilted tables to tilt the apple boxes of lettuce and spinach away from the sun. On those rare baking hot days of August, I have been known to apply the watering can to myself, or even to escape to a neighbors tent during a pause in business. Of course wearing light colored clothes helps, too.

I am traveling to market in a Honda Civic towing a utility trailer, so vehicle space is at a premium. At market I set up three tilted tables

displaying up to sixteen lugs and boxes of produce plus one short and two long flat tables where baskets, bags and loose produce is displayed. Sometimes I lay one of the tilted tables flat, depending what there is to display, but usually I make a wide "U" shape with the scale hanging on the hatchback door at the bottom. In the middle I have the three flat tables arranged as separate tables or in a zigzag fashion, always remembering to leave enough room for wheelchair accessibility. In other words, I take up space—often forty feet wide by twenty feet deep, and I certainly couldn't afford to cover that with a tent!

To Peddle or Not to Peddle

by Tom Roberts

Whether to allow market members to buy some or all of what they sell could be a hotly debated subject or an easy consensus. Which occurs at your market depends upon your market's history and its current makeup, as well as on your members' vision of what your market should be. If you already have members in the market who are making a portion of their income from selling items they purchase, then they will feel very defensive during a discussion of a "No-Buy Rule". If your market is made up primarily of people who sell only what they grow or make themselves, then they are likely to feel defensive about opening their selling market to other kinds of sellers, i.e., resellers.

The act of buying and selling has been practically raised to the level of a sacrament in this country. There is an enormous set of customs, laws, myths and emotions involved

with the right of anyone to start a business by buying a product wholesale and selling it retail.

It is indeed the entrepreneurial spirit which, as they say, "made this country great". This spirit is exercised via the freedom, in our economic system, to develop an economic niche in which to do business. Few places is this better exemplified than the selling of produce, a commodity which requires considerable care in purchasing (or harvesting), handling and displaying.

The image of the farmers' market as a direct-market retail focuses primarily on the grower, the one who produces and sells. This self-image of a market is also something that can be "marketed" to the produce-buying public, and the ability to buy direct from the farmer (gardener, baker, crafter) is what brings most shoppers to the farmers' market in the first place. It is in the nature of the market mechanism, however, to develop; that is to say, that markets actually have a life of their own, quite apart from the farmers who come together to create them. Thus the market, created by farmers, becomes a place where demand has been created, demand that is seen as potential sales, and not only for what the original farmer-founders are able to grow. When customers ask for strawberries and there aren't any, there is a perceived need on the part of those selling that there should be strawberries at the market (to "satisfy the market"), so some attempt is made to bring strawberries to market. This could be done by the existing growers deciding to grow strawberries, by recruiting strawberry growers to come to market, or by allowing current or new members to buy strawberries for resale at market. The first two solutions are in keeping

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 with the direct marketing aspect of the farmers' market; the later is letting the mechanisms of the market (and not the growers) take lead in market development.

When market members cater to the need of the market to satisfy consumer-demand instead of focusing on the needs of the producer-supply, they take a step in a fateful direction. They move toward losing control to market forces of what is of the highest value in farmers' markets to both growers and shoppers, the direct relationship between producer and consumer that is so rare and so valued in today's anonymous mega-marketplace. We are, many of us, knee-jerk trained to want to satisfy any consumer demand, but so doing leads down an alienating road; just look around you.

Getting Started at a Farmers' Market

by *Ellie MacDougall*

Like many people, when I decided to start selling reduce, I didn't intend to sell it at a farmers' market. But, I gravitated toward this outlet through issues involving lifestyle and economics. The editors of *Selling Outdoors* have encouraged me to share my odyssey because of my "beginner" perspective. I hope it will encourage those of you who have considered selling at a farmers' market to take that step.

There are a lot of advantages in selling direct to customers through a farmers' market. This method enables you to sell retail instead of wholesale, so you can keep all of what your produce earns. It lets you start small, with as little as a case of fresh produce. It allows you to maintain your privacy at home, something

that would have become very difficult if you were to operate a farm stand or sell eggs out of your garage. It lets you plan your time a little better because you know what days you'll be at market and, as a result, when harvesting and loading the truck have to take place—the kind of planning that's much more difficult if you were wholesaling to restaurants or stores. And you get to talk with the people who buy their food from you, and that builds not only a loyal clientele but, often, friendships.

There is another consideration here, a philosophical issue that may be as important as the more practical issues outlined above. It's a concept described by Brewster Kneen in his book, *From Land to Mouth*, called "distancing". Kneen points out that the result, and perhaps even the objective, of the American food industry has been to isolate or distance people from the source of their food. This has enabled agribusiness to exercise enormous vertical and horizontal control of every aspect of our food supply. The ability to pick and choose the type, variety and quality of food we eat is fundamental to human health and happiness. A farmers' market offers the opportunity to sell the food that you produce with your your own ingenuity and hard labor directly to the people who will be putting it on the table for their own families. There's a lot to be said for the strength and closeness of that connection.

Certainly, farmers' markets aren't the perfect way to sell your produce. Nothing is. There may be times when the weather turns foul and you can't make your goal for the day. You may misread demand for a particular item and go home with a case of food for the chickens. Like anything else, this is a learning experience—and occasionally a test of character. But for many of us, it's the closest

method to the ideal.

If you're thinking about trying a farmers' market, check out a couple to see how they work. Some markets are very small, a loose association of people who just want to sell extra produce from their own gardens. Generally, they are low key, close to home and have a slow pace of customer sales.

Large markets are more structured, more competitive and usually are located in larger towns or cities. They have a mix of large, full-time and dedicated part-time growers, and usually offer a greater potential for sales. To build a clientele in these markets requires more time and effort than in a smaller market.

You might decide to try a small market for awhile to see if this method of sales is comfortable. The small, informal market will let you get your act together regarding set-up, display, general systems for weighing produce and making change, learning to work with customers and build a clientele, and so on. You may find the scale of a smaller market matches the pace you'd like to maintain. Or, you may want to increase your sales above and beyond what that market can deliver. In this case, it's usually easier to move to a larger market than to try and change the structure of an existing smaller market.

Another aspect to farmers' markets is knowing what customers want to buy. Some items will do well in one market and poorly at another fifty miles away. Often, you can tell what's popular by going to a market and being observant—especially at the end of the day when you can see what's left over. The next step is to see if what's popular with customers coincides with what you and your particular garden have the ability to grow well.

Deciding to sell at a farmers' market, and

what to sell, is just the beginning. Now it's time to move on to how to prepare for (and what you can expect from) your first day at market.

The first thing you should consider is getting to market early. This is less important if you're at a smaller, less structured farmers' market, but it is critical to getting a good space at a larger market. And "early" means not only early in the day, but early in the season.

How much you're bringing to market will dictate when you pack your truck. If you're bringing a few cases of lettuce, you'll probably have time to get up early, harvest and wash the produce, load it and head to market. If you're bringing a large quantity of produce or items that are labor intensive to harvest, such as peas, you should consider harvesting and packing the truck the night before.

What will you need to bring to market? If it's hot, you may need coolers for your more perishable items, as well as a hand-held mister to keep fragile greens looking fresh.

As for hardware, start simple. You'll need a table on which to display your produce, a chair in case you find yourself with a few moments to sit down, a thermos of coffee or a cold drink and perhaps lunch, a blackboard or other signs on which to write the prices of items for sale, a sign with your farm name and a cash box.

There are a lot of opinions concerning cash boxes. Some people have a regular metal box nailed to the table. Others use carpenter aprons. Some people have change-makers attached to their belts. Whatever your method, you should bring an ample supply of change, \$1.00 bills and a few fives (someone always gives you a \$20.00 early in the day). It helps to price your merchandise using round

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 numbers—\$1.50 versus \$1.49—so you don't spend half of the day making change.

Display is another area where people have diverse opinions. Perhaps the best system is to imagine yourself as the customer, then try to visualize what would attract you to your table. Certainly, there's no substitute for good quality produce, canned goods, baked goods, etc. But you can enhance the appearance of even the highest quality produce with an attractive cloth on your table (a good way to hide boxes and bags underneath), baskets for your produce and arrangements that are colorful yet flexible enough so that if you pull out a head of cabbage to sell, the effect won't be ruined. Also, consider that it is illegal to display goods on the ground. Another issue concerns scales. You can put off this investment by pricing larger produce by the piece. But, if you're selling peas or beans or other small items, you'll need an accurate, legal-for-trade scale. Chatillon, Toledo and Detecto make a good hanging scale for \$150.00 or less, and MFFM is looking into a group buy on this item.

So, now you're set up. A few customers have begun to cruise through the market. They look at your display, smile and move on. Do not be discouraged! Customers have a way of testing newcomers to a market. It's as if they want to watch you for awhile before they trust you with their business. Just hang in there, smile, answer questions and, pretty soon, you'll find yourself with a few "regulars" every day at market. Over the course of the summer, if you come to market early and consistently, you won't be a newcomer any more. And you may find yourself going home with an empty truck and a smile on your face.

Most of selling at a farmers' market involves perseverance and just plain common

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 sense. As you go along, you learn more about customer preferences, pricing and ways to expand your product line. As the season progresses, we'll share our novice experiences at market with you in the hope that it will encourage you to try it next year. If you're already selling at a farmers' market, we hope that you'll share your experiences with us as well.

U or I? The shape of your market

by Tom Roberts

Larger markets, those with more than six or eight members regularly attending, often abandon the straight line style setup of smaller markets. Instead, they adopt a double line or "U" shape, where half the marketers set up with displays facing one another. Orono and Camden are examples of U-shaped markets.

This accomplishes several things at once. It allows setup in a more compact areas which might not be big enough for all members to stretch out in a line. It means customers can see more of the market at one time, and don't have to walk so far from one end to the other. It gives a more closed sense to the market, and works to keep vehicular traffic away from the customer walking area.

Sometimes smaller markets will also want to set up with displays facing one another and a customer walkway in between. This closes off the customer walkway to cars, providing a safer shopping environment. But if only two or three members attend market, this effect is considerably diminished.

The disadvantage to a double line is that what is displayed to passing traffic is simply

the front of the market vehicles instead of the market displays themselves.

Several larger markets (Brewer comes to mind) maintain the long-line approach, primarily for two reasons. One is that they are adjacent to Wilson Street so their long display shows off the market well to passing traffic. The other is that they have a long gradually curved space to set up in that can accommodate many members at once.

Traffic cones are also a helpful tool at market. They can prevent customers from parking in market spaces that will soon be wanted by a late arriving member. They can make traffic keeps its distance from the shopping area. And their presence, recognized by all, imparts a sense of security for parents shopping with their children. Real traffic cones are what's wanted. They are made of bright orange rubber, stand about eighteen inches tall and nest well for storage. They cost about ten dollars apiece, last for years, and can take being driven over time and again.

Thinking about Starting a Farmers' Market ?

by Judy Powell, Kate Slattery, and Tom Roberts

How To Go About It

Generally start by finding farmers, gardeners and others in your area who might consider selling through a market. The success of any market depends ultimately upon the decisions made by the members—the range of products they sell to attract a range of customers, how the members display their products, and quality and the quantity of product available, the merchandising skills the members demonstrate, and perhaps most importantly, the ability of the individual members to help make market decisions based on the overall good of the market.

First, Finding Members

Start by locating potential members. Classified ads in local papers and Ag trade bulletins or asking a local reporter to write a press release about your potential market may generate a response from potential members. A proven method is a direct mailing of a meeting announcement about starting a market to a large number of potential farmers and gardeners. Along with the time and place of the meeting in the mailing, be sure to include your address and phone number in case an interested grower cannot make the initial meetings. Your local Co-operative Extension Service office will likely help with doing the mailing. Utilize resources where farmers are listed such

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 as the Dept. of Agriculture's Producer to Consumer directory, various lists of farmers and gardeners maintained by the local Co-operative Extension Service, names supplied by agricultural commodity groups, farmers you know in the area, etc. For the first one or two mailings you want to throw as wide a net as possible to be sure anyone interested in a market will know of your efforts. Of course you will limit your selection of names to those who are within likely driving distance to the market, but remember that growers will drive further to their market than will most customers. By contacting growers directly, you'll be sure the word has gotten out to them. Some of these producers may already sell at a farmers' market so they may or may not want to get involved in another market. Either way, they may supply many good ideas about establishing a new market.

Organizing

At the organizational meeting you will be want to determine the level of interest, the range of products available, the level of supply (how much of each commodity they'll have to sell), number of growers, where the market will be located, and what will be the organizational structure. Often the structure is influenced by the location, but it has been shown that it is essential for the overall planning and day-to-day operation of the market be controlled by the members of the market rather than by any outside entity.

Maine has over 40 farmers' markets, and these take a variety of organizational forms. Some are organized by a city, such as the Portland and Westbrook Farmers' Markets. Some rent from the city and have their own formal bylaws, such as the Brunswick

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 Farmers' Market.

Some, such as Machias and Pittsfield Farmers' Markets are very informal, with minimal rules and no bylaws. A first organizational issue will be which route your members wish to take. A sample packet of sets of actual market rules and by-laws is available from the Federation.

Location is Critical to Success

If the members wish to use city property, then the city will have to be contacted to determine their level of interest in a market. In the case of Brunswick and Bangor, the markets are incorporated and the corporation makes an arrangement with the city and no other city services are provided. In Damariscotta, the market is located on private property. Because of a city sign ordinance, the private property location allows signs to be erected on market days only. In Rumford, the market is located on state highway property, in an official rest area. Selecting the best spot is a first order of business. Success in an out of the way location takes a long time to build. The twenty-five year old Camden Market has an out of the way location, yet is very successful. Although few locations are ideal, there are several aspects to consider when "grading" a site. Is it near a large food-shopping center? Is it easily seen from a busy road? Is it easy to describe the location in ads or by word of mouth? Paved lots are hotter in the summer heat, but grass and gravel lots get to be a mess in rainy weather. Paved lots offer customers a surer footing and are less dusty than gravel lots. Shade is nice, but visibility to passers-by is critical. Can customers shop at the market safely with children, or is it necessary to dodge passing cars?

Product Mix

Another organizational issue is deciding what kind of products you want to see at market. If twelve members express interest and all 12 sell the same products, then several questions need to be addressed. Will enough buyers come to buy out these 12 members? Or should a better mix of products be assembled to attract a variety of buyers? And what about the season? Members with seedlings can open the market before fresh fruit and vegetables are available; and, likewise, products to close the season should be available: pumpkins, squash, potatoes, apples, and perhaps wreathes and Christmas trees. Vendors of craft products can fill in to attract customers. Other products to include are fresh and frozen meats, fish, lobster, eggs, ice cream, specialty foods such as jams jellies, bakery products, herbs, and organic products. Note that the farther your member mix strays from actual fresh farm fruit & produce, the more difficulty you may encounter with your landlord or town ordinances. Also, care needs to be taken that the proper Dept of Agriculture licenses have been procured for the products offered by members.

Member Fees & The Budget

Once enough members are lined up, a budget for the market must be decided upon. There are two basic ways of generating money for the income side of the market budget. In one method, members pay an annual or seasonal membership fee to join, plus a daily fee each day they attend. This way the market has some funds that have been equally assessed to begin the season, and then with daily dues those members who attend more pay more. In the other method, the estimated annual expenses of the market are determined

before the season begins and each grower is assessed their share, which may be proportional to their size, or in equal parts. Sometimes the fee is collected twice in the season, once before the market opens, and once mid season. The advantage of this method is that the members don't have to come up with all of the money at once, and the second assessment may be adjusted up or down if the situation calls for it.

The income is used for signs, advertising, insurance, and perhaps rent, electricity, rental of restrooms, etc. A budget projecting total costs for the year should be figured to determine member fees. A budget committee formed at one meeting can report to the next meeting on its projected budget. The number of members may need to be increased to assure a reasonable charges, and thus adequate income for the market. It may be worth checking if any of the expenses such as rent could be waived or lowered for the first year as the market is just getting going.

Maine State Law says that the members at a market selling produce must have grown at least 75% of what they offer for sale. Some markets require that all products sold are grown, baked, caught, canned, etc, by the member who offers them for sale. Others allow buying of produce for resale only if no member who grows that item is bringing it in for sale. It is up to your market how you want to handle this question.

Many markets use formal contracts with members. One market places a 35 mile limit on products sold—they must be made or grown within 35 miles of the market. These decisions are made by your market, and may be changed from time to time as your perceived needs change. Some markets have

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 decided that they want a specified number of slots for bakers, crafters, fish sellers, etc. In any case before they attend market, all members should sign an agreement saying they will abide by market rules. A little structure designed in the off season goes a long way toward preventing a free-for-all in the busy summer season. Needless to say decisions arrived at or agreed to democratically by the membership will be accepted by the membership more readily than those autocratically handed down by the organizers.

Some member contracts allow for "temporary" slots in the market. These are reserved for members who haven't decided whether they can commit to an entire season and who want to give it a try. Or, they can be filled by seasonal growers who cannot supply an entire season, such as a strawberry or blueberry grower.

Other Rules & Regulations

The Division of Regulations of the Maine Dept. of Agriculture administers the state program of licenses and inspections to ensure a safe food supply. Each member is responsible for securing the licenses required for his/her products sold. A simple call to the Division of Regulations at 289-3481 will start the process. This brief brochure can't begin to list all of the regulations established by Maine statutes. For example, jams, jellies, pickles, fish, meats, eggs, cider, apples, potatoes, seedlings and hanging scales are all items that are influenced by regulation. Likewise each producer needs to call the city to assure compliance with all ordinances.

When?

What days, what hours, and what season

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 are "best" for the market? That depends on the flow of traffic in your locality. The market hours need to be designed with the buyers in mind. If the market is "downtown", find out what day and times are busiest. Often Saturday mornings are busy shopping days. If located in a business development center where offices or mills are located, then it's good to be open noons and especially when work lets out or shifts change. Remember, shoppers like to take time to shop, and don't want their purchases to sit in a hot car all afternoon in a parking lot. If the market is located on a commuting road, then staying open till 6 pm or 6:30 allows commuting shoppers the opportunity to support local growers.

Signs and Parking

In order for shoppers to be able to support the market, two critical factors must be kept in mind: access and signs. Drivers must be able to safely pull off the highway and easily park without blocking or being blocked by another vehicle. If parking is too congested, many drivers will not deal with the inconvenience. Secondly, your signs must be located far enough ahead for people to plan their turn off the road. The importance of placing signs can't be over-stressed. If your buyers don't know the market is ahead, you've just lost a sale.

Overall Market Appeal

Attractive stands with colorful displays draw shoppers and make browsing enjoyable. Colorful canvas or plastic tents or awnings can be erected inexpensively and add variety and contrast. Summertime visitors like to "experience" Maine's rural traditions. Baskets and crates are eye-appealing, cardboard is not. Produce needs to look fresh, and frequent mist

ing helps, using plastic atomizer bottles or watering cans. Seedlings and flowers mix in and add color as well as draw many gardeners and landscapers. For more info on being at market, check out the MFFM brochure "What Do I Need for Setting Up At Market?"

Promoting the Market

A variety of strategies have proven successful. Paid classified or display ads in local papers alert customers of days and open times and can list products available. Another option is for each member to advertise, mentioning they'll be at the market. This works when just getting started, when the market as a whole may not have the funds to spend. Markets have used coupons, flyers, direct mail, and special attractions to promote sales. For more info on market promotion ideas, see the MFFM brochure "Promotion Ideas for Farmers' Markets".

Basic Insurance Facts

by Bob Bowen

The 1998 MFFM insurance policy for farmers' markets will be thru Farm Family as it has been for the past two years.

This policy is for 1 million dollars liability coverage for each market that pays their dues to the MFFM and the premium for the policy. The policy is from April 1 to the following March 31. Each market will be billed directly by Farm Family if they have not been already. The policy runs for one year or any part thereof, starting April 1. This means that if you join late, the premium will be the same as for a year. All policies end on March 31 each year. Our Farm Family agent is Greg Warren. If a market's dues aren't paid by mid April, the policy will cancel since that is a requirement in the contract. So, it is very important that markets deal with joining MFFM and renewing or applying for insurance in a timely fashion.

Why should a market have its own insurance?

A market should have coverage year round to protect itself for all functions the market is involved in. Even if a person comes to a winter meeting and gets hurt, you could get sued. This only covers the market and has no coverage for any farmers, except in the case of a suit against one, all others would be protected from a class action suit.

Should farmers also have their own insurance?

Any farmer selling at market, farm stand or direct, has a real need for liability and products liability. If a person gets sick on your products— either grown or processed—you need protection. If it is a processed product,

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 like a dressed chicken, sausage or any product not in its natural state or sold in its normal mode (milk direct instead of to a dairy) means you might need comprehensive general liability (CGL). We found this out when we got audited for what we were doing.

If you have your farm insurance with Farm Family, the products liability is included in the farm policy. For most farms growing and selling produce or unprocessed products, this is all you need. Also, if you live in the country, many times their rates are lower if you don't have many outbuildings. That is the flaw, in that each building needs to be insured by itself.

I realize that there are people who don't like Farm Bureau policy, but I firmly believe that they represent those who are involved. If you want change, you need to be involved!! [Farm Family Insurance is a wholly owned subsidiary of the American Farm Bureau, -ed]

I hope you have a better understanding about the two kinds of insurance that are needed in order to be fully protected. I will be glad to answer any questions or I would recommend contacting a local agent. I don't have any connection with any company, but did use to work for Farm Family.

Filling Market Voids

by Tom Roberts

Does your market have voids?

This is another way of asking if there are times during the year when an item is in season, but no one at your market is offering it. Some markets, especially new ones, often don't recognize that "market voids" or "supply gaps" are one of the ways your customers are disappointed when they come to market.

A market void doesn't refer to the time when a customer drops in the first week of June to ask if the corn is ready yet. Rather, "voids" refer to those items—usually popular ones asked for by shoppers—which aren't available at market when asked for, but could be. And because season-aware customers are expecting them, they should be. Strawberries, peas, corn, blueberries, and eggs are commonly voids at market, but almost anything could be seen to be. It all depends upon your customer base and how complete a line of locally grown foods you want to supply to your customers.

Sometimes a smaller, lower-key market may not wish to deal with the issue, or don't see it as a problem, since the members are selling what they brought pretty well already. This is a local market decision, of course.

In order to address the problem of market voids, one of the first things a market steering committee should do is to become aware over the season what their markets voids are and when and why they occur.

If items are simply late this year because of drought or cool weather, then the answer lies in better growing techniques and customer education. But if the market has no one attending with those items, then something should be

done in order to show customers they can get what they are looking for at your market.

This is one of the ways in which improving the market as a whole leads to the betterment of the lot of each individual who is selling at market. Yet it is not always in the individual market member's direct interest to notice and eliminate market voids. Many markets have come to realize that it is in each market members indirect interest to make the market as a whole as successful as possible.

Sometimes, such as when one grower is bringing in some—but not enough—peas or strawberries and is selling out quickly, that grower may not be comfortable with recruiting another grower who will be a competitor.

However, more customers telling their friends, "Yeah, they have that down at the farmers' market" means more sales for everyone at market. When they tell their friends the opposite, this gives people one more reason not to shop at your market.

Here are some policies that markets have developed to deal with market voids. If you know of others, we'd love to hear about them.

Camden allows a member—after approval—to buy in an item to fill a void. If another member has the same item which they have grown, the first member may not offer for sale what they have bought for resale until the grower who grew the item sells out. Additionally, the bought-in item must be labeled as such.

The Orono Farmer's Market discussed this idea at some length and rejected it in favor of remaining a "100% no-buy" market. Instead, Orono opted to do active recruiting of growers for recognized market voids before the market season begins. This is a preventative, rather than a curative solution.

It should be noted that many market voids are highly seasonal items whose season comes at a time of low market-member attendance. Therefore, the problem of overcrowding with one more member is sometimes non-existent, even in markets with "no more room" for a new member.

Some markets even have established a "season membership" lasting just a few weeks, with lower market dues, specifically to attract highly seasonal items.

Orono's Emergency Buy Rule

by Tom Roberts

As of the 1997 market season, the two year old Orono Farmers' market has adopted a procedure for accepting new member applications. Also, a numerical cap of 30 memberships has been adopted.

First of all, members in good standing from the previous year will be automatically reinstated provided memberships application is received by the March 1 deadline.

In March, the market secretary will send to all current members a list of prospective applicants and the date, time and place at which the selections will be made. Selections will be made based on what best meets the needs of the market and its customers. Selection of new memberships is to be made by the Membership Committee—which is made up of the Steering Committee—and all members who attend the selection meeting. The number of available new memberships is 30 minus the number of returning members.

The membership meeting will decide whether applications received after the deadline shall be voted on by the membership, a

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 2/3 vote being necessary for acceptance. Late applications will be considered on the basis of value to the market.

Orono also has an interesting "Emergency Clause" to their No-Buy Rule for market members. Ordinarily, members are required to grow or produce 100% of what they offer for sale at market. The emergency clause, first adopted on a pro-tern basis late in 1995, and later adopted as a regular part of the No-Buy Rule, states that, "If a member is unable to make it to market, another member may sell the products of the absent member. This may happen only three times during a season and the identity of the absent member must be made clear to the customers."

Farm visits are made as needed to ensure a member's production of what is being offered for sale. Every new member will have a farm visit, and "one third of the membership will be visited each year to build neighborliness and to keep up to date with the members' changing and expanding product offerings."

For more information on how this new method is working or for other questions about the Orono Farmers' Market, contact Marketmaster Dana Llewellyn, RFD 1 Box 3880, Monroe 04951, ph. 525-3592.

Food Stamps and Farmers' Markets—A Winning Combo

[The following is the text of the 60,000 inserts mailed out to all Maine Food Stamp recipients in July. The mailing was a joint project of the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets (which put up close to \$300 for the printing costs) and

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 the Maine Department of Agriculture. The idea originally came from Phyllis Schartner of Thorndike, who also reserved the month of July for the mailing. The research to discover which markets accept food stamps and the wording of the insert was done by Deanne Herman of the Dept of Ag, without whose work this wouldn't have happened. Remember to thank each of them next time you see them! The insert was a two-sided 3 x 5 pink sheet.]

[side one]

What is a farmers' market?

A place where local farmers get together to sell their fruits, vegetables and other farm products direct to their neighbors.

Why shop at a Farmers' Market?

- *To get fresh, locally grown produce and other quality farm products.*
- *To get good value.*
- *To support the local economy. ' To meet your farming neighbors.*
- *For family fun and learning.*

Do Farmers markets accept food stamps?

At this time, a few markets around the state are certified to accept food stamps for all the farmers at the market. Others have some farmers who are certified, and some markets don't have any. More markets are signing up all the time.

Where are the farmers markets and when are they open?

Below is a listing of the markets where all or most of the sellers accept stamps. Find the towns nearest you and be sure to check the location and hours they are open before you head out to shop!

For a complete listing of all 38 farmers' markets statewide, write to the Department of Agriculture, Market Development Division, 28 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333. Or call 287-3491.

[side two]

Augusta Farmers' Market - 2 loc. May - late Oct.

#1 Where: Water St., downtown Augusta

When: Wednesdays, 9 am -1 pm

#2 Where: Turnpike Mall, Western Ave.

When: Saturdays, 9 am -1 pm Bangor Farmers' Market - May 1 - Oct 31

Where: Behind Paul Bunyan, Main St.

When: Tues thru Sat, 9 am -1 pm Belfast Farmers' Market - Early May -Oct 31

Where: Reny's Parking Lot, Jet 1 & 3

When: Tues, Fri. & Sat. 9 am -1 pm

Brewer Farmers' Market - May - Oct 31

Where: Brewer Auditorium Parking lot

When: Tues thru Sat., 9 am - Noon

Bucksport Farmers' Market - July 1 - Oct 31

Where: Downtown, near Town Office

When: Tues & Fri., 2:30 - 5:30 pm

Ellsworth Farmers' Market - Mid June- Oct 31

Where: High St., Next to Irvings

Mainway

When: Mon & Thurs., 2 pm - 5:30 pm

Sat. 9:30 am -12:30 pm Farmington

(Sandy River) Farmers' Market

Where: Rt. 2 & 4 Park n' Ride

When: Fridays, 9 am - 1 pm, May - Oct !;

Gardiner Farmers' Market - June - Oct 17

Where: Water Street

When: Fridays, 3 pm - 6 pm

Machias Valley Farmers' Market - May - Oct

Where: At the dike on Rte 1. When:

Saturdays, 8 am - Noon

Orono Farmers' Market - June - Oct

Where: Steam Plant Parking Lot

When: Tues & Sat 8 am -1 pm Thursdays, 4 - 7 pm

Printing subsidized by the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets.

Who's Successful, and Why

by Tom Roberts

Sadly, not all farmers' markets are successful. The Caribou and Palmyra Farmers' Markets have ceased to exist this year, the Houlton Farmers' Market continues to have only two or three members, with often only one attending. Even the Waterville Farmers' Market is having difficulty attracting and keeping farmer-members and customers. The attempt to start a market in Edgecomb this year apparently came to naught due to lack of enough farmers to make a go of it.

An argument could be made that the successful markets are the ones where "taking care of business" is taken seriously and gets done. By "taking care of business" I mean the business of running the farmers' market itself as a business, apart from the individual farmers that make it up. It is not as easy to do this as it is to say it.

The first hurdle that markets must overcome is that there is a need for some members to do promotion and organizational work that is above and beyond what it takes to get their own produce to market. During the market year, one does not always want to think ; about more things to do. For this reason, most i' markets develop the plan for their next season's activities during the winter, when there is more free time.

The second hurdle is that not everyone has all the skills needed to run a market, which is quite different than running your own farm & stand. Sharing the jobs among a "market steering committee" is a good way to get several heads together to work on a problem

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 and divide it into smaller parts, as well as getting that "group dynamo" going that can whittle big problems down to size. Yet there may need for personal growth and/or the learning of skills if we want to get the market's work done without the same tedious annual grind, year after year. If you think about it, a farmers' market is a small business with relatively few problems. Advantages include low overhead, plenty of supply, plenty of demand, local sourcing; the only major problems are the proper orchestration of a diverse membership and the customer base. These can be big problems if we are not good at business administration or group psychology. But we can learn these things, and we can learn to be patient with people and their ways of working/talking/being. It may not be easy, but it's worthwhile.

Farmers' Markets as Community Resources

by Sue Sergeant, Brunswick Farmers' Market

I have been thinking about farmers' markets as community resources and thought some experiences we have had at the Brunswick Farmers' Market might be worth sharing.

At first glance a farmers' market may seem to be just an outlet for several small businesses. Look closer and you will see a community educational resource that arrives on location at a scheduled time, complete with a well-informed and experienced staff.

Through the years teachers from nursery

school to high school have brought their classes to the Brunswick Farmers' Market. In some cases we schedule events that attract them, like free potted marigolds in the spring for Mothers' Day or free apples in the fall for kids who remember the magic words "please" and "thank you." Most of the elementary school class visits are organized by teachers with an educational plan in mind. They arrange for enough parents to come along so kids are in groups of about 4 or 5. Sometimes they come with a list of vegetables and fruits to find; sometimes the group has to decide how to spend the dollar they share; sometimes they are looking for some mysterious food item (like leeks) that no one else will bring back to the classroom. Besides carrying out their assigned tasks, the students also talk with the producers and learn about farming and where food comes from. They tell tales about their sheep or gardens and what foods are good or yucky.

One nursery school group came to the market to talk to all the beekeepers they could find. They had watched a Reading Rainbow program on bees, typed up a list of questions on the word processor, and headed down to the market to meet the real live beekeepers. After excitedly asking all their questions they bought some honey. Just by being available at our market stand we vendors were an educational resource.

For many years the high school art teacher has brought her Drawing II class to the market for half a day in the early fall. They spread out in a long row in front of the market stands to sketch. The customers and the vendors really enjoy having them visit and look over their shoulders to see the results take form. Last year we invited the class to exhibit their work

later in the, fall. By hanging a line between two trees and using clothes pins to secure the sketches, we had a well received art show and gave the students an opportunity to display their work to the community.

Whether we realize it or not, people are learning about food and agriculture, rural lifestyles and values whenever we interact at the market. Having recipes available, explaining how deep to set the tomato plants, encouraging recycling of bags are all part of the ongoing educational process for all of the community.

Buying in for Resale?

by Tom Roberts

There are few questions which bring more division among market ranks than whether to allow buying for re-selling, and if so under what terms. The state law, of course, says a seller at a farmers' market must have at least 75% of their items grown by them, and 100% of it must be native. The law is vague on 75% of what (Today's sales? Average annual products? Display space?), preferring to leave that to the discretion of each market.

First off, you need to ask yourself the question: What and whom is the market primarily for? Have you ever done a purpose statement? Look it over. Of course there are many components, many constituencies and interests involved in a farmers' market, but you have to ask yourself what is the market primarily for, what is the principle and most important purpose of the market? Is it the customers (who will always want more, cheaper, earlier, better—you know, the corporate-trained consumer psychology we are all burdened with). Is it the farmers, gardeners and bakers who show up every week to create for themselves a market with their sheer will, work, and presence? Is it the local businesses or town officials or nonprofit group for whom the market may be a feather in their cap, a low-budget way to good karma, or an improved flow of shoppers into the neighborhood? Yes the market may be all of these things and more, but what is its essence? Ask yourself who you are working for, then answer the question, What is the market for?

Many markets have a more or less strict "no-buy rule", meaning members are not allowed to buy in anything for resale. I say

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 more or less, because several markets make exceptions. Some of these include:

Brewer says that if you are leaving early you may sell or consign the remainder of your stock to another member selling that day and they may resell it for that day.

Orono says that a member may, on three separate occasions during a market year, send their items with another member due to illness, vehicle damage, or other such reason, and that the items shall be labeled as to the origin.

Unity allows "ghost members", that is, members who join (but never attend) for the express purpose of being able to send their wares in with another member for them to sell. Brewer, Orono, Fairfield and Pittsfield all expressly disallow ghost memberships. Orono has even adopted a policy that if a person joins the market but never attends, then next year they have no seniority as a member and must apply again as a brand new member. Unity also allows, on a case-by-case basis, a member to buy in an item declared to be a void in the market.

Pittsfield has an on-the-spot meeting of members in attendance when a questions about buying in an item arises. Considerations are made as to whether another member is already bringing it in, if there is already enough at market to meet market demand, and where it is coming from. Generally if there is already some grown by a member, buying in is not allowed, unless demand far outstrips supply.

Camden allows a member to buy in a product that would be a void in the market, but if another member who grows it brings that item in, the member who bought the item has to wait till the member who grew the item has sold out of theirs before offering the bought in item for sale.

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Note that all the exceptions markets make are just that: exceptions. It is generally accepted that the no-buy rule pertains, EXCEPT in given circumstances. In other words, the no-buy rule is the starting point.

Markets who go by the 75% rule usually wind up regretting it because 25% bought in can stretch to 50% or more if you are looking at sales volume.

Several markets allow for a "short season membership" at a reduced rate and without voting privileges. This allow voids in the market to be filled for such items as strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, peas, etc., by growers who have these as their main or only crop. Short season memberships are usually for three weeks. Regular daily dues or short-season fee apply.

Most markets started by third parties (downtown revitalization committees, dogooder non-profits, etc.) tend to be a bit dense about understanding the point of a no-buy rule, under the assumption that the more a market offers for sale the better for the sellers and for the shoppers. In other words they put the emphasis on the MARKET instead of on the FARMERS. Some market members even get the "retailing bug" and just love to sell. They see the opportunity to sell product as so great that it would be a shame not to buy in more to sell to supplement or even to replace any that they might grow.

I have often thought about what kinds of directions that farmers' markets can and might evolve in over the years. It seems pretty clear to me that if marketing is allowed to take precedence over farming, then the farmers' market as a marketing outlet for small farmers and gardeners will be short lived indeed. It is in the nature of a free market system to

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eliminate the small sellers in favor of the larger ones, and to concentrate economic power in the hands of those who can provide the widest range of goods at the lowest price. The simplest way to do this is to buy in what you sell, and not to grow it. So a balance must be maintained between the marketing and the farming aspects of the business called a farmers' market. And who better to maintain that balance than the farmers themselves.

But developing a policy is not going to be easy. The main sticking point for us seems to be the following:

- farmer number one says she will be producing corn, for some reason the crop does not come in at the same time corn is available in the area.

- farmer number two wants to buy in as people are asking for it, but is unable to do so because farmer number one will have some, sometime, maybe.

It isn't easy ever, for any market, because various people have divergent ideas about what a farmers' market is all about. Of course customers will have divergent views, but when farmers at the market can't agree, then we have a source of conflict in how the market is to operate. The most important thing is to come to a policy that everyone can live with. One (of many) ways to do this is to make the policy active on a "trial basis" for a year, to be revisited next year.

Note that the Camden market has a policy that says the buyer has to wait till the grower is sold out before selling the bought item.

In the situation noted above, it seems farmer two is operating under the assumption that the customer is king, and we must cater to their every whim. Including having everything they expect us to have whenever they expect

us to have it. In Pittsfield, there is a tailgate marketer about half a mile down the road from us, and we mention to customers that he is there with corn when the market didn't have any. (He was about two weeks ahead of anyone in the market.)

In other words, none of the eight of us were so worried that a customer couldn't get corn that we felt it necessary to modify the market's rules. The rules are, after all, for the long term benefit of the market, not the short term benefit of any particular farmer or customer.

Analyzing just how farmers are thinking about a problem, what thinking is behind their position, is an important first step in understanding where they are coming from and properly addressing their concerns.

Sandy River Farmers' Market policy right now does not allow anyone to buy in if a member farmer will be producing a product (as listed on their application). TRICKY things rules are.

The want-to-buy-in camp may feel that we lose customers when things are available but not at market. If someone goes to Shop 'n Save for com then they will also buy carrots and bread... The no-buy-in camp wants to protect what they produce.

Well if the market has carrots and bread, wouldn't the customer buy those at the market since they were there anyway, before heading off to the Shop 'n Save? We always tell customers to shop the farmers' market first, because you never know what just came into season. A good farmers' market shopper uses the supermarket as a backup.

I feel that it is our job as good and effective marketers to educate the public, not just about when and where the market is, but what

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 to expect from the market. We are just a group of small farmers, so we're not going to always have everything. If we try to meet the shopper's expectations that have been developed and coddled by the chain stores, we are only going to lose, because we can't beat them on that score. If we think of ourselves as bigger and more powerful than we are or can be, we will expend what we are doing beyond what we do best.

How do you balance this act?

I remember when I first started going to market that I was so dejected whenever someone didn't buy my produce. This was good, because it provoked me to look at my quality, my display, my attitude in greeting customers, in short, my whole market presence. And I improved a lot in the next few years. But there is still, and there will always be, the customer you can't satisfy, and you won't always know the reason. But I have decided to completely reject the customer who wants me to be the low priced bargain outlet for farm produce. Sometimes I say to customers, "This is better produce than you'll find at the supermarket, and we aren't a yard sale." This is as a parting shot, after I have decided they aren't going to buy anyway. But it gives them something to think about and maybe they'll be back later on, and with a different attitude.

Shopper re-education is one thing most marketers could use help on. Some of us are very good at it, at least some of the time, especially those who have been doing it for a few years. Others, especially newbies, feel we have to take the shoppers as they come, and we either satisfy their needs or we don't. Although I have some sympathy with this way of operating (as does your farmer number two, I suspect) and sometimes it is necessary when

the close-minded come to shop, I try as often as I can to share some of my agri-culture with my shoppers. The real repeat customers are generally looking for more to the buying experience at market than just the exchange of money for food.

I do go on at length sometimes. Hope this was of some help. Instead of suggesting a particular solution, I feel it's better in the long run to get marketers to think about all aspects of what they are doing, and hopefully develop their own unique and local solutions.

The Farmers' Market Law

The Maine Farmers' Market Law

Signed into law by the Governor on May 18, 1993.

MARKETING, GRADING AND LABELING CHAPTER 101

GENERAL PROVISIONS

SUBCHAPTER I

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING FARM PRODUCTS

7 § 415. Farmers' market

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Farmers' market" means a building, structure or place used by 2 or more farmers for the direct sale of farm and food products to consumers, at which all sellers meet the requirements of subsection 2, paragraph B. [1993, c. 138, §1 (new).]

B. "Farm and food products" means any agricultural, horticultural, forest or other product of the soil or water, including, but not limited to, fruits, vegetables, eggs, dairy products, meat and meat products, poultry and poultry products, fish and fish products, grain and grain products, honey, nuts, maple products, apple cider, fruit juice, wine, ornamental or vegetable plants, nursery products, firewood and Christmas trees. [1993, c. 138, §1 (new).]

[1993, c. 138, §1 (new).]

2. Prohibitions. The following acts are prohibited.

A. A person may not use the term "farmers' market" to describe a market or other sales location that does not meet the terms of the definition set forth in subsection 1. [1993,

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c. 138, 3, §1 (new).]

B. A person may not sell farm and food products at a market labeled "farmers' market" unless at least 75% of the product offered by that person was grown or processed by that person or under that person's direction. A product not; grown or processed by that person must have been purchased directly from another farmer. [1993, c. 138, §1 (new).]

[1993, c. 138, §1 (new).]

3. Penalty. A person who violates this section commits a civil violation for which a forfeiture of not less than \$100 nor more than \$200 may be adjudged.

[1993, c. 138, §1 (new).]

4. Relationship to farmers' market rules. This section does not prohibit a market from imposing more stringent requirements on its sellers than those imposed by subsection 2, paragraph B.

[1993, c. 138, §1 (new).]

Other definitions

Below is a sampling of what some other states/provinces in our region do:

CONNECTICUT: 100% of produce sold must be CT grown. Vendor has a letter agreement with Dept. Ag. which inspects 40% of the 38 markets.

RHODE ISLAND: Has no regulations. Has a "native" rule, defining what produce can be called native. 30 Markets

NEW BRUNSWICK: No regulations. The only rule is that there needs to be 10 or more vendors to be called a Farmers' Market.

NEW JERSEY: There are 2 categories A) 30% are large cooperatives B) 70% are tail-gate, all are self-monitored, not by Dept of Ag.

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About 75% is NJ grown.

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Dept of Ag loosely monitors. NH WIC vendors can only sell if under NH "native" or "organic" laws.

Peddlers and the Farmers' Market Law

by Kate Slattery

As I toured some of Maine's Farmers' Markets, a problem with "peddlers" became a recalling theme. If the market did not currently have the problem, the members were aware of the problem. The often unstated mission of a Farmers' Market is to sell your produce in a cooperative fashion with other farmer's to the public.

What MFFM has been trying to do, is to promote Maine grown produce sold directly to the local population by the growers who grew it. The State Law defining Farmers' Markets was passed in a effort to encourage "local foods for local people", and because there have been many instances of peddlers buying the produce they offer for sale at market. You can refer to the Farmers' Market Definition article on page 44 for a copy of the law, but basically, it boils down to:

"A vendor is required to grow at least 75% of the produce they sell at a farmers' market."

How this is can be enforced is open to discussion. More than a few market members want to allow NO BUYING AT ALL. This, they felt, would exclude the gray area of what is 75% refers to (pounds, sales, display area, on a daily, monthly, or annual basis, etc.).

Two markets were having difficulties with suspected peddlers. Another market had some-

one who wanted to join, but the group thought this person would buy in more then they would grow. And every market was afraid of inadvertently allowing a peddler to join.

What is wrong with buying in produce for resale? It depends what farmers are in the area and are selling at the market. Speaking for Bethel FM, there are almost no fruit growers in town, a few apple orchards, no strawberries, no blueberries. One local farmer has plums and apples, but can not be persuaded to sell at market. So the Bethel Market allows members to purchase 25% of their produce to fill a void. But what if the customer demand exceeds what can be grown by the existing farmers? Should the market encourage higher prices to slow down sales, or should they allow some buying and reselling by market members?

Cornish Market

by Ann Bennett

If the season continues as it has started, we are on the road to great success. We have five new vendors, bringing our total to seven, and the variety of products range from herbs, cut flowers, vegetables, seedlings, perennials, wreaths, craft items, eggs, herb vinegars and pottery. Not only do we have more vendors, our customer base has expanded and we are all experiencing an increase in sales. All members have been recruited to post notices in their area and I know this has helped greatly.

An item of interest that I have found to be a confidence booster for myself, is that in Cornish no one has to be huge to be a success. I sold one day at the Westbrook Farmers' Market and was over-whelmed by vendors that were able to truck in large amounts of flowering baskets, etc. It was a very disappointing

day. In Cornish we seem to have what people are looking for and everyone is small. We work together co-operatively to help promote each other's products and no one gets left out. It has turned out to be a very happy situation for all involved.

As the season progresses, we all look forward to serving the community with fresh Maine produce and local products.

Portsmouth Market

by *Silas Weeks*

15 July 1994

Just a note to say that the Portsmouth NH (Seacoast Growers Association) with Maine members, is having an outstanding year. Forty-eight (48) vendors are using the market, hot all present every time, this includes craft persons.

The market allows 25% crafts, but must be ; vendor made with natural materials and juried for quality. Thus we have 12 craft vendors plus' frozen lamb, frozen turkey pie, breads, baked beans, doughnuts, spices, jams & jellies, honey, cut flowers, pottery, wool, etc.

Usually there is a free demonstration, perhaps by Extension, etc. The Association has a paid market master who also supervises the markets in Dover, Exeter, Hampton and Durham besides Portsmouth.

Trouble at Springvale FM

reported to *Kate Slattery* by *Annette Austin*

Some of the Springvale market members went to Farmington NH to sell their goods.

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 While there, they remarked to other market members (NH) how successful the Springvale market was. A few of the NH farmers decided to show up at Springvale to sell, and the market master was not able to attend market that day to head off any problems.

The members that were there asked the NH folks to leave, that they would not be able to sell at this location. Their response was that this was a free country, and they could sell if they wanted.

This market is very loosely run, no application process was needed because they are all neighbors. Annette asked me if it were her legal right to kick these folks off and the Maine state law would back her. I was not sure if the present law would back her, but I strongly advised her to call a market meeting, draw up some by-laws and an application. With the application in place, she has a better footing to reject an potential vendor.

Ellsworth Market

by *Mike MacFarlane*

Well, this proves it. SELLING OUTDOORS will print anything. And, no, Kate did not pin me down and threaten me when Pat ran into her at the trade show. I am simply awestruck by the effort she and Tom put into this publication. And, yes, I am also guilt-ridden, but mostly, my wife Pat volunteered me. So here goes...

Last year, as you may remember, we had a membership drive. Be careful what you ask for, the saying goes, and we quickly grew from four to fourteen members. We opened early for us (June 15) but kept the same hours (Mon & Thurs 2 pm - 5 pm and Sat 9:30 - Noon). The veteran members hedged ner-

ously about the prospect of making a living with all of the new-found competition. "Grow it just as nice as you can" was the only advice we could offer each other.

Happily, or should I say thankfully, Phyllis was right. "A crowd attracts a crowd". Seemingly overnight, we went from four schleppers in a dirty parking lot to a vibrant, dazzling marketplace. A place where there were wore things to see. people to meet, and a decidedly sound alternative to Shoppermarket Souping. It was a fun place for everyone, including members. And we all saw increases in receipts.

We expect a downside. Four members could usually find a consensus. Fourteen, we're not so sure. Differences in opinion arose from time to time throughout the season. Keep in mind that we are now dealing with fourteen adamantly independent human beings: FARMERS! The message we are trying to get out is that the more active you are in the workings of the market, the more valued your opinion. When in doubt, we vote.

All in all, good tidings from Ellsworth...

On the more personal side, Pat and I are still experimenting, trying to find our niche. Right now we grow about an acre of mixed vegetables. We do a lot in herbs and specialty greens. We sell at the farmers' market and at a few restaurants. Both seem to have their pros and cons.

Restaurants are nice because we have to pick nothing on speculation. Most of the sales are retail and we find a willing market ready to pay a premium for our very best. They are also quite willing to use odd-shaped cucumbers and the like for a reduced price.

I have two pieces of advice: 1) If you're going o grow a specific item for a specific res-

taurant, be sure to make arrangements with the owner as well as the chef. No reason to lose a thousand pounds of okra because your chef has moved to Mozambique. Chefs are flaky. And, 2) if you take an order from a chef, you'd best deliver, even if you have to buy it at the market.

The farmers' market, on the other hand, is a trip. For us it is a social event three days a week. We like to say that we travel the world from our tailgate. The variety of people is endless, and it's easy to see that you are providing a necessary service. At least that's what they tell us.

On the flip side, the market requires a lot of hours. Ones that could better be spent keeping things growing. I usually can't stay. I'll help Pat set up, stay for the rush, and boogie.

Coaxing a living from an acre garden requires a lot of attention to detail. We are looking for ways to do things smarter, not bigger. We can see our limitations as to time and volume.

The beauty of market gardening? An infinite number of ways to go. A cranberry bog is in the offing. I'll keep you posted.

So there you go, Kate. Hope this will hold you till next January. I also hope this inspires other members who can't write to do so.

Bridgton Market Report

by *Dan and Linda Whiting*

After several months of site research and discussions with members of other markets, we had our first growers meeting on the 28th of February with 27 growers present. Growers

who were present represented flowers, veggies, herbs, strawberries, apples, eggs, turkeys, venison, baked goods, chevre, fudge, apothecary herbs and a couple of other things. Dick Keough was there and there was one other apple man from Raymond who does the Portland and Brunswick Markets so we had a lot of good input. The next meeting is in a week to bang out by-laws and operating rules, and cover insurances and licenses.

We chose the location offered by Jon Evans of Grafters Outlet on Rt. 302. He is enthusiastic, say he has 800 to 1000 people through on summer Saturdays; and he gave us a location that has shade until 11:00 am, an electrical hookup, water and the use of his bathroom. He said that if we were going to be there every Saturday that he would put the Farmers' Market in his TV advertising! This all sounds like a good start to me.

We plan to be using the brochures that you offer and we should include in our advertising that we are members of the MFFM to give more legitimacy to our market. Someone is going to contact MFFM for more insurance info, and someone is also contacting the WIG people and the State for a set of Farmers' Market regulations, like scales and food handling.

Dan and Linda live in Denmark and are veteran members of the Cornish Farmers' market.

Brewer has a Difficult Summer

by Tom Roberts

In June, 1992, shortly after the success of Farmers' Market Week, Brewer city councilor Alan Whittimore visited the Brewer Farmers'

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 Market one afternoon. He asked questions like "Why can't just anyone come set up at the market?" and "Who has set up the rules for this market?" and "Why have you stopped Brewer residents from setting up here?" and "How do you set your prices?"

Those of us who were present thought this councilor was acting rather belligerently, as though someone had changed the rules of "his" market without his permission. The questions he asked seemed like they were coming from a place of ignorance of all the information we had sent the city about the market over the last five years, and of all the discussions we had with the Director of parks and Recreations and the City Manager.

That afternoon, we thought that as soon as someone straightens him out, telling him what a credit to the community the market has developed into, how it is self governed and has worked with the city to change the regulations where needed, then all would be fine. However, this was not to be so.

Within a month, the city council had voted to "open the market" to any former members and any Brewer residents, completely ignoring the Bangor Brewer Farmers' Market Association, Inc., and the rules the market had developed. The very next day, two ex-members of the market who had been expelled for buying their wares, set up at the market. It turns out they had been called by a Brewer city councilor and told to come in. We knew they had been involved in a phone calling campaign deriding the market for not letting them sell, claiming we wanted the business all to ourselves. It became clearer to us then what was happening. We were in the midst of a political battle where the Tightness or wrongness of the parties mattered little. It

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 was who you knew and who you could get to go to bat for you.

These changes came about during the months when no farmer has the extra time to spend attending meetings and wrangling with elected and appointed officials. Nevertheless, three of our Steering Committee members attended more than a dozen meetings of the City Council and of the Ad Hoc Committee on Economic Activity Near the Auditorium. This latter committee was set up to "investigate the facts of the matter", and like many study committees their chief effect was to insulate the councilors from the considerable public pressure that was beginning to arise. Accompanying market members at various meetings were Judy Powell from the Div. of Market Promotions of the Dept of Ag, Commissioner of Agriculture Bernard Shaw, and Mark James of the Maine Farm Bureau. The presence of each of these people at the meetings and the advice they provided to us (and to their respective organizations) was most helpful and greatly appreciated. Their perspectives on the proceedings helped us orient ourselves during this difficult time, and without them we would have felt much more isolated.

Here, too, it should be noted that we have had on our side a few brave and feisty members of the City Council and Parks and Recreation Dept who have done their best to get the city to leave the market alone. They continue to fight for the right of the market to self-organize in the best interests of the farmers market, the city and the customer base. We are grateful to them also for arguing in our behalf, for standing up to the inconsistencies foisted upon the discussion, and for letting us know some of what was happening on

the "inside" of city politics. The storm of Brewer's city politics isn't pleasant or clean; favors are owed, hidden agendas abound, influence is peddled.

The two ex-members of the market (peddlers) soon had 4 x 8 sheets of chipboard with orange spray paint saying "We are the real farmers selling at real farm prices" which advertised week old corn, rotting tomatoes and green potatoes. THIS IS NOT AN EXAGGERATION! There strategy was usually to get to market before 6 a.m. and reserve the favored "top spots" close to where cars turned in to the parking lot, set up table after table sometimes with a single potato on each to save a space for another truck coming in later in the morning. Several times one of them came in so drunk he could hardly stand. More than once the situation almost came to blows as market members photographed produce displayed on the ground, decaying produce, and a "void" sticker on the set of scales being used. The reputation of the market for "quality produce bought directly from the farmers and gardeners" was being eroded, and we were collecting considerable evidence to that end. When the peddlers tried to set up between two members so they could not be pointed out as easily to customers, members began to set up closer and with more integrated displays, so that no one could fit in between. When the peddlers began to "bracket" one member to catch customers coming to her from either side, other members altered their set up location to set up next to her to prevent "bracketing". At the request of the city manager the previous winter, we had made membership signs reading "Brewer Farmers' Market 1992 Member" for each of the members. We now asked all members to

be sure to display them, and began to tell customers to look for the signs to be sure who they were buying from was indeed a member of the market.

For the most part our customers were wonderful. We found a depth of support from them we had never suspected, from Brewer residents, from Brewer business owners, and from people who came to shop in Brewer because the market was there. During the month of August, several of our members put out large poster board "Save the Market" signature petitions for customers to sign. This in turn brought about much discussion as to what the City Council was doing, and who were the members of the market and who were not. Several of the petitions included a place for "comments", which revealed the high regard in which the market customers held the market. See elsewhere a compilation of these comments.

Interestingly enough, in spite of all the attempts made to disrupt the operating of the market, it seems we continue today stronger than ever. We adopted a method of accepting new members during the season (copied from the Belfast Farmers' Market), which entails the market master asking each member present on our busiest, most well attended day, to vote, yes or no, on the admission of the new member in question. Using this method, we accepted two new members during this stormy season; ironically one of them was a houseplant oriented greenhouse from Brewer, who innocently began coming to market when she heard the market was open to all.

There are non-farmers in Brewer politics who wish to micro-manage the operation of the Farmers' Market to suit their own views of what a market should be. We have been told

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 that there should be 40 spaces in our market, ten feet wide by twenty feet deep, to allow more farmers to set up there. We currently are quite crowded when eighteen of our members show up, and while some of the smaller members take up about ten feet, many of the large growers need triple that. Over and above our market dues, some proposed that the city charge farmers an annual \$200 a slot to set up. Some city officials stated we should not be allowed to have a baker, a fish seller, flower sellers, crafters or meat sellers because these "compete with other businesses in town". (Of course so does vegetable and fruit selling, but with some it is useless to use reason...)

We were told we should have to accept Brewer residents in the market under any circumstances. The City Council said anyone who sold their own produce only could set up at our market, but then provided no enforcement of that rule, so the peddlers came in. We were accused of not selling at "farm prices", presumably price gouging the public; this same public was creating traffic jams every morning as they arrived at market before they stopped by the Doug's Shop'n Save up the street. There are many more examples of the mean-spirited suggesting ways to run the business of the farmers' market without any regard for the best interest of the market and its large base of customers. Either they believe that the farmer's plainly don't know what's good for them, or they simply don't care what we think, we are powerless, and they will tell us what to do. We voted "None of the above".

At our annual meeting, a unanimous vote was taken to leave our good location at the Auditorium parking lot and move a quarter mile further up Wilson Street to the parking lot of Varney's True Value. The location itself is

less shady but situated similarly to our previous site, with more opportunity for customers to pull in out of traffic. It was felt by almost all that we could not now trust the situation on city property, mostly due to the lack of good faith bargaining—and even treachery—that several of the city officials had displayed toward the market. A location on private property, although still not completely secure, seemed in this context to be far more preferable.

Problems in the Markets

by Kate Slattery and Tom Roberts

There seems to be a variety of problems at Farmers' Markets and MFFM should be there with help, advice, or just a shoulder to cry on.

What happens when a market is closed? A market is generally closed by majority vote when a saturation point is reached within the market. Either there are too many members selling the same thing, and therefore nobody is making a living, or there is just plain no more space for new members.

Newer and smaller markets often welcome any and all vendors in order to meet the customer demand for abundance and variety. Entry-level marketers gradually find through experience what the effect of various types of members is on the overall market, in terms of both member profitability and overall customer satisfaction. This then leads to growing awareness of the market as a marketing unit rather than solely a collection of growers. An analogy can be drawn between a "miracle mile" strip of haphazard commercial development at one end of the scale and a mall with its

planned selection of members at the other.

The evolution of a farmers' market often starts with a free-for-all tailgate market of isolated marketers. It can develop into the more sophisticated model of a farmers' association which acts in the interest of the group of farmers and customers by maintaining supply, raising quality standards, enforcing the selling of only home-grown, and/or ensuring the long-term sustainability of the market apart from any particular set of growers. The development of such farmer associations is something to be encouraged and hoped for. This is both because the direct-selling farmers are the ones who best know their local trade from the inside, and because it is in their own best long-term interest to keep customers happy even if this means getting competitors into the market to ensure supply. But this slow transition cannot be effectively made to happen by an outside agent, be it city officials, an extension office, or local do-gooders. Any of these can help, but only the farmers themselves can make it happen.

Several markets in the state are closed, for various reasons, and a few problems have now arisen. Potential new vendors feel they, too, are entitled to sell regardless of the market rules, space and current vendor load. It is unfortunate that these potential vendors can create such problems that worry the customer base and stress the fabric of the market structure by slander, complaints to city officials and threats of law suits.

The small and struggling Blue Hill Farmers' Market can be affected the same way as the larger Brewer Farmers' Market. A market can soon attract too many of a single type of member (beyond what would be considered healthy competition) and nobody makes

money, forcing some of the members to consider dropping out. Although this may temporarily solve the problem, the cycle soon repeats itself, and the overall result is that there is a lack of farmer enthusiasm for a market with such poor profitability, and a lack of consumer enthusiasm for a market with cut-rate second-quality products (which are common enough any where). For example, at this writing the Brewer Farmers' Market Association is at odds with two or three of the five Brewer City Councilors over what the rules of who can join the market should be. At least two well-to-do growers (a Brewer greenhouse and a Bangor farm) have had the ears of the councilors, who have, it seems gotten into a publicity huff over the fact that the farmers at the market are controlling who is allowed to set up at the market. Two long-time farmer/peddlers excluded from the market in 1991 may have had more than a little to do with instigating the whole affair. The politics of the thing gets sticky, but on a point-by-point listing of the issues, there is little disagreement with the Council in principle, except that there seems to be a distrust of the Brewer Market Association to set the rules of a market on town property. There has been an advisory board set up to discuss the "commercial use of the auditorium parking lot", i.e., the farmers' market. Except for these two fired-up politicians, there has been a very close and cordial relationship over the years between the market and the city officials of Brewer. Many of the customers living or working in Brewer and surrounding towns have called the council to offer support for the market. [See "Customer Comments" page 8.]

Earlier this spring, the Kittery and Springvale Farmers' Markets had problems

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 with the New Hampshire-based Seacoast Vegetable Growers Association (SVGA). Several members of these markets felt pushed around by the SVGA, so much so that they have felt like they were in a corporate take over. [See related article on page 46. -ed.]

Lease and rental properties are another issue. Farmer's markets can not afford to buy property and are therefore at the mercy of the "landlord". Many landlords feel that vegetables are a high profit item, i.e., once you have bought the seeds and planted them, the profits just roll in. Because of such erroneous thinking, many town commons, fairgrounds, municipal parking lots and other potentially good market locations are unavailable or available at a high rental rate even though a farmers' market stall is agriculturally related and not really high profit. Blue Hill, for example, which in years past has paid their "landlord", an official of the Blue Hill Fair, \$200 a season of Saturday mornings in July, August & September, is now being charged \$50 every Saturday day to set up.

Clearly, not all of these these problems will simply go away. More farmers' markets are starting every year. Perhaps this is because of the economic times, or maybe because today's highly centralized super-marketing of produce that is locally growable doesn't really make sense after all. But problems are arising, and the Federation wants to help, even if just to share experiences and solutions. What can be done? And how can the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets help? Should MFFM retain a lawyer that will support and defend the markets or just supply advice?

Please let MFFM know if you need help or can offer advice to another market.

Getting Started, or rather Jump Started

by Anne Bennett, Cornish FM

It is amazing to me that the Cornish Farmers' Market exists each year. As spring came around and Brian got a promotion and raise, I decided that with a 1 year old, I could not handle managing the market and a home farm stand. No one else wanted to be the market master, as a matter of fact, neither did I.

It has been very frustrating for the past 2 years having to CALL each vendor every Friday night to get them to come Saturday morning. We had 7 vendors last year, but after I had the baby and could not go every week, the others just stopped going. It was a big let down to all our loyal customers. I did not want that again this year.

Then unexpectedly, Brian was out of a job, and a last minute decision was made to do the market. There are only 2 of us full-time, 1 part timer and I'm the manager again. (Up date Jul. '95 there are now 6 vendors.) But I have not pursued vendors as I did in the past.

We would love to have more vendors. We work cooperatively to help each other and so far have had a great success. We were ousted off town property due to an ordinance change that we were not notified of, but have found a private business owner who is letting us use her parking lot—free of charge. We hope the rest of the season continues to go well.

What makes a successful market?

by Kate Slattery

Last year when I toured some markets, I found that each market was filling a niche in their town. All markets were selling the freshest veggies available and top quality veggies, baked goods and more. Each market has it's own flavor and ambiance. Most were in a parking lot, baking in the hot sun, but there was always a smile on the vendors faces.

I also would like to congratulate the markets that adhered to their advertized operating times. I did make a special trip to one market on a hot Thursday to the Auburn Farmers' Market. And there was no one there!! To me it was a major disappointment as it was advertised in the MFFM flyer that they were open. If I were a customer I would be really PO'd, after making a special trip to the market, maybe after not buying veggies at the grocery store. Now I would have to go back to the grocery store to buy from out of the state/country. When you are asked what the operating times are so MFFM can advertize for you, please make sure they are realistic.

I have talked to the bigger growers, the bigger markets and the smaller part time vendors and the smaller markets. Each feels a loyalty to their market. But what was the measuring stick of success? Pride. Hard work. An artists touch in their display.

Yes, these all count. But I found it curious that some vendors feel that it is a money issue. Now don't get me wrong, money is a big issue, and why else would we be doing it if not for the income. And some of vendors are big and need to sell a lot or compost a lot. There are

many markets in the state that feel that a \$200/day is a great success. But there is an attitude that \$200/day is not even worth setting up for. Let's face it, it takes time each season to get your customers retrained to come by the market. Starting the market generally a few weeks early is a good practice, and these weeks aren't always the big money weeks. OK, now it is peak season and you have oodles of fresh veggies. And your market isn't for another 2 days, you are off the beaten path so the farm stand is slow. What do you do??

How about joining a smaller market, many of the smaller markets are looking for vendors. Maybe send a smaller truck on that day. But get out there, sell, sell, sell and in the mean time, what have you done? ADVERTISED to another set of potential farm stand customers.

Now how does one measure success?? Look at your mailing list you have compiled and see how far people will travel to you for that good Maine food. You are now standing or more that one leg should something happen to your one "bigger" market. And now you are making that much more money by expanding you operation.

Think about it.

What markets say to shoppers

Each farmers' market has its own unique way of addressing and attracting customers. A market's brochure is one of the faces a market shows to the public, and reading what each market says can be instructive in learning how better to address the public. While all market brochures say "Rain or Shine!" and list their

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997 members and products offered, here's what some of the markets also say:

Camden Farmers' Market.

26 years of LOCAL FRESHNESS Farmers' Markets AND YOU help create a strong local economy. Camden also lists a season long series of special events.

Rockland Farmers' Market.

Help strengthen the local economy, buy Fresh, Local and In Season!

Farmers' Markets and you help create a strong local economy!

"The Rockland Farmers' Market association is an organization of local farmers and individuals who offer customers a large variety of locally grown, farm fresh fruits, vegetables, preserves, fresh chicken and seafood sausage as well as home-baked goods, maple syrup, goat cheese, mushrooms, seasonal plants and handcrafted items."

SUPPORT LOCAL AGRICULTURE!

Rockland also lists a season long series of special events.

Unity Market Day

Join us for Friends, Food and Fun!

"Every Saturday, Unity market Day offers a wide variety of fun-filled events for the entire community.

"Cookouts, barbecue lunches, wagon rides, gardening demonstrations, agricultural workshops, and musical entertainment are just a few of the exciting events the Market has to offer.

"Unity market Day also features a spectacular program just for Kids. School Street Arts of Unity provides a wide variety of FREE

activities ranging from puppet shows and face painting to scavenger hunts and interactive theater.

"Unity Market Day is your day—a day to meet local farmers, buy the freshest products available, participate in workshops and demonstrations, and simply have FUN!"

Unity also lists comments from shoppers under "Why do people love Unity Market

Day?"

Belfast Farmers' Market

Since 1980...and still growing

Orono, Pittsfield and Fairfield Markets

have some version of "What is a Farmers' Market?" as shown on page 68.

Farmers' Market Related Websites

[Note: This section has been updated for the 2011 edition, referring the reader to what is available and being kept up-to-date at MFFM.org. Practically all of the information in this section of the first edition is now out of date.]

The Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets website is at <http://www.MFFM.org>

If your market has a website and you would like to see it listed on the MFFM website, send the web address to Tom Roberts at tom@mffm.org

The MFFM website also has a section where you can view and download the daily operating rules and the by-laws of some markets. We'd like to post your market's rules and by-laws, too, so email them to us and we'll post them.

The most up-to-date statewide list of Maine Farmers' Markets is now hosted at <http://www.mofga.net>

It is hosted and maintained by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association. Many thanks to Melissa White Pillsbury for making the many phone calls necessary each year to obtain and update the information contained therein.

For more information about farmers' markets in Maine, contact the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets at tom@mffm.org, or phone 207-416-5417.

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Links to the State of Maine Farmers' Market law and agricultural permits and regulations are now also at mffm.org.
These are also available for downloading.

Useful Addresses

(These are listed for information purposes only; no recommendation is implied.)

Allstate Bag, 46 Rice St., Presque Isle, 25# Poly bags. (800) 244-2911.

Downcast Supply, Rt 100, Box 199, Gray Rd., Gray, ME 04039 ph. 657-3355 Attn: Bob Corey. Delivers, (supplies farm & garden centers, including greenhouses)

Dragon Products, Rt 1, Thomaston, ME 04861 ph.594-5555. (full & half truckloads of bagged lime, hi mag & calcitic)

Earthgro, Inc., PO Box 143, Lebanon, CT 06249 ph. 203-642-7591 Full & half truckloads. (Composted Cow Manure)

Fedco Seeds, PO Box 520, Waterville ME 04903-0520 ph. 873-SEED (Fedco Seeds & Fertilize^ Fedco Trees, Fedco Bulbs, Moose Tubers) Untreated seeds, no GMO products.

Fitzco Farm Center, Rt 2 Box 209, Bangor, ME 04401 ph. 848-3796 Attn: Norm Fitzpatrick. (form supplies, fertilizers)

Food & Nutrition Service, USDA, 40 Western Ave, RM 410A, Augusta, ME 04330 Attn: James Cook ph. 622-8255 (retailer food stamp certification)

The Green Spot, Ltd., home of the Green Methods Catalog of organic pest & disease control supplies and information. (Beneficial Insects & Biological Controls) 93 Priest Rd., Nottingham, NH 03290-6204. (603) 942-8925 info@GreenMethods.com

Greenhouse Supply of Maine, Inc., PO

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997
Box 97, Orono, ME 04473. ph. 866-7919.
Attn: Ellis Sprague. (Greenhouse & irrigation supplies, plants)

Griffin Greenhouse Supply, 1619 Main St, PO Box 36, Tewksbury MA 01876 ph. 508-851-4346. Delivers, (complete line of greenhouse and nursery supplies)

Johnny's Selected Seeds, Foss Hill Rd, Albion, ME 04910 ph. 437-4301. www.johnnyseeds.com (Many untreated seeds. Many of their own varieties. Very informative catalog.)

Living Acres, Weeks Mills Rd., New Sharon, ME 04955 ph. 778-2930 Attn: Tony Ramsey. Retail and bulk. (Kompost, liquid fish, natural potting soils).

Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Station 28, Augusta, ME 04333 ph. 289-3491 (Licensing, Weights & Measures)

Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association, PO Box 170, Unity ME 04988 (Organic certification, technical assistance, apprenticeship 568-4142) (Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener newspaper 763-3043)

Maine Poly, Inc., PO Box 8, Greene, ME 04236. ph. 946-7440. Attn: Jules Gagne, sales. (Poly bags of any size, custom made and printed.)

Mid Maine Greenhouse Growers Association, Micheal Zuck, Everlasting Farm, 2106 Essex St., Bangor, ME 04401. Ph. 947-

8836. (Greenhouse info, co-op orders for seed & supplies, monthly meetings.)

North American Kelp, Cross St., Waldoboro, ME 04572 ph. 832-7506 Attn: Mike Roberts (seaweed meal, liquid seaweed, fish emulsion)

North Atlantic Products, PO Box 146, Rockland, ME 04841 ph. 596-0331 Retail & bulk. (Sea Green Fish Compost)

Pest Management Supply, Inc., PO Box 938, Amherst, MA 01004 ph.413-253-3747. Attn: Tom Green. (IPM supplies, Identification aids, Sampling Tools, Beneficial Insects & Biological Controls. Excellent selection.)

Pine Tree Garden Seeds, New Gloucester, Maine 04260. (mini-packets, some unusual varieties.)

Rural Enterprise Magazine, N80 W12878 Fond du Lac Avenue, PO Box 878, Menomonee Falls, WI 53051. Attn: Karl F. Ohm III, editor. (Covers direct sales of farm products at roadside stands and farmers' markets nationwide.)

Volm Bag, Minnesota, mesh bags, (612)935-4169 or (715) 627-4826.

WIC program for Farmers' Markets. Shawn B. Hoyle, 11 SHS, Augusta ME 04333. (800) 437-9300. shawn.b.hoyle@state.me.us

What is a Farmers' Market?

[The following is a composite statement from market descriptions found on several farmers' market brochures.]

Farmers' Markets are ancient and simple. Many parts of the world have a tradition of farmers' markets going back for centuries. In today's rush for one-stop convenience shopping and year-round availability of foods from the global marketplace, our communities all too often have lost touch with the productivity of our local small farms. And the small scale grower has lost the connection with markets of appropriate scale. The Farmers' Market offers a solution where 100% of the money shoppers spend goes directly to the local farmer.

Not just one shop

It is helpful to understand that the market is a collection of independent growers each with their own standards of quality, display, selection, price and friendliness. They have joined together in a Farmers' Market Association to assure the shopping public of regular hours, high quality, and wide selection, and to thereby attract more customers than any one of them could do alone.

Many regular shoppers eventually settle on their favorite two or three farmers to do most of their business with because they feel these farmers best meet their needs.

Different kinds of farmers

Since there are so many different kind of farmers who are members of the Farmers' Market, they may never all be at the market at one time. For example strawberry growers and

The Best of Selling Outdoors 1991-1997
blueberry growers are almost never at the market at the same time because the seasons of their crops do not overlap.

On the other hand, our bakers and many of our farmers have a year round season—such as chicken, maple syrup, or honey—which are offered all season.

Get to know the market! Walk the market

It is important when first visiting the market—and occasionally thereafter—to "walk the market" to see who is there and what is being offered. Even the farmers themselves do this to see how their own stands compare with those of other farmers. Your favorite farmer may not always be earliest with what's just starting to come into season, or may not grow that specialty item you've been searching for. Most farmers respect the "comparison shopper", and are not at all offended if you don't buy everything at their stand.

Talk to our members

They are generally well versed in what they do, and don't mind taking a minute to give gardening advice, discuss recipes, tell you when another farmer can be expected at market, or when strawberry season starts. This varies their routine at market, and we hope spices up your day, as well.

Eat better - Eat in season

There is a natural variety to meals that comes with eating the luscious just-picked local produce as it is harvested. The ancient clockwork of the growing season is skillfully fine tuned by clever growers using both modern and ancient methods of season extension for a longer harvest season.

We bring you local produce that thousands of miles fresher.