

Shared Wisdom

Selling Your Best at Farmers' Markets

Marketing - Selling the Whole Truckload

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Reasons Why Customers Shop at Farmers Markets

- Freshness/quality
- Flavor/quality
- Variety (they want to shop)
- Availability of produce not often found in supermarket stores
- Pricing
- Buying direct from the farmer (origin)
- Bulk buying for preservation
- Social Atmosphere

Farmers Markets Benefits for Farmers

- Marketing rare heirloom & antique varieties too sensitive to ship.
- Increased profit margins.
- Opportunity to sell small lots.
- Product line expansion.
- Set your own price.
- Extends the farmer's volume of produce sold by selling a crop deemed "non-marketable" through shipping channels.
- Family employment.
- Immediate cash flow.
- Satisfying demand from diverse ethnic/cultural communities.
- Reducing overall marketing expenses; packaging, grading, and hauling.
- Introduction of new crop varieties and immediate consumer feedback.
- Minimal barriers to participate.

Strategies Farmers Use to Increase Sales

- Product/crop selection and identifying "draw crops": corn, melons, tomatoes, tree fruit.
- New varieties, access their potential.
- Make sure early varieties have high quality and taste.
 - Don't make a bad impression with lackluster flavor.
 - Better to wait and come in later with the good stuff.
- Product education.
 - Show customers how to use your product, how it was grown/made.
 - Helps them identify with the effort used to bring the farm to the city.
- Coordinate with the market's promotional calendar to bring in extra crop when it's advertised.
- Value-added products.
- Hydroponics adds value to a product.
- Don't bring a product unless you can put your name on it.
- Field run is ok but must be culled out before displayed.
- No more than 2 days on the counter for minimum ripeness.
- Bring at least 1 full box of ripe-to-eat now for sampling.

Effective Advertising Messages & Graphics

- Have a clear message/theme
- Present it clearly
- Always include "Direct from..."
- Who, what, when, how, where
- Method to get further information

Effective Direct Mail Methods

- "Shot in the Dark" - develop a market mailing list.
- Tracking the carrier routes.
- Turn around techniques.
 - Post cards that can be brought to market for drawing. You get the name and address back.

Stall Merchandising

- Line edges of table with stall/aisle marks.
- Get the customer as close to the table as possible.
- Setback of tables discourages customer interaction within the stall.

Stall Merchandising Continued

- U-shaped set-up for growers with established customer base.
 - The center front table is good for sampling set-up and close to customer flow.
 - Maximizes table space and creates sun/rain protection for customers.
- Add a stall space.
 - The bigger you are the more you sell.
 - The longer your table set-up, the more time customers take to walk by and consider your produce for sale.
- Angle your tables to invite customers into the market aisle when you are a corner stall.
- End cap stalls provide extra merchandising space.
- Use as much table frontage as you can.
- Conceal vehicles with bins of produce.
- Tilt your produce boxes, show off awards, get the customer's attention.
- Build compartments to help stack your produce higher and hold more.
- Tiered levels make more room for stock.
- A back shelf will provide more display area.
- Keep the display piled high.
 - Restock after each rush.
 - Keep the table balanced, spaced out neatly and evenly.
- Use color contrast to enhance eye appeal.
- Display at a convenient height - never on the ground or above eye level.
- Use bushel baskets, crates, etc. elevated for easy access and handling.
 - Baskets set on edge with produce tumbling out creates a great effect.
- Use colored table cloths to accent color of produce.
- Make sure product signage is easy and nice to look at.
 - Colorful
 - Descriptive
 - Easy to read
 - List up to 3 sizes/prices on one sign.
 - Use pictures of your produce or farm logo.
 - Include 3 bullets that tell something about the product.
 - Laminate signs to make them weatherproof.
 - Include the location and phone number of the farm.
 - Show pictures of farm activity.
 - Post an overhead picture of the farm.
- Wear a name tag.
- Occasional, friendly, informational announcements every 2-3 minutes.
- Create opportunities for sales - look into a customer's bag to determine if they need your product to complete a potential recipe.

Basics of Customer Service

- Place the scale up front to avoid turning your back to the customers.
- A rotating scale can face customers in any direction to view weight and price.
- Orient the shade cover to give protection to customers too.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Know your varieties and be ready to answer questions.
- Invite customers back - "See you next week".
- Ask how they liked the produce they bought the previous week.
- Do something special for regular customers - farmers market dozen.
- Satisfied customers will share the positive experience with 3 other people.
- Dissatisfied customers will share tell 10 others about their bad experience.

Pricing for Farm Markets vs. Retail Grocery Stores

- Try to resist mirroring wholesale pricing that is abnormally high or low.
- Keep prices the same during high and low wholesale price swings to build customer loyalty.
- High prices drive customers away from markets.

Customer Satisfaction

- Provide good customer service - be ready on time.
- Greet your customers and learn their names.
- Acknowledge waiting customers and be aware of their time to transact.
- Recipes encourage more sales; customers are more willing to try the product when they know how to cook it.
- Guarantee your product.
- Don't eat or smoke in the stall.
- Why customers leave:
 - 1% die
 - 3% move away
 - 5% form other friendships
 - 9% leave for competitive reasons
 - 14% product or service dissatisfaction
 - 68% attitude of indifference toward the customer by some employee

The Key to Direct Marketing it Repeat Buying

- Newsletters
- Farm identity
- Information booth
- Greetings
- Farmer's first line of offense... "See you next week!"
- Community Involvement
- Product mix
- Quality/Freshness
- Consistency
- Logos, T-shirts, bags, break-even promotions

Promotions

Merchant at the market
Face painting

Public Relations

- Recognition
- Be appreciative
- Give
- Help
- Market is a Community place
- Method to reverse complaints: Opportunity for Comebacks.

Disney Formula for Success

- Food
- Music
- Something for free
- Something for children
- Overlapping activities

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