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Ontario celebrates local farmers and food at Queen's Park

Did you know?

11% of vendors across Canada cite the need for 'more vendors' as one of their top wishes.

16% of shoppers identify the need for more variety and more vendors.

What does this mean in your market?



Did you know?

The pumpkin pie originated as a dessert back in colony times – pumpkins were hollowed out and filled with milk, spices and honey and then roasted on hot ashes.

For a pumpkin trivia quiz that can help you boost pumpkin sales throughout the fall, go to farmersmarketsontario.com or send us an email!

The White House hosted a farmers' market in Washington this month, but the Ontario Legislature beat them to the punch on September 16th. The Honourable Steve Peters, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, hosted a special harvest farmers' market on the lawn of Queens Park – and it was an overwhelming success. Posters and email invitations from Mr. Peters brought people out in droves, in pursuit of a fresh local lunch.

The special market was open for business from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and turned lunchtime at Queens Park into an adventure—and a picnic. Visitors were invited to graze their way through several covered stalls, enjoying a barbecued sausage or smoked meat sandwich, just-picked fruits and veggies, crusty bread, and a slice of fresh baked peach pie for dessert. But it wasn't just about lunch – shoppers also stocked up on farm-fresh products to take home for dinner, with the first 100 receiving a free tote bag with their first purchase.

This event was a great opportunity to celebrate the real heroes of Ontario's farmers' markets, in this case, MyPick™ Verified Local Farmers™—farmers whose farms and farm-fresh products have been inspected and verified as “the real thing” by Farmers' Markets Ontario®. FMO has now begun the process of enrolling and identifying Verified Local Farmers™ in farmers' markets across Ontario. The MyPick™ local farmer verification program is the first of its kind in the country, and FMO is optimistic that other markets across the province will begin to use the program to promote their bona fide local vendors.

Farmers' Markets Ontario® worked closely with the Speaker and his staff to ensure the success of this event.

For more information and tips on how to make the most of your events, visit farmersmarketsontario.com or give us a call!



The Manager's Office:

Your Market By the Numbers

Do you know how many people come to your market each week? Taking count several times over the season can be very useful for you, the vendors and your organizing committee, as well as the community.

Grab some volunteers and tally counters and do a 20-minute count.

1. Determine all market entrances and the exact line where people are considered to have entered the market.
2. Count only adults. Don't count shoppers re-entering.
3. Make counting periods consistent. Count every hour starting 20 min. past the hour.
4. Multiply the 20-min/hr totals by 3 for an hourly estimate.

When you publish attendance estimates, make it clear that they are for a specific day.

Market Management Catch-22

Why Some Markets Fail

Oregon State University (OSU) conducted the first major long-term study on why some farmers' markets fail. The seven-year study found a significant difference between established (more than 4 years old) and new markets. Larger markets were more resilient and rarely failed. They also had more experienced, better-paid managers.

Five Interconnected Factors

Small and new markets, supply (vendors) and demand (customers) balance, low administrative revenue, volunteer or low-paid manager and high manager turnover characterize market failure. They feed on one another.

The Circle is Small

Small markets cannot attract enough vendors and variety of products to attract customers. Vendors don't come because there aren't enough customers. If a key vendor leaves, the market can deteriorate quickly. Small markets do not generate enough revenue to adequately promote and develop the market on their own.

Over-worked, underpaid and inexperienced

There is often a connection between rent collected and a manager's pay. Larger markets benefit from more vendors and higher fees. Smaller markets tend to have volunteer or low-paid managers who are usually inexperienced. Volunteer manager burnout and turnover in these cases are high. Small markets provide limited revenue for marketing.

There is a belief that farmers' markets, small and large, should be self-sustaining. This is a particularly unrealistic expectation for small markets. The OSU study recommends that there be a transition plan in place to move a volunteer manager position to a paid one once there are more than a dozen vendors and the manager's job exceeds seven hours a week.

Other Factors

Lack of parking, tension with local businesses, low community support, and having market at the wrong hours on the wrong day can contribute to failure.

Internal problems such as vendor/management challenges or vendor/vendor conflict can also create a crisis. An imbalance between resellers and local vendors can exacerbate challenges.

Evaluate your market

If the manager is experienced (more than 2 years) and decently compensated, your market has more than 20 vendors and has been open for more than 4 years, you likely have a successful market. If you're open on the right day at the right time, have good parking and community and financial support, even better. Add in great vendor-management-organization rapport and your market is probably thriving.

If your market is characterized by any of the Fearsome Five, your work is cut out for you. Seek the support you need.

The report can be seen in full on the FMO website. www.farmersmarketsontario.com





Profile: MyPick™ Inspector, Bob Cobbledick



Bob loves farm visits. After a 30-year tenure with OMAFRA or now as a MyPick™ inspector, he says, “I come home so excited. I learn a lot from them.” Bob covers the Niagara region and the GTA west of Highway 400 to Owen Sound.

Bob agreed to participate on the MyPick™ Inspection Criteria committee on the condition that the people on the committee

were farmers. “They (the farmers) need to be able to buy into the system. The people who sat at that table were sincere and I respected their opinions. I still judge a farm based on those criteria.”

He recommends farmers preparing for inspection create a separate “inspection” file. “Drop in a photocopy of receipts and invoices as they go.”

The Vendor’s Stall:

Look With New Eyes

Invite a friend, another vendor, your manager, or someone in promotions to evaluate your stall. Take photographs. See what it looks like from the aisle. A visit to another market or vendor will inspire a good idea or two.

What does your display tell customers?

How many senses are stimulated?

How do you engage your customers?

Is it time for a new sign? Do you have labels AND prices?

Having to repeat prices or tell customers, which is the peach pie and which is the apple crumble wastes time. Good labeling allows you to educate, to tell a story, suggest a unique way to serve it or cross-promote with another vendor.

Just because it “ain’t broke,” doesn’t mean things can’t use a little fixing.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Diane Garrington has accepted the position of Market Manager for the Kitchener Farmers Market, effective August 31. Diane was the manager of Market Square in St. Catharines where she was also responsible for communications and special events for the City.

Growing Forward Business Development Programs (from OMAFRA)

The Growing Forward Best Practices Suite – Business Development for Farm Businesses program incorporates self-assessment and goal setting with a range of cost-share advisory services and skills development opportunities to help reach your farm business goals. www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/about/growingforward/busdev.htm

Helpful resources:

(OMAFRA) - Business Management Unit website at:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/agbusdev.html>

Over to You

What are your principal challenges as a vendor/manager?

What would you like to ask another manager/vendor?



Tip of the Month Contest:

Win FMO merchandise by sharing your "What Works" tip with other managers and vendors.

This month's winner of a MyPick™ - Verified Local Farmer™ T-shirt is Andy Terauds, Ottawa Farmers' Market-Lansdowne Park

Andy's suggestion is simple, but effective:

When the sale is completed say, "See you next week." If the Market is adding a new day, mention that. If they didn't know, they'll ask. Direct communications stick in their brain.

Customers want to know they've been noticed. Things like "We missed you last week," "how was your vacation?" or "how were the Green Zebra tomatoes last week?" help build successful relationships.

Profile: MyPick™ Verified Local Farmer™ Carol Collins, Collins Produce



Carol's increasing number of loyal customers start at one end of the stall with their bag. "They ask, 'When will the coloured carrots be ready?' That didn't happen last year."

Relationships are as important as produce for Carol. "I provide a service. The people who work with me provide the same service. They know how to answer questions about sprays, taste differences and what do you do with arugula?"

Carol encourages experimentation. "I can't tell you how many young men I've taught how to cook beets." She now grows rapini and methi (fenugreek leaves) to meet customer requests. She scans seed catalogues to see what might attract customers.

Her wholesale business has also benefited. Golden beets, for example, now nearly match her red beet sales.

Upcoming Market Events

Oct. 3	Carp Farmers' Market	Animal Day Guest: Community Food Advisors
Oct. 10	Carp Farmers' Market	Thanksgiving - Free turkey draw
	Welland Farmers' Market	Bringing in the Harvest - pumpkin pie contest, cooking demonstrations with Wolfgang Sterr
	North Bay Farmers' Market	Customer Appreciation Day - last day of the market season
	Aurora Farmers' Market	Thanksgiving at the Market Manatee Band performs
Oct. 17	Carp Farmers' Market	Heritage Apple Day

Post your market events on the FMO website.

If you don't have your member log-in and password, please contact fmo@farmersmarketsontario.com

Next issue: October 16 **Theme:** Season Wrap Up **Deadline for submissions:** October 12.

Contact Farmers' Markets Ontario®

Find out more on new MyPick.ca



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