

## Market Tips for First-Time Vendors

1. Grow your market by cultivating a loyal clientele.
2. Get top prices when you have top quality product.
3. Achieve success by delivering excellent customer service.
  - If you are not a “people person”, send another family member or hire a well-trained employee.
4. To encounter friends, appreciative customers, remember:
  - Customers shop at farmers’ markets because they want to meet the people who grow their food, and they want fresh, high-quality products.
5. Invest your time wisely:
  - By preparing and leaving enough time for travel.
  - Be ready to sell at opening bell. The majority of your sales may occur within the market’s first hour.
6. Bring everything you need.
  - Most market stalls are a 10’ x 10’ bare piece of concrete. See the sample checklist below.

### What to Bring

*Careful planning for market is essential to your success. Be on time and ready to sell by the opening bell. The majority of your market day sales may occur within the first hour of the market. Make a checklist! Examples of items to include:*

- o Canopy (white is best) and weights for each leg of the canopy
- o Stall structure: tables, table covering, racks, shelves
- o Display containers for your product
- o Plastic and paper bags
- o Cash box and bank (be ready to make change for \$20 bills!)
- o Licensed scale
- o Handwashing station (see *ODA Farmers Market Minimum Food Safety Guidelines* for details, page 78).

- o Miscellaneous display items: sign making materials including chalk, paper, cardboard, markers, scissors, tape, pens, bags, price tags, pocket knife, duct tape.
- o Check out items: pencils, pens, calculator, sales record/receipt book, notepad, bags, boxes, flats.
- o Trashcan, broom
- o Signs: the more personal, the better. Consider using pictures!
  - Large sign or banner hung at eye level or above with your farm's name and location.
  - Individual product names and prices alongside of the items—how the item is sold (by weight, piece, quantity)—highlight different varieties, heirlooms, product qualities (sweet, spicy, bitter), storage tips, etc.
  - Signage extras: recipes, how-to's, seasonality information, new item, product information.
- o Information about your farm, CSA or other on-farm activities, promotional materials, business cards—you never know when you will meet a chef!
- o Personal comfort items: weather gear, gloves, hats, rainwear, and drinking water.
- o Your customer service personality—a big smile is your best asset.

## **Merchandising 101: Sell Smart and Increase Profits**

**Build farm loyalty.** Create an identity for yourself. Make your farm name and location clear to customers. Provide a description of your farm including location, acres, history, crops, and growing methods. Try displaying this information on a poster and include pictures of your farm. Or have a flyer to distribute to customers. Take advantage of the opportunity to educate shoppers about how things are grown.

**Train employees!** Make sure they are knowledgeable about your product and your farm. Continuity of salespeople builds relationships with repeat customers.

**Provide samples.** Let your customers taste the difference! Sampling can increase sales up to 30%. Ask customers: “Have you every tried this variety?” Make sure you follow the minimum guidelines for food safety detailed in this packet. Keep a separate box with your sampling tools, e.g. toothpicks, serving platter, napkins.

**Supply recipes and information.** Find recipes that are simple and contain a few ingredients that can be found at your stand or other parts of the farmers market.

**Start an email list.** Let your loyal customers sign up for a mailing list so you can inform them about special opportunities, other markets, and locations they can find you or your product.

**Use your personality** and expertise as a merchandising tool to build and strengthen your customer base.