

Eastside FARMERS MARKET



Central park, madison, wisconsin
Madison Eastside Farmers Market Vendor Guide





Madison Eastside Farmers Market Vendor Guide

The Madison Eastside Farmers Market created this document for vendors and other farmers' markets as an addition to their vendor manuals. In addition to your particular rules and procedures, the following information may be helpful to vendors selling in the state of Wisconsin.

The following information was originally presented as a series of emails sent to Madison Eastside Farmers Market vendors during the 2016 season. All links are current at the time of original distribution.

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Wisconsin Farmers Market Association

Deborah Deacon
Board President
deborahdeacon@icloud.com

The Madison Eastside Farmers Market

2016 Board

Andy Watson: andy@macwatson.net
Mary White: honeybeecollective@gmail.com
Tim Zander: emeraldmeadowsfamilyfarm@gmail.com

2016 Market Managers

Carla Williams: efmmanager@gmail.com
Info booth/general operations manager

Jodi Meier: efmmanager@gmail.com
Social media/events/promotion

Exact Change Creative

hi@exactchangecreative.com

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture

2016 Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant program

Please direct questions about this document to efmmanager@gmail.com



Table of Contents

Don't Forget! A Simple Checklist	5
Direct Farm Marketing Insurance Information	6
Tent, Stand & Booth Advice	8
Product Display	10
Pricing Tips	12
Promotional Materials	15
Sampling	17
Signage	18
Market Day Employees & Helpers	20
Social Media	22
End of Season Evaluation	25
Additional Vendor Resources	27

Don't Forget! A Simple Checklist

It can be easy to leave behind important items when you're hurrying to get ready for market. Making a checklist and giving it a glance each week can be a real lifesaver. Here are some items you may want to add to your checklist:

- Cash box outfitted with change and small bills – so important, so easy to forget!
- Spray bottles filled with water to keep your produce (and you!) cool and fresh
- Weights to anchor tables, signs and canopies
- Trash bags – pack out all trash
- Scale – test each week before the market
- Hats, sunglasses, sunblock, hand sanitizer, small first aid kit
- Notebook and pen for reminders, collecting customer info, trading vendor info
- Copies of business licenses
- Rain gear (do you trust Wisconsin weather?!)
- Business cards, brochures or price lists that customers can take with them
- Extra t-shirts and clothing in case of spills or a change in temps



This list is adapted from reference material sourced from Kansas Rural Center and University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension.

Direct Farm Marketing Insurance Information

According to the UWEX Emerging Ag Markets Team, “farmers increase their risk and exposure to lawsuits by marketing their products directly to consumers. The public has become increasingly conscious of legal actions, and when faced with a problem, more people are willing to pursue remedies through the legal system.” Simply put – we live in a litigious society. Appropriate steps, however, can be taken to safeguard against such an occurrence. Adequate insurance and liability protection reduces potential economic risks associated with farming and direct marketing.

Producer/Vendor liability insurance is best viewed as an umbrella term for two more specific types of insurance:

- Product liability covers claims related to the products that the vendor sells (fruits, vegetables, eggs, baked goods, etc.)
- General liability covers claims brought against the seller that are not product related, e.g. trip and fall accidents or injuries from an unsecured tent

Note: Not all producer insurance policies offer the same type of coverage. When buying producer insurance, be very clear with the agent about what products you want covered by the policy, and verify that the policy provides that coverage. Examples of common issues:

- Product liability insurance might cover produce, but not meat and dairy sales
- General liability insurance may not cover temporary structures, such as tents or tables

Most farmers have a farm liability policy, but that doesn't mean your policy also covers any possible liability for what might happen at a farmers' market. Do not assume you will be covered by the market's liability insurance. Most markets will require proof of your own coverage.

Questions to Ask Regarding a Commercial Liability Policy Covering Off Farm Sales

- What types of products are covered and not covered by my product liability insurance?
- What types of incidents are covered/not covered by my general liability insurance?
- Does my liability coverage extend to all of the markets where I sell?
- Does my coverage extend to my employees or representatives and their actions?
- What is the deductible? (See definition on the next page)
- How much does the premium cost? Be sure to review both the cost of the policy and the type of coverage you get for that price.
- How much does the insurance cover per occurrence? The amount of money an insurance company will pay to a claimant is typically \$1 million. If the occurrence costs more you may be held responsible for the additional money owed.
- What is the aggregate limit of the insurance policy? (See definition on next page.)

Some Helpful Terminology

- **Aggregate Limit:** This is the maximum dollar amount your insurer will pay to settle your claims. Often referred to as annual aggregate limit, it's the total amount your insurer will pay in a single year.
- **Claimant:** The person who brings a lawsuit or claim against you.
- **Deductible:** The amount you pay out of your own pocket before the insurance provider begins paying the reimbursement owed to the claimant.
- **Farm Liability Insurance:** Insurance that protects against liability for accidents that occur on the farm premises or while engaged in typical farm activities. Depending on the policy, it may or may not cover direct farm selling activities.
- **Additional insured:** A party other than a party in whose name insurance is issued who is also protected against losses covered by such a policy. This coverage may be requested by a farmers market where you vend.



Insurance Resource List

[The Drake Agricultural Law Center](#) has developed an online legal resource and a free publication titled “The Legal Guide for Direct Farm Marketing.” The site provides regular updates on direct farm marketing law and policy, and allows readers to ask questions directly to Center staff and law students. Legal topics including business entity selection, taxes, contracts, labeling, land use and property law, labor and employment, food safety and licensing—all within the unique context of direct farm marketing. For FAQ’s about Direct Farm Marketing Insurance as well as 10 Questions to Ask Your Agent About Insurance Coverage see [this chapter](#).

[Risk, Liability, and Insurance for Direct Marketers](#) This is a fact sheet targeted at farmers who market their products directly to consumers, providing guidance on risk management, liability, and developing an insurance program to meet the direct marketer’s needs.

[Should Farmers Market Vendors Carry Product Liability Insurance?](#) This article provides an introduction to product liability insurance and its distinctions from general liability insurance. It also provides information for market managers considering whether to require vendors to purchase product liability insurance as part of their market agreement.

Tent, Stand & Booth Advice

Perhaps the most common vendor advice is simply this: don't buy a cheap tent. This advice applies even if you only work one market a week. A typical market season will expose your booth to rain, sun, humidity and maybe even snow. One good wind gust can render a cheap tent useless. [E-Z Up](#) brand tents are popular, especially because it is relatively easy to buy replacement parts. If you are looking for a tent, the best showroom is a farmer's market. When you see a tent you like ask the vendor for the brand and specs.

A white tent is ideal: it will absorb less heat in the summer, filter sun, and allow your produce to show its true colors. A blue, green, or red tent will discolor in the sun and may make produce look dull or unripe. Discolored fabric also often weakens faster.

Vendor canopies should be sufficiently weighted to the ground for the entire market day. The minimum canopy weight standard is 25 pounds per leg. See the Booth Resource List below to learn more about this important safety issue.

After a rainy market be sure to open your tent and air it out on the next clear day. Protect your investment - prevent mildew!

Booth Navigation

Observe the foot traffic of the market. Set up your booth to maximize that traffic flow. Some booths have a scale and cashbox at either end, some have one scale and a cashbox in the middle. Consider the size of your booth, the types of products you sell, and how many helpers you'll have when you set up at the start of the day.

Check out how your booth looks from across the aisle and down the row. Try to view it from a customer perspective. "Walk 10 feet in your customers' shoes — and you'll learn what's good and bad about your stall layout."

If you bag product for customers, consider placing bags in various places around your booth. Allow customers to help themselves while you collect payment from others. You can also pre-bag typical produce amounts to save time for you and the buyer.



Booth Signage

Backdrops can help or hurt your image: make sure they are easily readable. Large logos can be distracting, but a clear logo with strong images will be memorable. Keep perspective in mind – will customers see you from far away first, or up close? A backdrop can do double duty by blocking sun or wind so use care when choosing materials.

Backdrops and cloth signs can be weighted via weights or washers sewn in the bottom hem. If the material is too thick to sew easily use double sided tape to secure washers in the corners.

Spot clean signs and banners to keep your booth neat and make signs last longer. If you are worried about using cleaning solution on your signs, try a microfiber cloth with plain water.

Block printing and sans serif fonts are easier to read than fancy fonts or handwriting. Arguably, handwriting has more character and a more personal feel. Make sure all table signage is readable from a distance of at least three to five feet. Also, less text is more. Less text is more opportunity to talk with your customers.



Booth Resource List

[Canopy Safety 101](#): This comprehensive tip sheet will help vendors (and managers) reduce property and injury risks associated with wind, trips and falls, and other canopy mishaps.

[Selling at Farmers Markets](#) (Growing for Market 2009) pp.7-8 offers additional questions to ask when evaluating your booth.

Product Display



Product displays are the silent salesperson at farmers' markets. The way your booth looks will say a lot about you before you even say "hello."

Make the most of your table space by using all three dimensions - height, width, and depth. Tilt baskets and boxes of product upward toward customers (30 degrees). Aim to display products between elbow to eye level. Some vendors display "seconds" or bulk buys in boxes underneath tables or near tent poles to keep them away from the main selling area.

Don't force your customers to always look down. It's tempting to keep a lot of signage and information flat on the table so it won't blow away. Consider using small stands or taping your signage closer to eye level. This is more comfortable for the customer and forces them to look around your booth. It also gives you a chance to start a conversation.

Don't display too far back on the table. Keep everything within a comfortable arm's reach. Customers often have bags or snacks with them. Don't let a careless scone muncher leave crumbs all over your product.

Use color to your advantage. Customers will often remember what color a booth is instead of a name. Use neutral, solid colors for your containers and table cloths; background colors should enhance, not clash or distract from what you are selling. Break up similarly colored produce with contrasting crops.

Neatness sends a subtle message about the cleanliness and safety of your food.

This is especially important at markets where you may encounter many new potential customers each day. Make sure your display area is tidy and free of clutter. Whatever you use to cover your table should be clean and wrinkle free.

If there's time to lean, there's time to clean. Use the moments between customers to remove damaged product, reposition goods, and restock.

Consider offering some items pre-packaged, priced, and ready to grab 'n' go. Also try having bundled ingredients that will give customers menu ideas, like soup vegetables, salsa kits, or stir-fry greens.

Get ideas from all over. Try to get occasional photos of your booth. A few quick snaps of what works and what doesn't will save you set up time in the long run and may spark ideas for future displays.

Check Pinterest for display ideas. Search "[farmers market displays](#)" or "[produce display](#)." Sign up is easy and free. You do not have to post or pin to search and look at images on [Pinterest](#).



Product Display Resource List

[The Art and Science of Farmers Market Display](#) has more tips on making the most of your product display.

Pricing Tips



Cost Definitions

The following cost definitions can help you price your product once you make it to market

Production costs include both variable and fixed costs and typically focus on expenses associated with production through harvest.

Variable Costs change with business volume; i.e., the number of acres planted, plants raised, or products sold. These costs include inputs such as fertilizer, fuel, repairs, hired labor, and packaging.

Fixed Costs don't vary with production volume and are charged to the business even if there's no production. Fixed costs include depreciation, interest, insurance, property taxes, housing, and capital expenditures.

Marketing costs are variable, depending on how you plan to reach your customers. Established customers are cheaper to keep; new buyers can be expensive to reach.

Transaction Costs (from the Iowa State University Extension) are those associated with the marketing and delivery of the product from the farm to the customer. Transaction costs for farm products would include post-harvest handling, packaging and storage, as well as the labor to sell, invoice, and deliver the product. These costs help define the profitability of various marketing outlets (CSA, farmers market, institutional, or wholesaler).

Pricing Strategies: Three to Consider

Some general tips for pricing your product.

Customer-based (or market-based) is focused on how the customer values the product and how customers respond to different price levels.

Competition-based focuses on what products the competition is offering and at what price.

For cost-based pricing, costs need to be determined to ensure products are being sold for a profit.

1. Vendors who sell large volumes of produce for home canning and freezing might consider changing their pricing strategy during peak season to encourage larger buys: shift to flats of berries, boxes of tree fruits, and 20lb.+ units of vegetables.
2. Several states have weekly farmers market price reports - links are available in the reference section. The [USDA's Agricultural Market Service](#) also provides wholesale and retail price lists.
3. Scope out the competition. Note which vendors are selling what, in what amounts, and prices. If everyone has fantastic carrots this week, you'll need to be competitive. Could you sell by the pound instead of the bunch?
4. Keep an eye on grocery store prices. Consider it "market" research. When you hear, "I can get this for half price at the grocery store!" you will have had plenty of time to craft some great (polite) responses.
5. Chat with vendors at other venues, such as roadside stands or CSA providers. Knowing what they charge can inform your pricing.
6. When you're talking to that local chef or food service provider, ask about the quality and pricing they're getting from other suppliers. Be a little wily here. Remember, they have to make a profit too.

A note to new vendors:

Don't undercut market prices to make the sale. You'll only hurt yourself and your fellow vendors. Customers will move on as your pricing catches up to the market average, especially if more experienced vendors have better quality goods.

Above all, keep accurate records and recalculate costs on a regular basis. Look for trends. Costs don't stay fixed for long.



Pricing Resource List

The Pacific Northwest Extension offers budget analysis of fixed/variable costs: [Costs and Enterprise Selection](#).

[Pricing For Profit](#) is a publication of the Iowa State University Extension. Read about using a balanced approach with your pricing strategies and how to factor transaction costs into your marketing decisions.

Farmers Market Price Reports present weekly prices from a selection of farmers markets around [Illinois](#), [Kentucky](#), and [Tennessee](#). The prices reported are predominant prices during each particular week.

[The West Central Minnesota Farmers Market Pricing Study](#) from the University of Minnesota Extension (2015) compares market pricing to that of grocery stores.

[Understanding Organic Pricing and Costs of Production \(2012\)](#) provides resources to compare organic and conventional agriculture prices, discusses organic production costs, and offers tips on how to set organic crop prices.

[The Rodale Institute](#) offers a neat little pricing tool that uses data from big city markets across the country. This may be useful if you have a product you've never sold before or are heading to a market closer to Chicago.



Promotional Materials

Handouts

Here are a few ideas to promote your business and add value to your product.

Printed recipe cards with simple recipes increase sales, especially for unique items. It is also a useful tool to sell excess product – inspire shoppers to buy with a recipe in hand.

Brochures give cautious buyers more information about you. Include a description of your business, the location, and contact information. Add notes about your most popular items and your production methods. Other things you could include: Is your farm organic? What breeds of animals do you raise and why? Do you offer farm tours? Where else do you sell?

Order forms can feature special order options or products you don't always have on hand. Include descriptions of products, pricing, and pickup/delivery options.

Frequent Shopper Cards offer a discount after a defined number of purchases or spends (e.g. a stamp is given for every \$5 spent).

Membership Cards track the product a customer receives after paying a lump sum in advance. Hold the cards in your cashbox by last name.

Informational fliers highlight specific topics or events relating to your product. Consider writing about home canning tips, upcoming events, basic plant care, etc. Some vendors send an email newsletter and print a few to hand out. Be sure to add your contact information.

Business cards should include company name, logo, contact name, email, physical address, and a brief description of what you sell. Write something personal on the back of the card so the customer will remember you. Example: We spoke about a farm tour. We'd love to have you visit.

Product Menus save time if you have a large booth with many items. Make laminated menus and hang on tent poles. Wipe the cards clean each week and cross off what you're not offering. This is useful if you have high traffic and not a lot of help.



In general:

- Avoid full page handouts. Half or quarter sheets are easier to handle and cheaper to produce.
- Less is more. Don't cram a lot of info into a little space. Two or three topics is plenty.
- If you need graphics beyond your own photos search for "royalty free" images via Google Search.

Market Promotions

Consider bundling your products together into a kit. Salsa kits are popular, but what about gazpacho or another summer soup? Maybe a simple salad kit? Bundle fresh herbs for poultry or beef. Think about ways to make shopping easier for the amateur as well as experienced cook.

Partner with another vendor to create a deal. If a customer spends \$10 on your preserves, could they get a discount on bread if they visit the baker in the next booth?

Email

Email newsletters are often maligned for being "old school." The fact is, in certain situations they just work. Farm and CSA members especially appreciate recipes, prep tips, sneak previews, and news from the farm. Collect addresses at the market and request permission to send newsletters or occasional emails. Common free email list creation and management sites include [MailChimp](#), [MadMimi](#), and [Constant Contact](#). All require little to no technical skills to set up and use.

Promotional Items Resource List

[A Guide to Storing Fruits and Vegetables](#)

[Food Preservation](#)

Check out downloadable PDFs on food preservation techniques.

[DCFM Recipe Cards](#)

[UMD Summer and Fall Recipe Cards](#)

[Example of Customized Farm Recipe Cards](#)

Sampling

Samples provide a great opportunity to engage with the customer. As a vendor you can immediately address questions or concerns a customer may have. You can also pique customer curiosity just by talking about life on the farm. Sampling is a great way to make an impression, and you don't need an elaborate set up.

Many market shoppers are former (or current!) food service workers and have knowledge of basic food handling guidelines. If you practice sloppy food handling practices at the market it can reflect poorly on your business overall. See the following for tips and best practices:

You may have read the [Public Health Madison and Dane County food sampling guidelines](#) which provides the minimum of what is required in our area. Pack out all garbage at the end of the market.

The [state of Michigan](#) goes into further detail via their guidelines with a handy PDF.

If you really want to dig into some research on sampling including customer perspectives and its influence on market sales, look at the in-depth report from the [University of Kentucky Best Practices for Sampling at Farmers Markets](#). For highlights of the report, access a [slide presentation](#) of the results. You may be surprised at some of the customer comments.



Signage



Signs promote your business, provide information about you, and create customer interest. There are three types of signs that are useful at a market booth.

Banners

Banners should be kept simple and include basic information - business name, location, and your logo or other memorable image (a photo of your farm, an animal, etc.) Customers often remember booths by seemingly odd details. Mount banners across the back of your booth or across the front top section of the tent. You could even have your farm/business name printed on the front edge if you've invested in a high quality tent.

Go all out with banner design, and make sure they are readable from at least 30 feet away. Use a background color that makes the text stand out. The best color combinations are high contrast: black lettering on a yellow or white background, yellow lettering with a black background, and white lettering with a blue or red background. Fonts should be consistent with your other marketing materials.

Price Signs

Post product and price signs next to every display container or on a blackboard, indicating clearly and legibly the unit price (per weight, unit, or volume) and product variety. Be sure

signs can be easily read from a distance of 3-5 feet. The easiest idea is to make signs that are waterproof and rugged enough to hold up for a whole season. Use paper board from the dollar store and laminate. You can also buy plastic document holders at office supply stores which are more rugged and easier to hang. Again, use colors and font styles that are consistent with your other marketing materials.

A large chalkboard can be used in place of individual signs if you don't have too many products. You can also use small chalkboards to display pricing near each product. White boards are convenient but can easily smear.

Information Signs

Smaller signs can suggest menu ideas for more unusual items. Signs can communicate with your customers about your values and business practices: e.g., grass-fed beef, eggs from free range hens, USDA certified organic. The information should be concise, truthful, and consistent with all federal/state/local regulatory requirements that may apply.

An Important Tip on How to Label Produce

Per federal law, farmers who are certified organic or who sell less than \$5,000 a year of organic products can use the word "organic" or similar phrases to describe products. Even though farmers who sell less than \$5,000 are exempt from USDA certification, they must still meet ALL other requirements of the law, such as use of organic seed when available, certified organic transplants, and documenting all farming activities. This [Organic Broadcaster](#) article spells out various farmers market sales terms and their proper use.

Market Day Employees and Helpers

Whether you hire someone to help at your booth, or offer a friendly bribe to a friend or relative, here are some basic tips to put your best foot forward with shoppers.

1. Appearance: Market days are busy - leave time before the market for a quick shower or to change clothes. T-shirts, caps, or aprons with your logo are a great simple solution to the question of what to wear. Keep a few extra tees in your vehicle - just in case. Plus, as any market veteran can tell you, dress in layers. The day may start off cool but you'll warm up as you move around.

2. Interact: Greet all visitors with a smile. If you're not sure what to say, make eye contact, and start with, "Hello." Learn the names of your regulars. Stand if possible; if you need to sit, use a stool rather than a chair.

3. Educate: Be ready to provide tips on how to prepare, cook, or preserve what you have for sale. Try to get beyond the "just saute it in some butter" advice. Explain how to make items store/last longer. If you carry unusual items, be ready to describe how they taste. Customers are often interested in how food is grown, raised, or processed; they may want to know the names of produce varieties and animal breeds.

4. Listen: Talk with your customers. Keep customers informed about items coming to the market in the next few weeks. Request email addresses for your mailing list. Address any complaints politely without arguing. Ask questions to obtain details of the issue; solicit customers' alternative solutions. Offer a refund or a different product. Once resolved, thank the customer. Constructive criticism, while sometimes unpleasant, can help your business.



5. **Extras:** If you have the help, offer to carry large purchases to a buyer's car. Allow customers to leave purchased items at your booth while they finish shopping. Give an extra item or a sneak peek of a new offering to regulars that stop by each week. Customers appreciate these little extras.
6. **What to Avoid:** Don't eat in the booth. Avoid cell phone use unless you are taking notes or getting contact info from a customer. Chatting with vendors and friends is part of going to the market, but your top priority should be to help customers.
7. **Support the Market as a Whole:** Learn what other vendors carry so you can offer suggestions to customers. Encourage customers to shop the entire market – think prosperity for everyone, not competition.
8. **Cash Handling:** Keep your cashbox out of sight, but leave payments in plain sight while you make change. A common scam involves a customer insisting that they gave you a twenty when they really gave you a ten. If you need to leave your booth lock your cashbox in your car. You may also leave it with the Market Manager. If you are working alone consider using an apron or smock with pockets. Bring enough change so that you don't run out mid-market. You do not have to break large bills if it will wipe out your cash supply. Most customers will be understanding about this.

Sales Staff

Anyone you hire to help represents you and your business.

1. Keep in mind at what times you really need extra help. Are you busy at the beginning of the market, but less so at the end? Would you prefer to have help with setup or tear-down? You may not need help for the entire market.
2. Make sure helpers have a clear idea of their job responsibilities, your farm/business, good sanitation practices, and how to handle, store and use each of your products. Much of this can be picked up during the sales day, but also consider going over items before the market starts.
3. Give each helper a tee or apron with your logo to promote a consistent appearance.
4. Create a binder or sales sheet with frequently asked questions and answers for market staff to reference. This is especially helpful if you take special orders at the market.

Kids

While they're probably the cheapest labor you'll find, use care when having your kids help with the market. A busy market is not the time to teach your youngest how to make change. Children can package items, keep the booth tidy, and chat with customers. Older children can help with signage and setup. In general, be honest about the maturity of your child, and act accordingly.

Social Media

Choosing Your Platform

If you haven't yet started using social media to reach out to your customers, start small. Choose one platform, such as Facebook, to get started. Here is a very brief explanation of the major platforms:

[Facebook](#) - Everyone is on it, and it's possible to talk directly with your customers via comments and messages. Facebook can be daunting, but if you already have a user page a business page is not significantly different. Most people start here.

[Twitter](#) - If you're always on your phone, the 140 character limit of Twitter may be more your speed. Twitter is useful for on the spot updates, such as "Just sold out of cukes for the week!"

[Instagram](#) - If you or someone in your circle loves to take pictures, consider using Instagram. While there is room for comments, Instagram is known more for being a one way conduit with great visuals.

[Pinterest](#) - If you love sharing recipes and tips, Pinterest may be for you. Users "pin" your posts and share them with their followers. Something you post today can go viral and be shared for weeks or months afterward. Pinterest is probably more useful for those looking to establish a long term reputation and subject expertise.

Vine/Snapchat/etc. - These are video based and probably less useful for reaching potential customers. Master any of the others first.

Email newsletters - The email newsletter is a low pressure way to stay in touch with people who have expressed an interest in your business. Collect addresses at the market and add them into your system. Email newsletters are not as timely as a tweet, but they are a nice way to update your customers on a monthly or weekly basis.



Talking Social Media with Andy Watson of Sprouting Acres

Board member Andy Watson has been using social media consistently to connect with his customers. He proves you don't have to spend a ton of time online to get good results.

How do you use social media for Sprouting Acres, and for how long have you been doing it?

Andy: We have been using social media for about 3-4 years now. We try to post something from the farm at least once a week to Facebook. A picture or video of a big harvest or a big planting event. We have also posted videos when we got or made new wash equipment or tractors. We also have our website tied into Facebook and Twitter so when we post news on our website or a newsletter before a CSA box delivery, it gets posted to both from the website.

What benefits have you seen from using social media?

Andy: We have seen an uptick in customers that come to the market and say they saw we had a certain vegetable and wanted to get it before it was sold out. We also have some workers that like taking photos at the farm and posting them to the page's timeline.

How much time do you spend on social media per week?

Andy: Less than 30 mins.

Do you have any advice for vendors just starting to use social media to promote themselves?

Andy: Read up on when to post each day and time during the week. There are prime times when people are on their devices and you have a better chance of them seeing and spending time reading or watching what you posted.

Andy and Sprouting Acres are proof social media doesn't have to take a lot of time to be successful. Thanks Andy!

Special Orders via Social Media

One caveat for using social media: customers may try to place special orders via any platform you are on. This can cause problems if you miss a post or message. To avoid issues, choose one place to accept online orders, usually via a form on your website or a designated email address. Periodically post on every platform you use how you accept orders and requests. This allows you to keep all of your orders in one place.

Websites

You can get very far connecting with your customers via social media. In fact, you may not even need a website. If you decide to have a web presence, you have hundreds of choices.

Do your research and you will find a service that fits your needs.

[Wix](#) and [Weebly](#) are two popular options if you have little to no coding or design experience. Both charge a monthly fee for ongoing service. In addition, if companies of this type get bought by larger companies, or go out of business, you can lose your site overnight. You may also find yourself manually cutting and pasting your content to move it to a different platform. However, if you just want a one or two page site with a few images, these sites will have you up and running within an hour.

[Squarespace](#) may provide a happy medium. It offers hosting, customizable templates, limited SEO, and analytics all in one service. Their integrated payment service, Stripe, costs more than competitor Square, but it may be worth if you prefer to keep all of your web services with one provider. This is an important consideration if you plan to accept payments via your site now or in the future.

[Wordpress](#) is an open source platform that provides an outstanding array of plugins and templates for your site. If you want a site that will grow along with your business, look into Wordpress. Wordpress.com handles site hosting for you and is mainly for blogs Wordpress.org is self-hosted and used for full websites. Fully one quarter of all sites on the web are built in Wordpress, so it's relatively easy to find an expert if you need help.

There's a lot of questionable advice floating around about social media and how to make it work for you. Don't be intimidated and don't be afraid to experiment. Only you know your business and what you need.

Social Media and Websites Resource List

[Create Your Own Website the Easy Way](#) by Alannah Moore is a great resource if you are just getting started with your online presence. The book provides brief explanations of the major options available as well as testimonials and examples of small business websites throughout. It's a \$20 paperback or available via the South Central Wisconsin Library system.

[Website Setup](#) provides a free online tutorial for setting up a Wordpress site.

Timing your posts can be as simple as posting reminders 7 days before an event, then 24 hours before, then 12, etc. [Here is a recent article](#) regarding the best general times to post on social media.

If you reach out to your customers via multiple platforms, consider using a program such as [Hootsuite](#), which helps you manage all of your social media in one interface. This is especially helpful for cross-posting content across all of the platforms you are on. Consider this option if you are a heavy social media user (checking in multiple times a day) and using three or more platforms.



End of Season Evaluation

While crunching basic sales numbers will provide data regarding whether your experience at the market was a success, there are other factors to consider. Here are some questions to keep in mind as you look over your record of the season.

Tangible considerations, or your money and your time:

- Start by looking at your records of the products you brought to market. What sold, and for how much? Do you see any patterns? Did weather or concurrent park activities play a role? What about holidays?
- Regarding price tracking: what was the sweet spot for each item sold?
- How much did you spend on gas, supplies, market fees, and equipment maintenance or replacement?
- How much did you spend on labor from picking to market help?
- How much of your time was spent from field to sale – picking, cleaning, prepping, transporting, setup, and selling?

To see an example of this computation, visit the [University of Maryland Extension](#).

Intangibles, or your happiness and goodwill:

- Did you make any important contacts during the season? These could be local chefs, regular customers, or a regular bulk or special order purchaser.
- Did the market provide any opportunity for selling at other venues? Did the visibility get you invited to sell at other venues?
- Did you make friends with other vendors or market staff?
- Did you learn more about your target customers in terms of what they like, what attracts them to your product, and how they shop?
- Was the market management and board helpful and respectful of your needs as a vendor?
- Overall, did you have a positive experience?



While tangible costs can be somewhat fixed, intangibles can be a little more difficult to quantify. Both are important for continuing success. Ideally you want the best of both worlds: low costs, high profits, and lots of good vibes. Every market is different, even at different times of the year. Evaluate carefully when deciding where to spend your time next season.

For next season:

What information did you miss this year that you wish you had? Weather notes? Traffic notes? Notes about products from other vendors? Define what is important to you on an ongoing basis to keep your records useful. It is better to gather too much information rather than too little, because you never know what will spark a good idea.

Find more technical information on making your numbers work for you: [Evaluating a Farmers Market Using Whole-Farm Records](#).

Additional Vendor Resources

[New Farmers Guide: Cultivating Success at Farmers Markets](#) – Davis, CA Farmers Market

This guide covers nearly every aspect of selling at farmers markets and includes worksheets to help evaluate prospective markets and budget for the costs of selling at them. Addresses how to examine your readiness and how to plan, including researching markets, estimating costs, connecting with farmers market managers, creating a stand that works, delivering good customer service, expanding your market, and tracking and evaluating results.

[Selling Successfully at a Farmers Market](#) – University of New Hampshire Extension

Thirty-five marketing and merchandising tips for those selling, or thinking of selling, at a farmers market. Product quality, sales areas and presentation, pricing, signage, branding, retaining loyal customers, safety, and planning are a few examples of the information included.

[Some Thoughts on Selling at Farmers Markets](#) – Nina Planck

Twenty-two lessons in running a successful market stand from a food writer who grew up on a farm that depended entirely on farmers markets. She later created a system of 13 farmers markets in London.

[Sell More! Farmers Market Booth Guide for Vendors](#) – Washington State University

Tips and ideas designed to help farmers and other vendors improve their specialty crop sales at farmers markets.

[Selling Strategies For Local Food Producers](#) – University of Missouri Extension

Discusses importance of customer service and relationships. This guide presents a customer-centric approach to sales & marketing of farm products through direct sales channels.

[Selling at Farmers Markets](#) – Growing for Market magazine

Contains articles and photos about all aspects of selling at market, including: creating great displays, managing customer traffic, setting fair prices and food safety and sampling.

[Maximizing Your Sales](#) – Farmers' Market Federation of NY

Discusses the right combination of product, display, merchandising techniques, pricing and customer service.

[Understanding Customer Behavior at Farmers Markets: Strategies for Increasing Sales and Customer Satisfaction](#) – New York Farm Viability Institute and Grow NYC

Discusses sound marketing strategies at farmers markets.

[Social Media Guide](#) – New York Farm Viability Institute

Tips on creating effective social media and website content.

[Marketing Enhancements for Greenmarket Farmers](#) – Grow NYC

Case studies on farm marketing.

