

Direct marketing: farmers' markets market day

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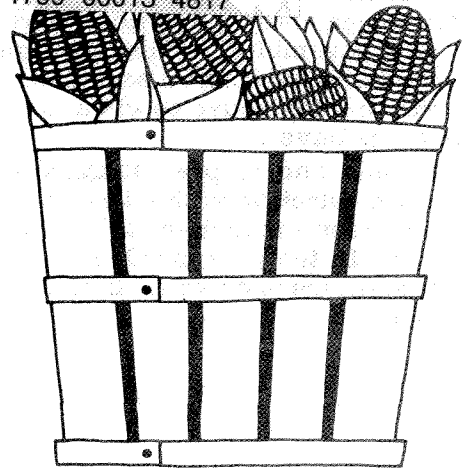
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Quick Facts

Fresh produce harvested at proper maturity is key to insuring quality.
Produce must be clean and pest-free.
Produce prices should be lower or comparable with competitors.
Displays should be attractive and well-planned.



Vendors are reminded that sound, tested market procedures will yield the quickest sales and maximum profits. Fresh produce attractively packaged and reasonably priced will result in greater buyer interest.

Selecting Produce

Gather the produce immediately prior to the market opening to insure freshness. For example, if the vegetable or fruit is susceptible to wilting from prolonged exposure (such as carrots, leafy greens, broccoli, etc.) pick or dig the crop just before the market opens. If it becomes necessary to gather the crop earlier, store it in a cool, protected place to insure freshness.

Your success in the sale of farm and garden produce at a farmers' market will greatly increase if you harvest and display produce at the proper stage of development.

Buyers will pass up dirty root crops and insect or diseased damaged produce in favor of clean, edible fruits and vegetables. Mechanical damage will also detract from the appearance of produce.

If pesticides are used in production, be sure to read the pesticide label to insure proper usage and harvest interval.

Specific guidelines for harvesting may be found in a variety of Service in Action sheets available from your local county Cooperative Extension office.

Packaging

Although some buyers may be interested in purchasing large quantities for canning or freezing, others are interested in a quantity for immediate use. Small, convenient-sized packages are often in demand.

For example, carrots and beets can be tied in bunches (tops in tact); tomatoes, peppers and green beans can be packaged in small containers or plastic bags; small fruits such as cherries, strawberries or raspberries, can be placed in small plastic boxes or bags; potatoes and onions can be packaged in plastic bags. Select a container that will make the product attractive.

Display

Plan to arrive at the market site well in advance of sale time in order to have sufficient

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time to set up an attractive and well-planned display.

Your display serves as advertisement. Buyer curiosity will bring potential buyers to your display to compare quality and price. Plan your display with the buyer in mind. A prior visit to the market to observe other vendors' methods may be helpful in your planning.

No produce should be placed on a grass, asphalt or cement surface unless the area is covered with a clean tarp or plastic. Tables, boxes, crates, easily assembled stands, tail gates or trunks of vehicles may serve as display areas. Vehicles and display must be clean and prove accessible to the buyer.

Arrange bulk and/or pre-packaged produce to permit buyer selection without excessive handling that may result in damage to the remainder of the produce. In the past, producers have displayed taste samples in order to show the quality of the produce.

Pricing

Consumers expect fresh, high quality produce at prices that are lower than or competitive with other retail outlets. Produce may be priced by piece, count, package or container and weight. If a vendor plans to sell by weight, state law requires the scale must carry an official and current inspection seal (see Service in Action sheet 4.007).

Many potential buyers are reluctant to ask prices. List your prices—each piece, bag, crate, etc.—on an easily read sign in a conspicuous place. You may add your name, address and telephone number for further buyer contact.

Be prepared to make change and decide ahead of time whether or not personal checks will be accepted. In the case of an incorporated market, food stamps may also be accepted (see SIA sheet 4.007).

Always remember that word-of-mouth from a satisfied buyer can be your best advertisement.