

Farmers' Market tradition continues

MARKET COMING BACK FOR ITS 16TH YEAR

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Amanda Kajen and Matt Dank pick out fresh tomatoes at the Ridgewood Farmers' Market.

Fresh produce and more is offered at the Ridgewood Farmers' Market. Organized by the Ridgewood Chamber of Commerce, the market is coming back for its 16th straight year and is one of the very few remaining true farmers' markets in the area.

"The market only sells food, no candles or anything like that," explained Joan Groome, executive director of the Ridgewood Chamber of Commerce.

The market will take place this year every Sunday from June 26 through the end of October, rain or shine. The market may go a little later into the fall depending on the weather.

"The sellers put their food under tents, so the market will come off unless there are extreme conditions," Groome said.

Merchants include a mozzarella cheese salesman; a baker; a jelly and jam salesman; Picklelicious, a well-known pickle company that attends many farmers' markets and three farmers. >



Steve the Jam Man sells some items to a customer.

Groome explained people should come and try out the farmers' market because the food is "fresh from the ground to the table."

The farmers sell whatever produce is in season, meaning that their inventory will change throughout the year. This gives attendees a variety of options to choose from, and keeps things interesting.

"The freshness [of] the food, buying local," said Steve Geisel, a jelly and jam salesman known as the "Jam Man" about why people should come to the market. "That's what brings people to the market."

The "Jam Man," whose inventory comes from a farm in Newburgh, N.Y., travels from New City, N.Y., to participate in the market.

"What makes me come to this one down here is the loyalty of the customers," he said.

Another salesman from the market, Michael Grisafe of Totowa, has been selling his mozzarella cheese and garlic at the train station for the past 15 years. Despite being in the business for so long, Grisafe said that he often sees new customers in addition to the familiar clientele.

"We've seen some new customers; we're getting busier and busier every year," he added. >

Why shop at a Farmers' Market?

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, access to fresh, locally grown foods may be one of the best reasons to shop at a farmers' market.

Farmers' markets have fruits and vegetables at the peak of the growing season. This means produce is at its freshest and tastes the best. The food is typically grown near where you live, not thousands of miles away or in another country. Shopping at farmers' markets also supports your local farmers and keeps the money you spend on food closer to your neighborhood.



Some other reasons to shop at a farmers' market:

Something new

Farmers' markets feature what's at the peak of season in your region, so you can often find your favorites, along with new items that will stretch your culinary imagination.

Learn a farmer's secret

On market day, farmers love to share their secrets. First among them are tips on how to prepare fresh offerings, so if you need to know what to do with kohlrabi or are looking for something to bump up your tomato salsa, just ask.

Follow the rainbow

A great way to eat healthy is to put a spectrum of colorful fruits and vegetables on your plate. The more color variety, the better!

Bring the kids!

Farmers' markets are kid-friendly. Let your kids pick out something new to try. Then, let them help prepare a meal or choose a snack based on what caught their eye.

TOP: TAV JINIVZIAN; LEFT: HILDI BORKOWSKI