



Top 10 Strategies for Farmers Market Vendors¹

1. **Tell your farm's story.** Post pictures of the farm with the owner and the employees who are working the market(s) in action shots. Have photos of them working on the farm in various settings to help customers make a visual connection with the farm and its products.
2. **Brand your stand.** Besides having a great logo and having it everywhere in your stand (aprons, farm sign, boxes, etc.), the stand should be tied together with colors, matching tables/table covers and pricing signage consistent with the image. Be known for something. Nothing is worse than another vendor offering the same product as you – and sometimes at a lower price! You can avoid getting caught up in price wars by having other great products and being known as having the best of certain products.
3. **Differentiate yourself as a grower** if the market allows resellers. If you are selling a neighboring farms' items – it should be posted as such. Consider going to farmer only markets. From our experiences, you'll probably notice the higher prices you can get for your products.
4. **Educate your customers.** Why should they be coming to your stand? Will they keep coming? Explain why your products are healthier, more sustainable, local and more beneficial to the local economy. Additionally, it is your job as a producer to be sure they understand current agricultural practices used to produce the food you are selling.
5. **Do some simple research.** Making a sale can be as easy as making conversation with customers. Ask questions which cannot be answered 'yes or no' or give them a suggestion regarding a product. Once they feel comfortable with you, try to find out what other products they may want to purchase. Then, find a way to grow those products for the market.
6. **Tell them how to use it.** Many items will not sell unless the consumer can see themselves serving it up for a meal. Offer recipes and tell them how to prepare – broil, braise, steam, blanche or just eat it raw! Encourage the market to have cooking demonstrations using the market manager, inviting local chefs or simply showcasing customers as masters of locally grown products in the kitchen.
7. **Provide convenience.** Make paying for items as easy as possible. Think about this when setting prices and when deciding what forms of payment to collect. Line decorative baskets in displays with the bags customers will take home so they can just pull it out and go about their shopping (and this may help with your food safety requirements). Consider recycleable, reuseable or biodegradeable bags. Let customers know what other markets you participate in and on what days those markets are open.
8. **Mix it up and make it colorful.** Even if you don't have a large mix of products available, consider growing a variety of colors/shapes of the same products to make the display and offerings look as new and fresh as possible. There are endless varieties available to 'mix it up a bit.' Try mixing different colors of tomatoes for a 'salad mix' basket, different romas for a 'sauce mix' or just a variety of similar vegetables/fruit to market towards smaller households.
9. **Pay more to be a vendor.** The more serious the business plan for the market, the more likely you are to be profitable as a vendor. Markets which pay a manager and pay attention to a succinct marketing plan seem to have more customers and happier, more profitable vendors. A great plan will allow customers to find market hours, location(s), website, social media and special events whenever and wherever they decide they need it. And, as a market grows, do not be afraid to help start a second market with a different focus.
10. **Work with the community.** Whether it's the chamber, tourism bureau, business improvement district or a non profit – find a way to connect and partner to better the entire community. Accept coupons for nutrition programs and other government programs which will help many segments of the local population.

¹ By Eric Barrett, Rob Leeds and Hal Kneen, Extension Educators, OSU Extension. Based on observational research at farmers markets across the United States.