



# Stalls that sell more



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Farmers' markets provide a great opportunity for producers to sell directly to the public, giving you control of where and how you sell. This workshop is all about making the most of this opportunity.

**Customer interest in local food remains very high as this recent survey shows:**

**'26% of people thought that they would be buying more at farmers' markets, twice as many as those thinking they'd be shopping more at supermarkets'.**

**IGD forecasts a bright future for farm sales, Oct 2009.**



People love shopping at farmers' markets – it's the only place that they can talk directly to the producers about exactly how the food they are about to eat has been produced. So work hard to get to know your customers, and make sure you let them know what's special about your great local produce.

It might be useful for you to think a bit about the reasons why you have chosen to sell at farmers' markets, what makes your product special and why customers buy from you.

## 1. Why I attend farmers' markets

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## 2. What makes my produce special – What's my unique selling feature?

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## 3. The key reasons customers buy from me

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Improving your success at farmers' market/s is all about looking at what you do now and thinking of ways to do it even better. Review your stall today - it might help to point to some simple things that you could do to make it outstanding!

	YES	NO
Is your stall clearly labelled with your farm/business name?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your business name visible to customers at all times?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have an information leaflet to give to customers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all your products priced?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you telling customers why they should buy your products?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you tell customers how far your produce has travelled?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you telling your story –where's your farm, what's it like?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you tell people when your produce was picked, prepared etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you and/or your staff always welcoming to all customers even those who don't buy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you wear a name badge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you know the names of your most loyal customers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you create a 'special value' offer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The workshop organised by Making Local Food Work gave you some ideas about how to improve your business at farmers' markets. We hope that our practical advice will help you give your produce maximum appeal as well as giving you some hints and tips on how to persuade customers to buy from you.

Here's what we covered –

## 1. Professional stallholding

- Professional stallholder
- Professional you
- Professional labelling
- Professional business

## 2. Love your customers

- Choose your attitude
- Love your customers
- Handling complaints

## 3. What makes your market special?

- If you want people to talk about the market, give them something [positive] to talk about
- Getting customers to shop the whole market





## 1. Professional stallholding



You are passionate about your produce. Do you and your stall communicate this to your customers?

### Professional stall

- Presentation – do your products look appetising and inviting?
- Are you using colour, height and shape in displays to create impact and interest?
- Do you know which colours enhance/detract from your product?
- Does your stall look generous – do you replenish stock or rearrange it as needed?
- Is your stall clean and tidy?
- What are you selling? Is rubbish and/or packaging as prominently displayed as your products?
- Pricing – do your prices stack up? Show price comparisons if they are favourable.
- Hook customers with tasters and cooking smells, and by coming out in front of your stall
- Ask 'Have you ever tried my special XXX' rather than 'Would you like to try'
- Have 3 interesting points to say about your sample
- Are you telling your story – about your produce, about you, about your business?
- Show that you know what you're doing (display certificates, prizes, awards)
- Is your stall in the right place?

### Professional You

- Be clean and tidy, with clean hands and nails (people do notice, and you are selling food)
- Tie long hair back if serving ready to eat food, wear disposable gloves (and change them)
- Don't smoke, eat, chat on your mobile or read while behind the stall.
- Wear your own branding or that of the farmers' market as a logo on clothing
- Try not to leave your stall unattended
- Have insurances up to date, EHO and TSO registration etc
- Don't bad mouth at the market
- Make sure your representatives work to the same high standards



## Professional Labelling

- **Prices** – people will walk away rather than ask so make sure it's visible from a distance

**Benchmark for most products:  
+ or – 10% of supermarket prices.  
If your prices are higher you need to  
justify (so that customers can explain  
to their family).**

- You grew it, reared it, made it – say so!  
And say why that's a benefit
- Product Features and Benefits – use both

<b>Feature</b>	Broccoli from our own fields
<b>Benefits</b>	Fantastic fresh flavour Cooks in 3 minutes! One of your five a day

- Beware of making health claims – trading standards are developing an approved list

- Legal requirements – Information is available on-line at

**[www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/clearfoodlabelling.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/clearfoodlabelling.pdf)**

and there is an example of an annotated product label at

**[www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/flash/eatwellflashlabel.swf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/flash/eatwellflashlabel.swf)**

## Professional Business

- Name badges – you're a real person with a name
- Name on your stall – your business is local, be proud of it
- Branding – on signs, clothes, aprons, badges
- Positioning signs – are they always visible?
- Information to take away – leaflets, flyers, calendars
- Other outlets – let customers know where else you sell, ordering, box schemes etc.
- Are your staff reinforcing your professional message?
- Be honest, don't 'cheat' your customers with the product you sell e.g. hiding fat by clever packing, sneaking in a rotten apple

## 2. Love your customers

Many people will not have had previous selling experience before becoming a stallholder at a farmers' market and it may feel daunting to be facing your customers. It's useful to remember that you have fantastic stories to tell about what you are selling, and the people who visit farmers' markets are longing to hear them. Remember at every market there will be new customers who haven't heard your story. But don't forget you will need to draw them in by having something to entice from a distance e.g. pictures, smells, cooking, tasters.

To help shape your story it's good to think about why people buy. There are two basic reasons – Because it makes them feel good and because it solves a problem. So it's your mission to confirm some of the things that will make people feel good about buying from you and to solve problems for them.



### Make people feel good and solve their problems

- Explain your products – fresh, seasonal, local, special variety, regional food
- Talk about how you grow, rear, make what you are selling
- Tell people why what you do is good for the environment – organic, animal welfare, less sprays and pesticides
- Remind people that they are supporting the local economy
- Tell people if you use less packaging
- Solve problems by telling them how to use / cook / store your produce
- Give them recipe ideas to inspire them
- Point out other items on the market that might compliment what you are selling
- Offer something to keep them going until the next market – freezer packs

### Make your stall inviting – tempt people to stop

- Add theatre to your stall – cook or prepare something even if it's just bunching radish
- Have samples available
- Be friendly, be factual, be helpful, have fun – if you look as though you're having a good time, your customers will respond positively too. BUT never embarrass the customer and take care with colleague conversations – stop talking to other stallholders or include the customer.
- Put product in the customer's hand – they'll almost always buy
- 'Up-sell' from your own, and other stallholders stalls – it will benefit everyone if all the market does it.





## Make your customers enthusiastic fans

- Get to know your regulars – by name, greet them
- Invite customers back 'See you at the next market'
- Give them what they want - do you know what that is? Consider pack sizes, price breaks, variety packs, gift wrapping
- Provide tips – how to cook, recipes, storage and other information about your produce
- Run your own unofficial loyalty scheme

## Handling complaints

The most helpful customer is one that tells you when they are unhappy with something.

The least helpful is one that doesn't tell you but tells ten friends that they didn't like your product and / or the market.

## Golden rules

1. Acknowledge
2. Listen
3. Don't argue or be defensive
4. Thank the customer
5. Respond helpfully and make amends erring in the customer's favour if needed

Remember how you deal with a complaint could impact on the customer's perception of the whole market as well as your business.

## 3. What makes your market special?

If you want people to talk about you, give them something to talk about

**Word of mouth is the most effective marketing tool for your business and the market – and it's free.**

Imagine your customers talking to friends about the market – what would you like them to say?  
Suggestions for what might get people talking

- Information – tell people something they don't already know
- Unusual varieties
- Delicious recipes
- Be honest, even a little generous at times
- Give great value offers (very important in today's economic climate)
- Be friendly and fun, create a great atmosphere

And you can help spread the word!

### Getting customers to shop the whole market

- Know your 'departments' – get to know your fellow stallholders' businesses and products so that you can help customers around the market
- Add value to their purchases (up-sell) by recommending complementary products
- Think about whole market recipes

***A farmers' market is more than a collection of individual stalls, it is a retail entity. You have a collective responsibility for the success of the market.***

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