

SPROUTING NEWS

OCTOBER 2011



Dear Market Friends and Vendors,

It's hard to believe Fall is here and we're heading into the last few weeks of our Market Season. I love this time of year and personally think it's the best time to shop at a farmers market. We still have lots of summer produce as the fall fruits are harvested and the winter squash and greens arrive. There's a sense of anticipation in the air as preparations are made for what's known as the traditional harvest season and folks stock up for the winter.

Please give a big thank-you to our "green growers", our steadfast friends who weathered a difficult growing season this year. Heavy spring rains and floods followed by a summer drought with high temperatures made for an uncertain season for them as well as for the Market. Thanks for working together to keep the Clayton Farmer's Market full of produce. Your hard work is greatly appreciated!

I have a few announcements to make with the goal of making the end of our Market Season a fun and prosperous one. Attendance typically drops a little in the fall at farmers markets in St. Louis so we have some activities planned to attract Market-goers through the end of the season. Please read below to see how you can participate and join the festivities.

Best Regards,
Deb Henderson
Market Manager

LOOKING AHEAD--DATES TO REMEMBER

October 15 Sponsor Gift Baskets

The Clayton Farmer's Market is going to present our Primary Sponsors with market gift baskets to thank them for helping to make our market possible. **If you want your products to be represented and would like to donate samples for the baskets, please deliver them to me (Deb) by October 15.**

Two baskets will be made up—one for the owner of Straub's and the other for the Economic Developer of Clayton. Two smaller gift bags will go to Clayton's Event Specialist and Brown Shoe's Property Manager. These will be delivered before the end of the market season.

October 22 Market Tasting Fair in Honor of National Food Day

Buyers from the area's smaller grocery and specialty food stores have been invited to meet vendors and sample their products. Many vendors have products with production levels that make it possible to expand beyond selling only at a farmers market. And, many food stores are now interested in carrying local products. **Let's Meet and Have a Tasting Fair! Mmmmm!**

Invitations have been sent to buyers at Straub's, the Wine and Cheese Place, Whole Foods Market, Local Harvest, Winslow's Home, and The Smokehouse. If you think of others who may be interested in attending, let me know and I'll send them an invitation.

Even if you aren't ready to or have no intention of selling wholesale to stores, you're welcome to participate and of course, participation is optional. Offering samples is a great way to get immediate customer feedback about your products and to increase your sales. **We're going to have a fun day sharing the many delicious flavors of our vendors' culinary creations. The taste of success is in the air!**

In order to provide samples, some of you will need to get a Temporary Food Establishment Permit (TFE) which is good for 14 days---so you can sample two Market Days if you want. You can pick up a permit application at the Market Manager Tent, ask me to send one to you via email, or download a copy from our website under Vendor Resources. Check with me, if you're unsure whether a permit applies to your product or not.

Until we get a Farmers Market Food Service Facility Bill passed, this is what we have to work with in terms of DOH permits. Non-produce farmers, who offer samples, need a TFE permit. Produce farmers need a Seasonal Food Permit (SFE) if you want to sample at your tent. As farmers, neither should be charged a fee. Let me know if there are any difficulties. We'll have room at the Culinary Tent for fruit and vegetable samples from farmers.

I talked to the DOH Supervisor, Tim Thorn and the Environmental Specialist, Mark Redecker, who process the permits for our market, to let them know about our Tasting Fair. They are happy to help with the event and will work to get permits through as quickly as possible.

Our permits are processed through the South County Office.

St. Louis County, Department of Health / Environmental Protection
4562 Lemay Ferry Rd, St. Louis MO 63129 Fax 314-615-4008
Tim Thorn (Supervisor) Phone (314) 615-4044
Mark Redecker (Environmental Specialist) Phone (314) 615-4040

October 29 Halloween and Pumpkin Decorating

Market-goers are encouraged to wear a costume and get a prize. Little Market-goers can decorate pumpkins to take home. All right, all right--if vendors want to wear costumes—they'll get prizes too!

We need pumpkin donations for the little ones to decorate. Small pumpkins are good. If you can help, call Deb at 314-913-6632. If you donate pumpkins, your name will be mentioned in our weekly newsletter---in big neon lights (just kidding)—but your name will be mentioned.

November 5 Closing Day Festival Sponsored by KDHX Radio 88.1 FM

Join us for a fun-filled day to celebrate the Season's end. Say good-bye to Market friends.

8:30am-9:00am Call to the Market by Master Bagpiper Chris Apps

10:00am-12:30pm Music by Pik'n Lik'n- one of St. Louis' most popular Bluegrass bands!

We'll have more news about this later.

ADVERTISING FOR THE MARKET

Market Coupons, Fliers and Events Calendars are available at the Market Manager Tent for Vendors to pick up and hand out. Coupons can be personalized with Vendors names and Fliers can be posted at Churches, places of business, coffee houses, etc. Please take a few and make copies as needed.

MARKET PARTICIPATION FOR WEEKLY VENDORS

For vendors who attend every other week or occasionally, if you want to add more market dates to your schedule, email Deb to reserve your space. We are expecting higher vendor attendance for the Tasting Fair and the Closing Day Festival and the number of tents and tables we have available for rental is limited. Tents will be reserved on a first come basis and of course vendors are welcome to use their own tents.

If you're a vendor who alternated other markets with Clayton and those markets are closed for the season, you're welcome to pick up more dates with us. It could be a fun way to finish the season and build your customer base before markets go indoors for the winter.

MARKET ELECTRICITY & TENTS

Extension Cords: If you require electricity, please be sure to bring an extension cord with a gauge large enough to accommodate your appliance(s). Professional or commercial grade cords are recommended for cooking appliances and larger freezers.

Space Heaters: We're sorry but we don't have the capacity to supply electricity for space heaters. On chilly days, bring hot water bottles, blankets, or other ways of staying warm.

Tents on Windy Days: For windy days, please bring weights to anchor the legs of your tent down? Weights can be something heavy like bricks, sand bags, or jugs of water tied to the tent legs. Also, if you put a side on your tent, loosen the bottom during gusts of wind, so air can flow through. This helps prevent the tent from becoming airborne.

The tents are offered as a courtesy to vendors for a very low rental fee and we need your help protecting them from damage by anchoring them with some kind of weight. We would like to continue to offer this amenity to vendors, so any help you can give to keep them in tip-top shape is greatly appreciated.

FARMERS MARKET FOOD SERVICE FACILITY BILL: AN UPDATE

On August 31, I (Deb) was a guest on the Charlie Brennan Show on KMOX Radio 1120AM. The emphasis of the show was the disparity between what farmers market independent vendors are charged for DOH permits to offer samples compared to what grocery stores are charged by the DOH to offer free samples. Mr. Brennan was very supportive to our cause and read off a list of what we want in a Farmers Market Food Service Facility Bill.

The interview was so effective that Lori Willis, Communications Director of Schnucks, phoned the next day. Ms. Willis expressed concern about the interview and disagreement with the previous statements given by Schnuck's spokesman, Paul Simon in the July 13 Post-Dispatch article by reporter Paul Hampel.

Here is what Hampel reported: "Two supermarket chains, Schnucks and Dierbergs, have registered complaints with the county Health Department about the vendors' efforts to minimize fees."

"Dispensing with fees for the farmers markets would create an unlevel playing field," said Schnucks spokesman Paul Simon. "We have to make sure that we are following all the codes and all laws in the jurisdictions we sell or prepare food in. And we don't think the farmers markets should be exempt from any of the fees we pay."

After Willis was given accurate information and statistics about the issue, she indicated that she would look into things. It's interesting that she didn't correct the Schnucks spokesman's statements immediately but waited until six weeks later when the issue received more publicity on KMOX radio.

Examples of unreasonable farmers markets (FM) fees compared to restaurants and grocery stores (GS):

FM Waffle Vendor pays DOH over \$900/year for 4 hours of operation/week at FM for 1 full year (52weeks)
New Restaurant pays only \$130/year for unlimited hours of operation-24/7 for 1 year

FM Bakery Vendor (with updated Bakery DOH permit @ over \$300)
is required to pay DOH an additional \$900/year to cut up bread and offer samples at a FM
GS Bakery (with updated DOH permit) is not charged anything to cut up bread and offer samples

FM Independent Wine Vendor is charged \$35 to offer samples of wine when selling bottles at FM
GS Independent Wine Vendor is charged nothing to offer wine samples when selling bottles at GS

Question: How much would it cost if grocery stores had to pay the same DOH permitting fees for sampling that farmer's markets vendors currently pay? Answer: Hundreds of thousands of dollars!

KDIX Radio 88.1 FM Interview Monday, October 24 at 7:00pm tune in to "Earthworms" where host Jean Ponzi will interview Clayton Farmer' Market Manager, Deb Henderson about the St. Louis County DOH Permitting Fees and the prospect for a Farmer's Market Food Service Facility Bill.

Letters to the County Council: Letters written to the County Council which document the process we've gone through to get the DOH Permitting Fee Structure changed are posted on the Clayton Farmer's Market website under Vendor Resources. These are now readable in a convenient PDF format.

VENDOR ATTENDANCE AND CANCELLATIONS: A REMINDER

Please **email Deb at marketmanager1@yahoo.com with any foreseeable attendance changes by Thursday. This applies to both attending and canceling. If there is an emergency, call any time at 314-913-6632.** If we set up a reserved tent and table for a vendor who pays weekly and that vendor doesn't show up, unless there's an emergency, there will be a \$20 charge. Market set-up begins at 6:00am.Thanks for your consideration!

Best Regards and Successful Market Days to Everyone!

Sprouting News Copyright September 2011

Deborah L. Henderson