

Behind the Scenes at the Farmers Market

Supporting local farmers markets is one of my favorite activities of the summer season. Today, I'm sharing some "behind the scenes" information about local producers and markets. I encourage you to make supporting your local markets part of your regular routine.

Commitment - Regardless if the vendor is an artisan or produce grower, they've invested time to get their product to the market. Artisans spend many hours sewing, soap making, woodcarving, or crafting their inventory. Gardeners started their process with seeds or seedlings and continue to water, weed and harvest to bring you the freshest items.

Most produce at the market is picked within 2-24 hours of being displayed at the market. The same vendor selling the produce was also responsible for daily care and harvest. It is not easy work!

If you knew your favorite store was only open for limited hours, you'd make an effort to shop during those times. Many of the Cowley Farmers Market Association vendors participate in both the Ark City Farm and Art Market on Tuesday (4-6:30 p.m.) and the Walnut Valley Farmers Market on Saturday (7:30-11 a.m.). During these 6 hours, local vendors need you to be customers!

Collaboration - The Cowley Farmers Market Association is the umbrella organization for the Arkansas City and Winfield markets formed in 2019. This collaboration strengthens and supports all vendors. Previously, these markets had volunteer coordinators (who were also vendors). With the new association, a paid market coordinator position has been created. Volunteers serve as board members.

SNAP-EBT is the electronic benefits transfer program for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly called food stamps). Both markets in Arkansas City and Winfield are now EBT authorized and equipped. This allows SNAP customers to visit the market information booth to purchase tokens with their benefit card. SNAP eligible items can be purchased from any qualifying vendor at the market.

Market vendors also benefit from collaborative advertising. If you are interested in learning more about the markets or want a preview of weekly produce, visit these Facebook pages: "ArkansasCityFarmAndArtMarket" and "walnutvalleyfarmersmarket."

Camaraderie - If you like to learn new things or meet new people, a visit to the farmers market will not disappoint. You can learn baking, gardening and crafting tips from the vendors. If you need a custom gift or special product, most vendors will take orders. And if you need to be inspired, a conversation with a youth vendor will make you smile.

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K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and

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