

WATSONVILLE MARKET GROWS



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Hanan Huwiah carries a box of produce at the Watsonville Farmers Market. Starting Friday, the weekly event is set to expand, closing Union and Peck streets from 2-8 p.m.

Weekly produce market to take over Union Street on Fridays

By **DONNA JONES**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Look for more veggies, more fruit and more hot food as the Watsonville Farmers Market expands Friday.

But don't look to drive on Union Street between Peck and East Beach streets. That's where you'll find more of the fresh produce and international flavors customers have come to expect from the 8-year-old weekly market.

"It will be wise for people to be aware that Union Street will be closed," said market manager Nancy Gammons. "But it will be a beautiful, beautiful market surrounding the (City) Plaza."

The market runs 3-7 p.m. Fridays, but

Peck and Union streets will be closed 2-8 p.m. to allow time for vendors to set up and tear down stalls.

During the winter months, the market is confined to Peck Street, but as the weather warms and local produce ripens, more space is needed. In the past, the market expanded to Trafton Street. But Union Street offers more space and will keep the market on the plaza, where there's often cultural or other activities on Friday afternoons.

Since opening, the market has grown from six vendors to 40 at peak season, Gammons said.

"Without this addition, we couldn't expand," she said. "It's a growing market. Every year we add two or three vendors."

New this week in the prepared food section will be homemade New York City-style

pizza with cheese sent from Queens by the producer's mother.

Of course, the traditional Mexican fare, roasted corn on the cob and Salvadoran papusas will be back, too.

She also said to expect more produce, and more of it will be organic this season. With the warm weather, stone fruits could be here before you know it, she said. The first cherries could arrive in a couple of weeks.

"My goal is to make it a true farmers market with more locally grown organic produce so people who want to can buy their produce for the week and then stop and get something really good to eat," Gammons said.

Contact Donna Jones at 763-4505 or djones@santacruzsentinel.com.