



Michael Merrill

Every Saturday, hundreds of shoppers visit the Cabrillo Certified Farmers Market, a veritable cornucopia of farm-fresh produce, flowers, baked goods, meats and fish.

Cabrillo Farmer's Market is a shopper's delight

By MICHAEL MERRILL
STAFF WRITER

APTOS — The Certified Farmer's Market has been offering fresh fruit, vegetables, flowers and other gourmet food items to local residents since 1977. Over the years shopping at the "Cabrillo Market" has become a tradition for local residents and out-of-town visitors alike.

Held each Saturday in the Cabrillo College Parking Lot, between 40 and 63 vendors set up and sell produce, flowers, meats, breads and assorted culinary delights, many of which has been grown, baked or caught by the vendors themselves.

Karen and Russell Wolter own a 55-acre organic farm in Carmel Valley and have been selling at the market for 18 years. Russell is not a newcomer on the organic bandwagon, however — he was organic when organic wasn't cool.

Wolter Farm has been totally organic since 1947. "About that time the university began promoting chemicals," Russell Wolter said. "All their data said it was the way to go — better yields more attractive produce — but my mother resisted. She didn't tell me why, just that it didn't 'feel' right. That was before being organic was fashionable and I was embarrassed to admit it to anyone."

The Wolters grow varied crops including tomatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, kale and collared greens. Even though there are some natural pesticides some organic farmers consider acceptable, the Wolters use none of them. "If it's a poison it's a poison, whether it's natural or not,"

Wolter said.

According to Monterey Bay Area Certified Farmer's Market Director Catherine Barr, Certified Farmer's Markets are subject to several rules and regulations defined by the California Agricultural Code and are strictly controlled. Past efforts to combine a flea market have been unsuccessful and potential vendors of non-food items have claimed they were shut out by old-timers who did not want to give them a chance.

Barr said that is simply not the case. Efforts to combine a flea market with the farmer's market were unsuccessful not because of resistance from the market vendors, but because of state regulations.

Barr said that according to the state government, if other, non-certified or non-certifiable items are to be sold or offered for sale, the location cannot be approved and would invalidate the market's certification. If this happens, each vendor would need a separate permit from the County Health Department.

She said non-certifiable items may be sold in a nearby area, but they must be separated from the certified products so as to leave no doubt that they are a part of the Certified Farmer's Market.

Prevedelli Farms were selling 21 different types of apples Saturday — all grown on their Watsonville farm — including the sweet Winter Banana Apple. Nick Prevedelli, who grew up on the farm, has been selling tree-fresh apples and produce with his parents for the last 14 years.



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Mori Tashiro has been growing field flowers in his 10-acre hothouse in Salinas since 1972.

A stunning variety of field flowers was offered by another long-time market vendor, Mori Tashiro. At a time when demand for traditional tea roses and carnations is low, being replaced by a growing demand for the multi-colored and delicate bouquets of field flowers Tashiro, like Karen and Russell Wolter, has found that something he has always done has finally come into vogue. "I have always grown field flowers, ever since I started 25 years ago," Tashiro said. "From the very beginning I have liked the variety."

With a 10-acre hothouse in Salinas and four brokerage houses in various locations throughout the state, Tashiro hardly needs to sell flowers in Aptos, but that's the type of vendors you will find here. People love what they grow and enjoy sharing the fruits of their

labor with the public.

For some of the freshest fish in town, be sure and check out Don and Bernadine Dodson who offer Sand dabs, halibut, soup fin shark and both whole and filleted red snapper. What makes their products unique is the fact that every fish in their display was still swimming in Monterey Bay the day before. Don Dodson is not only a fish monger — he has been navigating the local waters for 37 years.

On Friday night he brings in his daily catch and early Saturday, the fish are cleaned, iced and on display at bargain prices.

The Cabrillo Certified Farmers Market is located directly across from Cabrillo College on Soquel Avenue. There is plenty of free parking, it is easy to find and the crowd is as friendly as the vendors.

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