

# Some things to know about farmers' markets

✓ *Farmers Market*  
A READER SUGGESTED it might be a good idea to run a listing of all the farmers' markets in the county.

First, note that some operate all year round, while others have an off-season.

Experienced shoppers know to bring their own canvas bag or basket — and if you think of it, tuck some extra plastic produce bags in to bring along, too.

The farmers appreciate it when you pay in small bills; checks usually are not accepted, although food stamps usually are.

Dogs and smoking are discouraged, although not forbidden — although they're held outdoors, it is food that's being sold, and you wouldn't bring your pet or light up a cigarette in a grocery store, would you?

Another etiquette tip is to remember that sampling is to help you decide what to buy, not to take the place of lunch. Whatever



**JANET  
BLASER**  
**FOOD FOR  
THOUGHT**

the farmers are giving away for free comes out of their pockets — there are no middle men absorbing the profits, or losses, here.

Farmers often can bring along or hold something special for a customer, and are usually happy to do so. But if you make a special order, don't decide on the spur of the moment that you've changed your mind. That leaves the farmer with a lot of effort wasted, and most likely more of an item than they're able to sell. You expect them to show up every week; it's not too much for you to do the same if you've made an agreement.

Treat farmers like you would in any other retail exchange — responsibly, courteously and dependably.

There's often confusion about what "certified" means in the farmers market title. "Certified" farmers are permitted to sell only what they actually produce.

(Note that there are organic farmers who are not certified organic because they don't want to pay the fees required to be inspected. For a small operation, those fees can be hefty.)

There is also an interim certification for farms that are in the process of obtaining organic certification.

So, when in doubt about how produce is grown, ask.

*Janet Blaser is a staff writer. Send questions, tips or comments to PO Box 638, Santa Cruz, Calif., 95061; fax 429-9620; email jblaser@santa-cruz.com*

## Where you can find 'em

**Monterey Bay Certified Farmers Market.** Saturdays 7 a.m. to noon. Cabrillo College, parking lot D, 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos. Open year-round. Information: 728-5060.

**Scotts Valley Certified Farmers' Market.** Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Erba Lane, Scotts Valley. Open May-October. Information: 728-5060.

**Felton Certified Farmers' Market.** Tuesdays 2:30-6:30 p.m. Felton Presbyterian Church, 6090 Highway 9, Felton. Open May - November. Information: 335-7443.

**Bittersweet Certified Farmers' Market.** Tuesdays 2-5 p.m. Bittersweet Bistro, 787 Rio del Mar Boulevard, Rio del Mar. Open June-November. Information: 662-9799.

**Watsonville Certified Farmers Market.** Fridays 2:30-6:30 p.m. Peck Street, next to Main Street Plaza, Watsonville. Open June-November. Information: 335-7443.

**Santa Cruz Community Certified Farmers Market.** Wednesdays 2:30-6:30 p.m. Lincoln and Cedar streets, Santa Cruz. Open year-round. Information: 335-7443.