

Saratoga Weekend: Farmers Market like an old-fashioned village square

By Terance Haight



Vanessa Perkins of Saratoga Springs looks over fresh tomatoes at the Farmer's Market with her daughter Lucia, 1, and her son Alexander, 3, on High Rock Road in Saratoga Springs.

SARATOGA SPRINGS – The Saratoga Farmers Market is in its 35th year of business, occupying High Rock Park every Wednesday and Saturday throughout this summer and fall.

With roughly 50 local vendors selling everything from peanut butter and crackers to hard cider and meats, the farmers market has a little something for everyone.

“People tend to think it’s just vegetables and plants, but we really have quite a wide range of local products,” said market spokesperson Deborah Miles Czech. “The vendor mix continues to change and evolve.

“If you haven’t been here before, come and check it out. ... There are a lot of fun and entertaining events at the market besides just the shopping.” Live music, contests, and a weekly yoga class on the park’s grass make up just a few of the market’s many offerings.

On Wednesdays, the market invites a local chef to give demonstrations and serve samples prepared from the market’s local products while also preparing quick meals for customers to eat-in while listening to music by local bands, or to take-out on the way home.

“The farmers are based in neighboring counties, and all of the money that’s being spent at the market directly benefits the local economies,” said Czech. “It’s like the old-fashioned village square. It’s just really nice for public interaction.”

Friendly people

“I love the people. That’s the main thing: That we’re out with the people and have our product,” said Linda Kerber of Linda’s Country Kitchen, a bakery in Johnsonville. “You see some of the same people, and they’re all friendly. You can tell people use this as a meeting place, too.”

“I think it’s very convenient for customers to come here and get a really good variety of products,” said Mary Pratt of Elihu Farm in Easton. “The customers are wonderful, they love our products and we love them.”

Pratt sells eggs, lamb, and duckling, and in the fall, geese.

“The animals are raised very humanely. They’re not raised in feed lots. The animals we have for our poultry products and our meat, they’re outside, they’re on pasture – they live a normal life.”

“We’re lucky to be here, we’ve met a lot of nice people over the years,” said Sherri Dyer of Dyer’s Farm and Greenhouse. “We have a lot of customers that come back year after year. Week after week, if you walk through this market, I guarantee you would see the same people.”

“Between the farmer’s market and the customers we make a real community, it’s very nice,” said Liza Porter of Homestead Artisans in Argyle. Porter and her husband sell meats and cheese at the Saratoga, Clifton Park, and Glens Falls farmer’s markets. “This gives us an opportunity to be here for the customers at the time that the customers are here for us. It shortens the period of time that the farmers need to be away from the farm so they can produce the stuff that the customers want to buy.”

“The market is great for us to help get rid of product,” said Missy Riehl of Burger Farm. Best known for sweet corn and melons, Burger Farm also sells annuals, perennials, and vegetables. “Being based out of Niskayuna, a lot of people don’t even know we’re there, so this is a great way for us to expand out of the area and for new customers to come down to our farm and see what we have down there as well.”

“My wife and I probably buy half our food at the markets, year round,” said Dave Davidson of Sacandaga Lake. “We like to buy just what it is that we want or need and, of course, it’s fresh and it tastes good.”

Lake Luzerne resident Peggy Paoloni doesn’t like to buy her produce from supermarkets.

“They put so much chemicals in the regular vegetables. What’s nice about this market is that most of these farmers will tell you they don’t spray,” she said. “It’s kind of like the black sheep of the super market.”

“I like the idea that you can eat something that’s local and not sprayed. I’m willing to pay a couple extra dollars, because we don’t have a lot of chance today,” said Dennis Hedderman of Saratoga Springs. He mentioned an increased amount of carcinogens in food today, including milk. “I’m going to get some calcium from my kale and collard greens, and possibly get some fruit – they have some nice buys over there.”

“The thing is, this market is actually a farmers market. We grow 100 percent. We don’t go and buy any,” said Linda Gifford of Gifford Farms in Gansevoort. She mentioned vendors at other venues that don’t grow what they sell. “I wish people would understand: You might as well go to a grocery store. The farmers market is where you’re going to find the real home grown.”