

GUIDES · SELLING

Sell at a Farmers Market

A step-by-step planner for getting your table into your first market, and keeping it there.

FREE GUIDE

Devlin Foster

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Before you start

Farmers markets are one of the best ways for a small farm or maker to sell, and many of the people in the Hudson Valley Almanac sell at them. Getting a spot can look hard from the outside. It's mostly a list of small jobs, done in the right order.

That's what this guide is. There are 12 steps in four parts. Do one a day, or one a week. You don't need to be an expert, and you don't need to spend much to start.

This is not a rules manual. What you're allowed to sell, and what you need to sell it, depends on the product, the market, and the year, and it changes. So where a rule matters, I tell you who to call and what to ask. Please make those calls. Nobody minds a question before you start.

I checked the sales tax and home-processing details against the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and Cornell's small farms program on October 11, 2026. Where I couldn't check something, I say so.

The 12 steps

- **Part 1, Get ready:** decide what to bring, visit a market, find the right one, make your calls, sort out insurance.
- **Part 2, Apply:** fill out the application and learn the market's rules.
- **Part 3, Set up:** build your table, handle prices and payments, pack.
- **Part 4, Market day and after:** your first day, then how to keep customers coming back.

Put your farm on the map too

Customers who meet you at a market will look you up later. My other free guide, *Put Your Farm on the Map*, shows you how to get a Facebook Page and a Google Maps listing so they can find you between markets.

Part 1: Get ready

Decide what you're bringing, then find out what the market and the state need from you.

1 Decide what you'll bring

Start small. Pick **three to five things** you can make or grow in steady supply, and bring plenty of each. A table that's full of a few good things sells better than a table with a little of everything.

Write a one-page list: each item, how you'll package it, and your price. You'll use this list again on your application and on your price signs.

2 Visit a market first

Go as a shopper, ideally on a busy day. Walk the whole market and take notes:

- How many vendors sell what you plan to sell? What do they charge?
- Where do people stop, and where do they walk past?
- How do vendors take payment? How are the tables and signs set up?
- Who's the market manager, and how do you reach them?

The map on the Hudson Valley Almanac lists farmers markets by county, so it's a good way to find the ones near you.

3 Find the right market

You don't have to pick the biggest market. A small market close to home can be a better first one. Ask the manager:

- Are there open spots? When's the application deadline?
- What does a spot cost, per season or per day?
- Can I try it as a drop-in or day vendor first?
- Are there rules about who can sell, such as where products must be grown or made?
- Do the day and time work for me?

4 Make your calls

This is the step people skip, and it's the one that can slow you down, so do it early. Some of these take weeks.

The market manager. Ask what they need from you and what they require of vendors.

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (agriculture.ny.gov). If you make, bake, or process food, ask whether your product needs a license or qualifies for the Home Processor registration. That registration is free but tied to one address, and the state says reviews can take a long time, up to 16 weeks. The list of what qualifies changes, so ask them. I'm not going to list it here.

NYS Department of Taxation and Finance (tax.ny.gov). Many farm and food products meant for later eating are exempt from sales tax. Others aren't, and crafts, flowers, and plants are examples of items that are generally taxable. If you sell anything taxable, you need a **Certificate of Authority**. Cornell's small farms program says to apply at least 20 days before you start, and you can't make taxable sales until you have it. Once you're registered, you file a return every quarter, even in a quarter with no sales.

Cornell's small farms program (smallfarms.cornell.edu) also has plain-language guides on both of these topics.

5 Ask about insurance

Some markets ask vendors for general liability insurance and want the market named on the policy as an additional insured. Others don't. Ask the manager what they require. Then call your insurance agent. If you already have a farm or business policy, ask whether it covers market sales. I haven't listed prices because they vary a lot.

Part 2: Apply

Fill out the application, and learn how the market runs.

6 Fill out the application

Applications differ, but they commonly ask for:

- Your name, farm or business name, address, and contact information
- A list of what you'll sell, and sometimes where it's grown or made
- The fee for a spot, often paid with the application
- Proof of insurance, if the market requires it
- Any license, registration, or sales tax number that applies to your products

Keep a one-page **vendor sheet** with your product list, prices, and contact information, so you can fill out each application quickly. Be honest about where your products come from. Markets care about that, and it builds trust with customers. Turn the application in before the deadline, and if it's full, ask to be put on the waitlist.

7 Learn the market's rules

Once you're in, ask for the vendor rules in writing and read them. Look for:

- Setup and teardown times, and where to park
- Whether you can package or portion food at the market, or if everything has to arrive packaged
- Whether you can offer samples
- Any sign or permit you must display
- What happens if you can't make a market day. Some markets want notice, and some charge a fee when you miss one without it.

Part 3: Set up

Build a table that's easy to find, easy to understand, and easy to buy from.

8 Build your table

You don't need fancy gear. You do need a few basics:

- **A tent or canopy** if the market allows or requires one. Weigh down the legs, because wind catches a canopy like a sail.
- **A sturdy table** with a cloth that reaches the ground, so you can store boxes underneath out of sight.
- **A big sign** with your farm or business name. People should be able to read it from the aisle.
- **A price on every item.** Customers walk away rather than ask.
- **Height.** Use crates or shelves so the display isn't flat.

9 Prices, change, and payments

Round prices make change easier: \$4 beats \$3.75. Bring a cash box with plenty of ones and fives, and keep it somewhere safe.

Many customers pay by card or phone now. A card reader that plugs into your phone is the easiest way to take cards. In *Put Your Farm on the Map* I go through the free and low-cost options step by step.

If you sell by weight, ask the market manager about scales. I haven't verified the specific rules, so please ask.

10 Pack and practice

The night before, set up your table at home. You'll find out what's missing. Then use this list:

- ☐ Tent, weights, and table
- ☐ Tablecloth and display crates
- ☐ Farm sign and price signs
- ☐ Cash box with change
- ☐ Card reader, with the phone charged
- ☐ Bags and boxes for customers
- ☐ Pen, notebook, and a few business cards
- ☐ Your market permit or paperwork, if the market asks you to display one
- ☐ Water, a hat, and a jacket
- ☐ Hand wipes and trash bags

Part 4: Market day and after

Your first day, and how to turn first-time buyers into regulars.

11 Market day

Arrive early, within the setup window, and give yourself time to finish before the bell. Then:

- Stand up, smile, and say hello. A friendly greeting does more than a perfect display.
- Tell people what it is and how you made it. People buy the story along with the jar.
- Offer samples only if the market allows them, and ask about any rules first.
- Take a photo of your table. You'll use it for posts later.

12 Afterward: keep them coming back

Right after the market, while you remember it, write down what sold, what didn't, and what you'd change. A few weeks of notes will tell you what to bring more of.

Then make it easy for people to find you again:

- Post your photo to your Facebook Page, with your next market day.
- Ask regulars to follow your Page, or write down an email address if they want one.
- Get your market days on the Almanac. You can submit a listing on the site.

Give it a few markets before you judge it. Regulars take time to build.

One last reminder. If you aren't sure about a rule, call first: the market manager, the state's Agriculture and Markets office, or the Tax Department. Rules change, and the people who answer those phones can tell you what applies to your products today.

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Details were checked October 11, 2026 and may have changed.