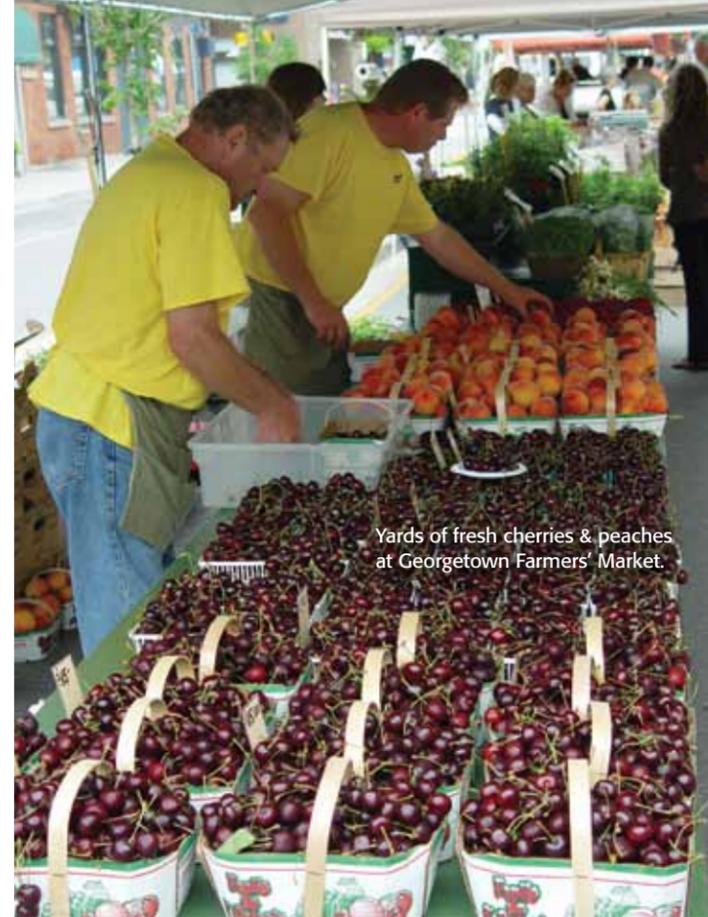


Fresh, Local Farmers' Markets

By Paul Glendenning & Gloria Hildebrandt Photos by Mike Davis

There's always time to chat across the fruit at Georgetown Farmers' Market.

Farmers' markets are not just places to buy food. They are community events where people gather to get what's fresh and in season, but also to get news about local groups, to run into friends and acquaintances and to start conversations with strangers. Although few people stop to chat while grocery shopping in a supermarket, it's usual to linger with people at farmers' markets.



Yards of fresh cherries & peaches at Georgetown Farmers' Market.



Georgetown Farmers' Market offers a wide variety of farm-fresh produce.



Children at Georgetown Farmers' Market get an education in local fresh food.



Smell the freshly baked goods at Georgetown Farmers' Market.

Farmers' markets turn big towns and cities into friendly small villages. People bring their dogs to outdoor markets for socialization, and well-taught children ask if it's okay to pet them. People with dogs are used to being approached, and conversations start about breeds, ages, names and temperaments. Each market has a unique character created by its location, vendors, exhibitors and customers.

Georgetown Farmers' Market

When the Georgetown Farmers' Market opens in mid-June, June 12 to be exact this year, the produce available tends to be what good vegetable gardeners might already have growing: rhubarb, radishes, green asparagus, early herbs. Yet even from the first day, there are plenty of other reasons to shop here: fresh-baked goods, real maple syrup, ethnic cooking, varieties of teas and exotic coffees, handmade products.

But oh, when the tender fruit starts arriving from Niagara! The cherries, berries, plums, peaches and nectarines! Yards and yards of

OTTAWA STREET FARMERS' MARKET

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www.ottawastreetfarmers.com

The goodness of the country in the heart of the City!

Fresh pork to peaches are on offer at Ottawa Street Farmers' Market.



Early shoppers get more choice: Ottawa Street Farmers' Market starts to sell out in the afternoon.



Fresh & local: this Niagara farmer brings tender fruit to Ottawa Street Farmers' Market from southeast of Hamilton.

Ottawa Street Farmers' Market fills a Hamilton parking lot with local food every Friday & Saturday all year long.

fresh, ripe sweetness to feast on in season. And from a farm closer to home, in Halton Hills, the corn on the cob, often the peaches-and-cream variety, delightfully filling the back of a 1930s-era truck in mint condition. Six cobs or a dozen, fresh and tight in their just-picked husks, ready for shucking and boiling and devouring without butter and salt because they are just so fresh, sweet and delicious.

There are other reasons still to go to the market. Community groups are fundraising, awareness raising or gathering signatures for important causes. There might be a climbing wall to try, whether you are young or old. The downtown shops are open and might have specials displayed on the sidewalk, tempting you to take another look at their wares.

When you meet friends, you might look for a table in front of a café, where happy dogs lie in the shade beneath the tables. A hot beverage and a fresh-baked sweet top off a great morning at the market.

This year there will be another market day in Georgetown, in addition to the Saturday morning one. Wednesdays from 4 to 7p.m., farmers only will be selling produce on Wesleyan St.

Ottawa Street Farmers' Market

Ottawa Street Farmer's Market in Hamilton is a shining example of a truly community-oriented market. While it has only been at its current location since 2008, the market's history stretches much farther having begun in 1955. Everything from farm-fresh fruit and vegetables, to meat, flowers and a delicious array of baked goods await those choosing to visit the 22 vendors who make up this outdoor market.

While summer is the market's busiest season, visitors can shop there every Friday and Saturday year round as the dedicated vendors brave even the cold winter months by sheltering in their

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vehicles to provide local products to their community. And the items are truly local, as strict market policies require goods to be produced within 100 km of the market. Visiting the market can also be an informative experience as visitors are encouraged to talk to the vendors about where and how their food was produced.

Market manager Caroline Merritt, who has been referred to as a true local food champion says, "As farming is becoming an economically difficult way to make a living, it's so important to educate our customers on the many reasons why they need to keep buying from their local farmer. As well, we're finding our customers want to know where their produce comes from."

The market also provides handouts and information on canning and storing as well as recipes to make the most of their market purchases.

Visitors also have an opportunity to learn more about community initiatives as the market extends a hand to such local non-profit organizations as Hamilton Food Share, Hamilton Green Venture, and the Greenbelt Foundation by providing space for groups to promote their activities. Environment Hamilton's Eat Local program is another organization to benefit by their association with the market, having launched their first two



Easy pickings from armloads of brilliant cut flowers at Ottawa Street Farmers' Market.

Georgetown Farmers' Market

Season opens June 12, closes Thanksgiving weekend
Saturdays 8:30a.m. to 1p.m., Main St.
Big DADDY Festival June 19 & 20
Wednesdays 4 to 7p.m., Wesleyan St.

Ottawa Street Farmers' Market

Open year-round, Fridays & Saturdays 7a.m. to 3p.m.
One block east of Ottawa St.
between Campbell & Edinburgh

"Buy Local – Buy Fresh" farm maps there.

Eat Local program manager Karen Burson says she is a big fan of the market and points out, "It's even possible to test market a business or product concept, such as Bettina Schormann's "Bread Bar," which will soon turn into a real bricks and mortar bakery operation."

Being situated but a block from the equally thriving Ottawa Street business area, the Ottawa Street Farmer's Market has truly

grown into an essential part of their community and richly enhances local shopping experiences for those lucky enough to live in or visit this vibrant Hamilton community. **EV**

Paul Glendenning is a writer and sales consultant in Hamilton.

Selected Local Food Sources

Dutchman's Gold, Carlisle:

honey, maple syrup, bee products
dutchmansgold.com

Foodstuffs, Georgetown:

bulk, health & specialty food
foodstuffs.ca

Frogpond Farm,

Niagara-on-the-Lake: organic wine
frogpondfarm.ca

Hildreth Farm Market: fresh fruits & vegetables in season, preserves, baking
hildrethfarms.ca

Localicious, Hamilton: fresh food festival Sept. 17-Oct. 3
downtownhamilton.org

Picard Peanuts, 8 locations:

peanut products, chocolates, homemade ice cream
picardspeanuts.ca

Information on Farmers' Markets & Local Food

Farmers Markets Ontario
farmersmarketsontario.com

Fresh Radius FreshRadius.com

Greenbelt Farmers' Online Market Greenbeltfresh.ca

Harvest Ontario
harvestontario.com