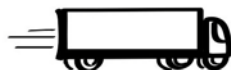




**MarketReady for Restaurant Sales
Full Report**

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MarketReady™



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MarketReady for Restaurant Sales

Marketing from the farm to the restaurant has emerged as a key market channel for many producers. Locally-grown food topped several American restaurant industry trend lists in 2009 and again in 2010, leading many farm marketers to explore and expand the local restaurant market. Connections forged with chefs at farmers' markets, consumer preferences for locally produced food, and the dining trends toward locally-grown food have all helped increase farm-to-restaurant volume.

Restaurants are a diverse market, ranging from independently owned bistros to multinational corporations. Catering firms, institutional foodservice systems, and country clubs are also included in the restaurant market. Although different foodservice establishments have different preferences and characteristics, interviews with both producers and chefs indicate that there are best marketing practices that farm operators can adopt across the foodservice spectrum. This report will address best practices for various business functions for producers to follow in the following areas:

- Communication & Relationship Building
- Packaging
- Labeling
- Pricing
- Supply
- Delivery
- Storage
- Invoicing
- Insurance
- Quality Assurance & Temperature Control
- Satisfaction Guarantee
- Working Cooperatively
- Marketing – An ongoing process
- Local Products for Local Markets

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Communication & Relationship Building

The old rule for success in a retail business was “Location, Location, Location.” When marketing directly from the farm to the chef, that rule changes to “Communication, Communication, Communication.” The open line of communication between the farm and the chef is critical for growing the relationship—and growing your business.

David Cleverdon, who’s Caledonia, Illinois, Kinnikinnick Farm specializes in Italian produce varieties for the Chicago market, tells how a relationship and communication with the chef led to what is now one of his farm’s signature products.

“One week we were having a crop failure—we were growing a salad mix. So we began separating out the lettuces from arugula and Asian mustards that we were growing. I got a call from Mary Ellen Diaz (the chef) saying, ‘Hey—the plates are coming back clean.’ She used to watch the plates coming back in from the dining room to see what people were eating. The salad plates were coming back clean—and all we had on there now were just lettuces, a mix of lettuces.”

“That’s when it hit us. This is Chicago—it has a milder palate—and we weren’t putting the hot greens in the mix. So all of a sudden we had a product which is just a mix of baby lettuces which has been our mainstay product ever since—all because of the conversation and relationship with the chef.”

Those kinds of open, two-way conversations between producers and chefs are absolutely critical to growing a farm’s restaurant market. And a farm’s response to that two-way communication is coveted by chefs.

“I know I can talk to my farmers. If the beet is half-an-inch too big, I can tell them. They’re going to take care of you if you let them know,” says Scott Wallen of Charlotte, North Carolina’s Upstream.

With the ongoing demands of a restaurant business, producers need to work to find the practical communication channel that works best for the chefs they are servicing. Phone calls or voice mail, text messages, and email orders were cited by chefs around the country as being easiest to access. Still, nothing beats the personal touch.

“I trust the local farmer whose face I know,” said Michael Mitchell, executive chef at Spring Lake Country Club outside Quincy, Illinois. Mitchell buys both local produce and local pork.

For Mitchell, it’s essential for the local farmer who sells him pork to keep in touch regularly. “Some initiative (from the grower) is certainly helpful to me because it makes things easier,” says Mitchell. “It’s great when someone can call me up and say, ‘This is what I’ve got, what do you want?’”

Growers also find that offering some degree of flexibility is helpful to developing the business relationship with the chefs.

“I’m willing to work with him if he wants to try something different,” says David Dedert, the grower who sells pork to Mitchell at the country club. “I’m just a mile-and-a-half down the road.”

For restaurants in larger markets, however, farmers may have to work a little harder to get directly to the chef.

“Successful growers create a line of communication between them and the chef,” says David Rand, Farm Forager for Chicago’s Green City Market and consultant to Chicago’s network of 25 city farmers’ markets.

Rand sees successful farms sending weekly email blasts directly to chef’s personal emails with full descriptions of the products, prices and their availability.

“Chefs that are very successful are very adaptable,” says Rand. “It makes sense that the farmer has to be willing to adapt too. And communication is key.”

One thing that producers should never overlook when approaching chefs, says Bob Perry, a chef who developed a system for local buying at Kentucky’s State Resort Park restaurants, is their personal appearance.

“Showing up at the back door looking like you just crawled out from under a tractor

doesn’t provide confidence in you or your product,” says Perry. “Professional personal appearance is important, especially when making the first calls on a restaurant or chef.”

Communication is the thread that ties all the areas of successfully marketing to chefs together. From weekly product lists to personal conversations at farmers’ markets, professional product appearance to pre-season grower-chef meetings—all successful farm-to-restaurant marketers understand and know how to communicate and build the relationship with chefs.

For Cleverdon, whose business selling to chefs increased fourfold between 2006 and 2009, building those relationships with good communication was foundational to growing the farm’s market.

“We knew we had to build our business in our market based on relationships,” he says.

Summary: Communication & Relationship Building

- Successful farm-to-restaurant marketers understand how to communicate with chefs and the best communication channels that reach individual chefs
- The farmer-chef relationship can create synergies that may result in profitable changes to a farm’s product line and production
- Good communication only improves the most important aspect of farm-to-restaurant marketing: the relationship between farm and chef

Best Marketing Practices: Communication & Relationship Building

- ✓ I understand that growing relationships with chefs is just as important as producing my products
- ✓ I have asked the chef what the best way is to contact them personally and have conversations about my products
- ✓ I have access to email, websites, social networking sites, and other communication channels to discuss product orders and quality
- ✓ I am making the effort to connect personally with my customers to improve the conversation and the business relationship
- ✓ I present a professional and clean personal appearance when making business calls to restaurants and chefs

Packaging

Poor packaging and presentation is a common mistake made when delivering produce and other farm products to restaurants. This is especially true when selling to higher-end restaurants.

“You need to wash and clean and pack [the produce] to high standards for the chefs. Pay attention to presentation even in the box. Wash your potatoes. Wash your turnips, carrots. Clean them. Wrap them in bundles, bunches, put rubber bands on them,” says one producer that has mentored many farmers.

Restaurants—especially those in the fine dining sector—appreciate growers going the extra mile to present their product. But chefs also understand that, like in a kitchen, things can happen on the farm too.

“I actually don’t mind when I get a shipment of vegetables and stuff that’s still warm from the sun and still dirty—I mean, it doesn’t bother me,” says Jeff Newman of Boone Inn & Tavern in Berea, Kentucky. “At least I know it’s fresh.”

The package in which the product is delivered, especially for produce crops, is another topic requiring clear communication between producers and chefs. When he started selling to restaurants in Chicago, Illinois, Brian Stout used his family orchard’s reusable plastic bins or totes to deliver product. Some chefs loved them and returned the bins already clean. Others lost the bins or returned them so dirty that it was a nuisance. “Now we stock cardboard boxes on our (farmers’ market) truck to pack some restaurant orders in,” Stout says.

Some restaurants may be willing to save wholesale containers (waxed cardboard,

plastic trays) for farmers to reuse; just ask. As for produce delivered in the plastic T-shirt bag common at farmers’ market stands? It just depends on what the chef’s preference—and the crop—is.

“It doesn’t matter so much to me if greens and specialties come in a plastic bag,” says Donnie Ferneau, owner of Ferneau’s in the upscale Kavanaugh neighborhood of Little Rock, Arkansas. “We can deal with that if the quality and consistency is there.”

One important thing producers need to remember is that restaurant kitchens often operate under space constraints. One chef noted an important principle is not to package a product “too much.”

“I don’t need mesclun mix in a plastic bag *and* a cardboard box,” said one chef. “Just the bag is fine.”

“If in doubt,” says Will Gilson of Massachusetts, “a farmer usually won’t go wrong with a cardboard box—especially a standard size produce box.”

“We’re used to handling cardboard. We can break it down and put it in our recycle pile,” he says. They may also be willing to save the boxes for you to pickup when you deliver next.

It is important for the producer to communicate clearly with the chef about the size of the produce. Differences in region, chef preference, and even ethnicity can affect the pack size and type of produce required.

Meat and Dairy Products

More perishable products, such as meat and dairy products, as well as value-added products may have special packaging requirements. David Dedert, a Quincy, Illinois, pork producer that sells at both his local farmers' market and to a local restaurant, says that his packaging is the same for both.

"I deal in the product that I get right from my local locker," says Dedert. "For the restaurant, it's the same pack size, the same label as I have for my retail."

Dedert notes, however, that doesn't apply to special orders from the restaurant. "Obviously things are going to be different if they want a whole hog or special order," he says.

Even if a product is packaged and labeled properly, some restaurants desire different kinds of cutting or processing than a local locker may be accustomed to. Producers using a meat locker or other processor should be careful to make sure that their product is being delivered to the chef according to his or her specifications. A producer may even want to introduce the chef to the processor so the restaurant can deal directly with the processor—especially if the restaurant requires unique processing services.

"Whenever they change meat cutters, I have to go out to the plant and make sure they know where to cut," says Greg Higgins, award-winning chef and owner of Higgins Restaurant and Bar in Portland, Oregon.

A meat or dairy producer using a third-party (such as a slaughterhouse) to process or package product that will end up at a restaurant can greatly help the chef in the long run by making sure the chef knows how and

who to communicate with at the processing plant.

Producers hoping to introduce chefs to purchasing whole animals direct from the farm need to realize that chefs may not be familiar with this type of purchasing and may need to be educated about potential cost savings and other benefits of such a purchase. George Frangos, the restaurant operations consultant to Farm 255 in Georgia, developed a spreadsheet that showed the economy gained when a whole animal is used.

"Farmers that can share materials like that with chefs can really help educate [them] about the value of their products," he says.

Summary: Packaging

- Farm vendors must understand the standard sizes and quantities that their products are offered in
- Conversations with chefs should introduce them to the typical product size offered and determine if that is consistent with their restaurant's need
- Farms should be willing to clean and pack produce to high quality standards, especially when marketing to upscale restaurants
- Cardboard produce boxes are a good "default" packaging option for restaurants
- When selling meat or other products processed off the farm, the producer can assist the chef by introducing them to the butcher, slaughterhouse, or plant manager and having the chef communicate directly with the processor

Best Marketing Practices: Packaging

- ✓ I understand the typical industry standard packaging for the product I want to market from my farm and am prepared to deliver that kind of package to a restaurant
- ✓ I am prepared to possibly spend extra time packaging my produce to a chef's specifications and have accounted for my extra time in the product cost
- ✓ I have asked the chef how he or she wants my product packaged
- ✓ I have access to standard size cardboard produce boxes
- ✓ I have relationships developed, or am developing relationships, with processors that a chef can work with for my meat or dairy products
- ✓ I am prepared to show a chef the potential value for the restaurant in purchasing a whole animal or other larger quantities of product direct from the farm

Labeling

A young couple at a local farmers' market balked when they saw the same stickers for use on a vendor's winter squash as were on squash at the local grocery store. "Do you know if that squash is local?" they asked another vendor. The label made the squash look less "local" than the customer was used to.

Labels and labeling may seem a lesser marketing concern for selling directly to restaurants than for selling into other channels. After all, don't your fresh produce and other products often speak for themselves—and don't chefs know what to do with the product? That mindset defeats the different marketing purpose that a label has when selling to restaurants, say experienced farm-to-restaurant marketers.

"Put a label on it!" says Jody Hardin, a farmer on the edge of Arkansas' Delta who sells to upscale restaurants in Little Rock. "It's all part of the professional presentation. Develop a logo. Let the chefs know your product is professional."

Beyond product presentation and connecting your farm's name with the product, product labels can include instructions for use and storage. This can benefit restaurant kitchen staff that may be new to using local product. If including these kinds of labels, be sure to use materials that are water-resistant and can withstand transport and handling.

Some producers may wish to include additional information on produce labels, such as the date picked, variety, and even the field location. Although chefs have a great trust for local product, traceability has become critically important in the food industry. For products that may be new or less familiar to chefs—specialty fruits like pawpaw or

persimmon, for example—handling and storage information that are critical to maintaining product quality should be included with delivered product.

Labeling should not get in the way of the product, however. One grower marketing through a produce auction discovered that restaurants didn't want to remove stickers on every melon. So he just labeled one or two in each box—that kept his farm number identified, and it also kept the restaurant staff from having to peel off labels.

For meat, clear labeling that meets legal requirements for commerce may be more essential. David Dedert, a pork producer in Quincy, Illinois, selling at a farmers' market and to a local country club, sells the same frozen pork in each market. His pork packs are labeled according to state and local standards.

"Nothing is seasoned, so that helps [to ease] labeling," says Dedert, who has chosen to offer no seasoning with his sausage or bacon products - simply fresh or frozen product in order to keep his labels simple. The local country club chef that he sells to likes to season his own ground pork and other products.

Following labeling guidelines will also be critical if marketing value-added products to local restaurants. If selling a retail product, be sure to follow the same requirements you use at other retail locations like your farm stand and the farmers' market.

Producers need to exercise care when classifying their products. While terms such as "organic" and "sustainable," are often valued, it's unreasonable to assume that chefs know all about certifications and how you, professionally, define these terms. Both

producers and chefs say a good marketing certification or other term, be sure your principle to follow is this: if you're using a customer understands what it means.

Summary: Labeling

- Labels add a professional presentation and help customers associate your farm with your products
- Labels can also include information for product use, storage, and even field numbers or other farm identification
- Labeling for many meat or processed products will need to meet legal guidelines for product labeling and sale
- Take the opportunity to explain what terms like “certified”, “sustainable”, etc. mean on your labels

Best Marketing Practices: Labeling

- ✓ I understand that labeling can help build my farm's identity and improve product presentation
- ✓ I have access to water-resistant labels that link my product with my farm but do not get in the way of product handling
- ✓ If selling meat, dairy, or processed products, I understand my legal regulations for labeling those products
- ✓ I have taken the opportunity to explain to chefs what terms like “certified”, “sustainable”, and other phrases mean if I use those terms on my labels or product packaging

Pricing

Just how much more should you charge for a “locally grown”, “sustainably produced” or “farm-fresh” product? How much less than farmers’ market prices should you expect a restaurant to pay? Pricing your products can be a difficult exercise.

Producers selling to restaurants need to understand that prices chefs are willing to pay will usually be based more on wholesale prices than farmers’ market prices. While restaurant prices may be lower for the producer accustomed to direct retail (like farmers’ market) prices, the cost of marketing to restaurants may be much less.

Justin Dean, CEO of Relish Restaurant Group in Cincinnati, Ohio, notes that a grower needs to value the time that they save when selling to a restaurant.

“You can sit under an umbrella at a farmers’ market and sell 100 pounds of tomatoes on a Saturday, or you can drop me 50 pounds of tomatoes and I’ll pay you a certain percentage (of farmers’ market prices),” Dean says. “It’s less than what you’ll get at the farmers’ market—but it’s one stop, it only takes 10 minutes to drop the product and get out the door.”

Negotiating a price involves having a frank and honest conversation with the chef or restaurant business manager. Before having that conversation, though, the producer needs to have some idea of how much it costs to produce the product. Your “cost of production” can be determined through a basic production budget estimate. While a cost of production estimate may be more difficult for certain products than others, even an idea of the approximate cost of production is crucial

information for you to have in mind when you begin negotiating price.

Brian Stout says that it’s critical to know how much the product costs you to produce, and to know how much the product is worth on the wholesale market. His family raises between 150 and 200 acres of produce, including organic apples, in Dowagiac, MI. He started selling direct to restaurants in the Chicago, Illinois, market in 2008.

“We sell a lot on the Benton Harbor Fruit Market, which is a massive wholesale market. We get on the market and see what the selling price of the market is, figure in fuel costs for getting it (to Chicago) and our time, and that’s what we stick with,” Stout says.

While not every grower may be able to price so competitively with wholesale prices, Stout says, his chef clients value his pricing strategy.

“They’re running a business. I’m running a business. Costs are everything. So we try to take care of them and they take real good care of us,” he says.

The price a chef is willing to pay may also be dependent on the type of restaurant he is running. Understanding the restaurant’s background and market is part of developing the business relationship with the restaurant.

For example, restaurants with more economical pricing points tend to be more sensitive to the prices they pay—but are often highly loyal and steady customers if favorable pricing points.

“With pricing, the relationship is not a one-time thing—that’s what needs to be

understood,” says Neal Gilder, owner of Arbor Ridge Vine & Grill, a two-year old restaurant near Louisville, Kentucky. “If you’re willing to sell me tomatoes at half or three-quarters of farmers’ market price, or whatever we agree to, I will buy tomatoes from you week in and week out for as long as your tomatoes are going to be in.”

Quality is also critical in pricing, especially for products that tend to be more expensive. Greg May, sous chef at Uncommon Ground in Chicago, Illinois, says a higher-priced product like herbs are a good example.

“I can’t afford to pay \$20, \$30, \$40 per pound of herbs just to have half the bunch go bad,” says May. “They have to be good quality.”

Producers marketing to restaurants with higher pricing points, however, may be able to command higher prices for premium. Commonly premiums range from 5-25% above the current wholesale market price; however retail prices are usually unrealistic to expect from restaurants.

“I have no problem paying top prices for locally grown,” says Marc Bodenstein, Executive Chef at Chalk in Cincinnati, Ohio. Bodenstein says he passes that cost on to his customers through smaller portion sizes at higher pricing points.

Restaurants also offer another aspect to pricing: the ability to purchase larger or

leftover quantities of product at “cash and carry” prices. Not only do chefs appreciate the value, many also savor the challenge of putting a bargain or bulk buy of local products to use.

“I had 500 pounds of peaches on my truck one time that I didn’t know what I was going to do with,” says Jody Hardin, the Arkansas farmer that has developed cooperative marketing networks for locally grown food in the Little Rock market. “Then a top restaurant client told me they would take it all. They put their whole staff to work processing and freezing the peaches to serve throughout the winter. They valued the local food that much.”

The key to successfully negotiating fair prices with any restaurant type seems to be the farmer’s willingness to build the relationship with the restaurant.

“It’s all about the relationship,” says Dean, Cincinnati, Ohio’s Relish Restaurant Group CEO and former chef. “It’s much easier to settle on a price if there’s an effort to get to know the chefs.”

Part of the pricing conversation should recognize the diversity of farm products. How much should you charge for sustainably grown Jerusalem artichokes? How much to charge per bunch of carrots or radishes? One chef offered a blanket statement that can guide pricing efforts for anything.

“We all just really want something priced by the pound,” he said.

Summary: Pricing

- Producers need to realize that selling to restaurants and other foodservice is a different market than the farmers' market and will involve a different pricing structure
- Knowing your approximate costs of production is critical to having a productive conversation about pricing with a new customer
- The conversation about pricing is just another part in the development of the business relationship with the restaurant or chef
- Different kinds of restaurants with different pricing points may be willing to pay different price levels for similar products
- Product quality is crucial in the price negotiation, especially for higher-priced products
- When in doubt, offer chefs a price per pound of product

Best Marketing Practices: Pricing

- ✓ I realize that I may not be able to charge a full "farmers' market" price when selling direct to a restaurant or foodservice customer
- ✓ I have estimated my costs of producing the products I will be offering to chefs
- ✓ I have estimated the cost of delivering the product to the restaurant and included it in the total product cost
- ✓ I have researched what prices chefs may be paying for wholesale products
- ✓ I understand why the chef might value my product more than wholesale products, and I have discussed the benefits of my product's quality, freshness, or locally-grown attributes with them
- ✓ I am prepared to quote a price per pound I would accept for my product

Supply

Chef Twillia Glover of Little Farm Catering in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, works so closely with local food growers that, when a wedding was booked for the following year, one grower made the appropriate adjustments at planting. “She planted two extra rows of broccoli rabe for me,” says Chef Glover.

Caterers may have enough advance time for a grower to anticipate precise volumes that will be needed to be supplied. For most restaurants and foodservice, however, accessing adequate and consistent supply volumes is an ongoing challenge for buying direct from farms.

“Volume is our biggest issue,” says Cait McClanahan, Sustainability Coordinator for Sodexo’s foodservice at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. McClanahan’s task is to increase the amount of local product in the 1800 meals that Sodexo’s foodservice unit serves at Berea each day. “We’re at 6-7% local (in 2009),” she says, “and volume availability is really the only thing holding us back from our goal of 10% local food at this point.”

Whether a large foodservice institution or a boutique caterer, foodservice operators cite supply volume as a common barrier to sourcing locally. Producers should realize that smaller volumes are not always the barrier; chefs are usually happy to deal with smaller volumes of local product if there is a stream of communication between the farm and the chef about what is available.

“We know we can’t source 100% local,” says Chef Scott Wallen, whose dining room seats 250 at Upstream in Charlotte,

North Carolina. “What we can do is ask, ‘What crops can you grow at this volume?’”

Both chefs and restaurant managers say that good communication from the farm to the chef is the critical element in solving supply issues. Good communication is required, even in the most perfect of chef-farmer relationships, says George Frangos, a restaurant operations specialist. Frangos cites his current project, Farm 255, a restaurant featuring exclusively local food in Athens, Georgia.

“Farm 255 has its own farm—Full Moon Farms, a separate business owned by the same owners of the restaurant,” says Frangos. “But even there, the farm operators might be letting the chefs know that they have A, B, and C available one week—and the chefs are asking for crops X, Y, and Z.”

Frangos says that constant, honest communication is the best solution for this dilemma. Jay Denham, who worked as an executive chef for a three-restaurant group before becoming involved in a local meat processing plant in Kentucky, says that starting communication long before the growing season, is key.

“I would sit down with farmers in January and go through seed catalogs. I knew what each farmer (grew) really well—so I knew I was getting lettuces from this person and tomatoes from that person...I just built really good relationships with all my farmers,” says Denham.

Some local food and sustainability groups in larger areas facilitate such farmer-chef meetings during the off-season. In Portland, Oregon, for example, a similar meeting draws over 250 farmers and chefs.

But the lack of such concentration or organized effort shouldn't keep producers from approaching chefs to explore future business possibilities.

"Chefs love to dream and talk about food," said one grower. "But you also have to remind them of those conversations, because chefs are really busy."

In the event that a producer can't deliver the quantity—or quality—than thought, it is crucial to let the restaurant know. In the event of crop failures, producers who unselfishly go the extra mile to provide promised product—even when they can't supply it—only strengthens their relationship with restaurants and chefs.

Producers will also benefit from providing regular updates to restaurants about their product availability. "I'm used to being able to go online and select the products that I want," says Mark Davis, director of purchasing for Sullivan University's culinary school in Lexington, Kentucky. "If I can do that for local product—all the better."

Even if a grower lacks interactive technology, direct email provides a way to let chefs know what's available. Chef Will Gilson (Cambridge, Massachusetts) pulled out his iPhone to illustrate the point.

"I get my email list sent to my mailbox on my phone, take a look at it, see what's good, call my sous chef if I'm not in the restaurant and say, 'here's the stuff we need, let's get it Thursday,'" Gilson says.

Chef Jeff Newman at Boone Tavern Inn says, "I've got this guy... that has been

one of my best guys. He got some like blight issues, just in the past few weeks. And he took it upon himself to contact other farmers and tell them, "Look, Boone Tavern, buys 200 pounds of tomatoes a week and I've got all this blight, so start giving them calls"...that meant so much to me, because he called and told me, "Some people should be calling you in the next few days."

Consistency of volume is not the only issue in supply; product quality is critical for restaurants, too. Most chefs understand that there are risks involved in producing food; their biggest concern is that producers be honest and timely about their products.

One trend that some restaurateurs noted is increased interest in being involved in the sourcing of products at the farm level. This is nothing new—many chefs use fresh herbs from their kitchen gardens. Other restaurants are located on a farm or are owned by the restaurateur.

But as larger restaurants and restaurant groups increase volume of local product needed, they are also entering into formal partnerships with farms. One chef was self-financing hoop houses that would extend the season for his product. Such formal or informal partnerships may present new opportunities for producers that have developed exceptional relationships with chefs.

"We have a great relationship with our farmers and so much respect for what they do," says Glover, the Rhode Island caterer. "We have fostered our relationships and it has paid off for everyone involved, but it does take extra work and commitment on both sides."

Summary: Supply

- Local growers should not consider the inability to supply large volumes a barrier to approaching restaurants. At the same time, they need to realize that there are volume levels and consistency that will be critical to maintaining restaurants as customers...plan accordingly
- The grower needs to take responsibility for the volume that they commit to supplying a chef. Providing exceptional service in the case of crop failures or other challenges helps strengthen the farmer-chef relationship
- Regular updates and availability/price lists are easily provided by email. Many chefs and managers also appreciate the ease of online ordering

Best Marketing Practices: Supply

- ✓ I understand and have approached possible chef clients before my crop is in to talk about my crop availability and their volume needs
- ✓ I have explained what varieties or types of products I offer, and have invited chefs into conversations about new product possibilities before the season
- ✓ I have a regular price and availability list available for restaurants
- ✓ I have identified my chef customers direct email, voicemail, or the best way to reach them directly
- ✓ I am exploring season extension and other production options that allow me to increase volume of products supplied

Delivery

Chef/Owner Billy McCullough of Dragonfly, a pan-Asian restaurant in Truckee, California, enjoys the privilege of being located in a state with year-round produce availability. But his mountain location in the Lake Tahoe area is also hard to get to.

“There’s a guy delivering more local (produce) with a truck that comes through now—but if he didn’t, we’d have more difficulty getting product,” says McCullough.

Whether a restaurant is located in the mountains near Lake Tahoe, in a downtown metropolitan area, or in a small rural town, getting your product to the restaurant regularly and on time is the critical customer service for farm-to-restaurant marketing.

David Rand says that he has seen chefs loading up 300 pounds of produce into a taxi cab from a farmers’ market in Chicago. “If a farm knows a certain chef is going to be their customer, delivery is key,” says Rand, Farm Forager for Chicago’s 25 city farmers’ markets and Green City Market in Lincoln Park, Chicago.

Restaurant kitchens are busy places, and chefs depend on regular deliveries from their purveyors. What combination of breakfast, lunch, or dinner the restaurant is serving often determines the best times for delivery.

“The best time for us is either in the morning before lunch or in the afternoon around 3 or 4, before dinner service,” says Chef Donnie Ferneau, whose Little Rock, Arkansas, restaurant serves lunch and dinner.

Mid-morning or mid-afternoon are typical times for chefs to expect deliveries.

For country clubs, catering services, and institutional foodservice, other times may be also ideal. Here again, communication is key. Simply ask when the chef, sous chef, or manager wants the product—and deliver the product you’ve promised at the time expected.

“I’m depending on my suppliers to deliver the product when they say they’re going to,” says Neal Gilder of Arbor Ridge Vine and Grill, Crestwood, Kentucky. “If they don’t show up on time, I may have to change my dinner menu—and if they’re always late, I’m not going to want to keep doing business with them.”

Remember that the time you’re spending in delivering product is a marketing cost associated with that product. It may not be worth your time to service one restaurant in a certain area—but if another restaurant can be added, or if the volume or product variety purchased may be increased, your time and cost may be justified.

Also remember that typical delivery times may not be the best time to conduct other business with restaurant clients—talking about future business or new products that you may offer. It never hurts to ask chefs if it is a good time to talk—and then to make a later appointment if the time is not right.

Finally, realize that offering delivery may be non-negotiable for expanding your clientele to restaurants not currently engaged in buying locally grown products. Several chefs from Little Rock, Arkansas, who were not currently using local product, say that delivery would be crucial for them to consider sourcing locally.

“I would be looking for an impeccable product brought right to my door,” says Chef George Desidario, director of foodservice for Dillard’s department stores corporate headquarters.

The head chef at a downtown Little Rock hotel restaurant agrees. “I would like to use local, but I don’t have time to come and get product,” they said.

Cultivating new clients in delivery areas new to your farm could pay off in the long run as you make regular, high-quality deliveries of produce to their kitchen door.

“I’m really glad that the truck is coming through regularly now,” says Chef McCullough of Dragonfly in California. “The fresher the product, the better.”

Summary: Delivery

- Find out what times are ideal for the restaurant or chefs to receive your product
- Always let the restaurant know as soon as possible if you will be unable to deliver a product on time, no matter what the reason
- If selling to chefs at a farmers’ market, be willing to investigate offering options for delivery before or after the market—chefs may even be willing to pay a small delivery fee for this service

Best Marketing Practices: Delivery

- ✓ I understand the cost in time and fuel, etc. that is involved with product delivery
- ✓ I am able to deliver my products to the restaurant’s door if necessary
- ✓ I have asked the chef or manager what days and times they want me to deliver
- ✓ I have an invoicing system that allows me to leave an invoice with each delivery
- ✓ I am willing to offer delivery services in new areas to gain new clients

Storage

Farm 255 restaurant in Athens, Georgia, was conceived on the basis of serving a regionally fresh menu. Farm 255's kitchen receives product from Full Moon Farms in Athens, an eight-acre biodynamic farm also owned by the restaurant's owners, as well as other regional farms.

As Farm 255's business matured, the restaurant remained faithful to its goal of "reconnecting food to its roots and people to their food," serving a local, seasonable menu nightly. But the owners also realized they needed to improve profitability from both the farm and the restaurant. So they hired George Frangos, a restaurant management operations consultant, to help improve the restaurant's financials and figure out how to use even more locally grown food—like meat from whole carcasses broken down in Farm 255's kitchen.

Frangos says that, for a restaurant to be committed to sourcing from local sources offering superior freshness, the restaurant has to be able to store that food.

"When we do break down a whole animal, we know we're going to be developing an inventory," says Frangos. "In the larger context of the business, coolers are not that expensive. You just have to be willing to make the investment to commit to the local product."

However, say other chefs who have invested in local product, the realities of a restaurant's space and kitchen don't always

allow them to expand their storage to accommodate larger amounts of product.

"I buy pretty much anything that local farmer's show up with at my door," says John Varanese, chef/owner of Varanese Restaurant in Louisville, Kentucky. "I wish I had space to handle a whole hog," Varanese says. "But I don't. I basically work in a kitchen that is a box."

What producers need to realize about restaurants is that space is usually at a premium. Kitchens are often crowded, and the space in a restaurant's walk-in cooler may be limited. These realities, however, should not keep a producer from starting the discussion about expanding their offerings to a new or existing restaurant customer.

"You may be able to work with the local (meat) processor to keep some meat hanging in their storage," says Frangos, the restaurant management consultant. "For other products, like produce, the more communication (on issues like quantity and delivery) between farmer and chef is better."

Producers with less perishable products may even be able to help chefs solve their own storage dilemmas.

"I'm storing my pork in freezers anyway for my farmers' market sales," says David Dedert, Quincy, Illinois. "It's no problem when I get the order from the chef to pop it in the cooler and deliver it that day."

Summary: Storage

- Restaurants usually have storage and space limitations created by the restaurant or kitchen layout
- Communication between farmer and chef helps to address potential storage challenges for a restaurant to handle farm-fresh product
- Frozen or less perishable products (potatoes, grains, etc) may provide a farm the opportunity to hold inventory for steady restaurant customers

Best Marketing Practices: Storage

- ✓ I know how much of my product a chef is able to comfortably handle in the kitchen's storage
- ✓ I am willing to help a chef come up with off-site storage options that can maintain my product's freshness, quality, and food safety if storage at the restaurant is an issue
- ✓ I have developed storage guidelines for my products and have educational materials available for customers that may be new or unfamiliar to handling my farm's products

Invoicing

Both chefs and successful farm-to-restaurant marketers will tell you that direct marketing to restaurants is all about building a relationship of mutual trust and product quality. But that doesn't mean that you can ignore good business basics—one of the most frequent concerns chefs had about buying local produce and meat was the difficulty many farm producers seem to have in providing clear, timely invoices and tracking the amount purchased by a restaurant.

“You have to have an invoice,” says Jody Hardin, a farmer from Grady, Arkansas, with 20 years experience selling direct to restaurants. “It's very important that farmers learn to approach chefs as businessman and present themselves professionally.”

A professional invoice doesn't have to be fancy—but it does have to be on paper, says Jeff Newman, Executive Chef at the Boone Tavern Restaurant in Berea, Kentucky.

“I want an 8 ½” x 11” piece of paper with the grower's name, address, phone number, the product, how much it weighed and how much it cost. That's it,” Newman says.

For David Dedert, a Quincy, Illinois, farmer who sells pork directly to a local country club, the invoice is even simpler.

“This is it—just the little invoice book I bought at Wal-Mart,” says Dedert. At every delivery, he provides the country club chef

with the smaller invoice, which is suitable for the country club's accounting department.

No matter what the invoice size, the invoice must meet the requirements of the restaurant's accounting system. This is especially important for country clubs, institutions, and corporate restaurants where checks may be issued monthly from a central location.

Producers and chefs across the country agree that farmers have to be able to track their invoices too. Whether carbon copies from an invoice book or a monthly computer statement, the producer needs to take responsibility for tracking what they've delivered.

“Inherently, you cannot trust restaurants and chefs to keep track of anything,” laughs Will Gilson, owner and executive chef of Garden at the Cellar in Cambridge, Massachusetts. “An invoice comes in...a busboy throws it in a pan that gets washed. You have no idea where it is. That kind of stuff happens regularly.”

Gilson and other chefs say that it's crucial for farmers to be able to provide them with a monthly statement, just as their wholesalers do.

“All my other vendors give me statements of their outstanding invoices,” says Gilson. “You should total your own invoices and be telling me.”

Summary: Invoicing

- Create a generic invoice with the farm's name, address, phone number, and other contact information. Leave space for product name, weight, and price
- Ask the chef, restaurant manager, or business manager what their requirements are for invoicing. Modify your generic invoice to fit the requirements of all your restaurant clients so you have a "one-size-fits-all" invoice
- Recognize that many restaurants will pay once monthly; determine how to keep track of how much you are owed by the restaurant

Best Marketing Practices: Invoicing

- ✓ I have a blank invoice form with my farm name, address, phone number, email address, and other contact information
- ✓ I have space on my invoice form to print the product name/description, weight or quantity, and price
- ✓ I have discussed invoicing with the chef or restaurant manager and have made sure that my invoice statement or system meets their requirements
- ✓ I am prepared to accept payment later than the time that I deliver the product to the restaurant
- ✓ I have a system in place to keep track of how much I am owed by individual restaurant customers

Insurance

Carrying product liability insurance is a reality for producers marketing to restaurants. The investment that you make in insurance helps protect both your farm's assets and the customers that are buying your product.

Product liability insurance is crucial for selling into retail and larger foodservice institutions. At Berea College in Kentucky, Sodexo foodservice required local growers to carry \$1 million product liability insurance—a cost to the producer of about \$200 per year. “Because of the volume that they’re selling to us at, growers don’t have any problem with that cost,” says Cait McClanahan of Sodexo.

Individual and smaller restaurants may not require their purveyors to carry insurance. “I’ve never had any of my chefs ask about insurance,” says Michigan’s Brian Stout, whose farm still has a full product liability policy in place.

That doesn’t mean that a grower should ignore having product liability insurance in place before approaching a restaurant—even if the chef doesn’t ask or assumes it is in place. Product liability insurance can also guarantee access to catering companies and other markets requiring insurance.

“We ask for a certificate of insurance—a million dollars,” says Robert

Beauregard, executive chef at Lundy’s Catering in Lexington, Kentucky. “That seems to be a pretty standard level.”

“I do ask (about insurance). But I’m a small restaurant, so it’s not as big a concern,” says Cincinnati’s Marc Bodenstein. “But as our restaurant group buys more local product, (insurance) becomes a bigger issue.”

Chefs often view insurance issues as being more critical for meat and processed products than fresh local produce. “With fresh produce, I can inspect it for freshness and quality and have a pretty good idea that it is what (the grower) says it is,” said one chef purchasing large amounts of local product. “But with meat and other products, I can’t trust myself to be as sure.”

If you don’t already carry product liability insurance, review your needs for direct marketing to restaurants with your existing insurance provider. You may also want to compare costs and coverage levels between different companies.

“Insurance is simply a cost you have to have to sell (to restaurants and institutions),” says Carl Chaney of Chaney’s Dairy Barn, who sells ice cream that he makes at his farm store outside Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Insurance: Summary

- Product liability insurance is an essential part of selling to restaurants
- Producers should make sure they are covered at a level appropriate for their restaurant clients

Best Marketing Practices: Insurance

- ✓ I have asked the restaurant or chef what level of product liability insurance they require
- ✓ I have added the necessary product liability insurance coverage for my farm
- ✓ I note that my product is insured in my marketing materials

Quality Assurance & Temperature Control

Temperature control varies by product and customer type when selling from the farm to the restaurant. You may be able to take chives in a cooler directly from your farm to the local country club—but that method may not meet an institution’s requirements (or generally accepted food safety practices) for purchasing ground beef. Maintaining the cold chain (a temperature-controlled supply chain) is crucial to delivering a quality product that will maintain product freshness and shelf life.

“We bought some (local) meat and there was a problem in figuring out how they were going to get it from their place to us,” says Mark Davis, director of purchasing at Sullivan University’s culinary school. “They said, ‘We don’t have a refrigerated truck’. Well, that created a time/temperature management problem.” The producer formulated a suitable delivery system for that purchase—but Davis says he still checked the product temperature upon arrival.

Temperature control, especially for meat and highly perishable or specialty produce crops, is crucial for food safety and product quality. For other products—such as herbs, leafy greens or berries—storage at proper

postharvest temperatures is crucial for ensuring the life of the product. Temperature control thus becomes a marketing tool for your products because extended product life is one of the selling points for locally grown fare.

“I know that when I get local mesclun mix, it is going to last so much longer in our cooler,” says André Poirot, Executive Chef at The Peabody Little Rock.

For products that chefs may be unfamiliar with, or that you know require particular handling to maximize quality, you may have to provide instructions for kitchen staff or chefs about proper handling. Proper temperature control helps ensure that your product arrives as good and fresh as you have grown or produced it.

“I don’t want just anybody handling my ice cream,” says Carl Chaney of Chaney’s Dairy Barn in Bowling Green, KY. “My ice cream is at 25 degrees below zero, and I want to keep it cold. If somebody gets the temperature up to 5 or 10 degrees and then they freeze it back—they’ve messed it up.”

Summary: Quality Assurance & Temperature Control

- Producers need to understand temperature requirements and safe handling practices for the products they are delivering
- Some institutions may require certain temperature protocols, and the grower must be able to meet those guidelines to deliver product
- Keeping products at the proper temperature is a marketing tool—proper temperatures ensure that the farm products remain at peak freshness and quality

Best Marketing Practices: Quality Assurance & Temperature Control

- ✓ I have discussed cold chain requirements for my products with the chef and/or other food handlers
- ✓ I have educated myself about safe food handling, proper temperatures and storage of the products that I will be marketing from my farm
- ✓ I am able to explain to my customers how my handling practices help to maximize the life and the quality of the products they will receive from my farm

Satisfaction Guarantee

In marketing directly to restaurants, you'll be competing with wholesalers that regularly make adjustments and credits when product quality was down. Guaranteeing the satisfaction of your product is critical to developing your farm's relationship with a chef.

"I like it when my vendor says, 'I guarantee that my mesclun mix will last in a container in the walk-in for one week without any sort of decomposition. If anything happens, let me know and I'll bring you some fresh mesclun,'" says Will Gilson of Garden at the Cellar in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Producers cite a variety of ways in which they "go the extra mile" to keep restaurant clients satisfied—making special deliveries, taking special orders, even finding extra product when their farm cannot supply a consistent customer.

"When my main local tomato supplier got blight, he was letting other growers around know that they needed to supply me with tomatoes," says Jeff Newman of Boone Tavern Inn in Berea, Kentucky, "and that meant so much to me."

Establishing the conversation and relationship with the chef up front, with clear communication about what a farm can and cannot deliver, is central to guaranteeing a chef's satisfaction says George Frangos, the management consultant working with Farm 255 and Full Moon Farms in Athens, Georgia.

"Sometimes you're not going to get a pristine case (of produce) from the farm," says Frangos. "You need to have an understanding

of what the product looks like or how it's going to be delivered. Communication about that has to happen from both farm and restaurant."

While such product appearance may not bother chefs with an established relationship with a farm, younger farmers or those new to selling directly to restaurants need to go the extra mile to present their product to restaurants—especially those in the upscale market, says Jody Hardin of Foodshed Farm in Grady, Arkansas.

"I feel like I go the extra mile (for chefs) almost every day," he says. "Sometimes it's just unbelievable what I have to do—and I'm sure it's not always the most profitable. But it builds those relationships and keeps the local food in the market."

Producers have to be willing to make reasonable adjustments, say chefs from around the country.

"I kept an open dialogue with all the farmers that started selling to me," said one southeastern chef, "and the ones that really listened to what I was asking for are the ones that I'm still doing business with."

Brian Stout, the Michigan farmer selling to restaurants at a farmers' market, notes there are other benefits to keeping his chef clients satisfied with his products and prices.

"We take care of them and they take care of us," he says, adding, "I've yet to go hungry at market!"

Summary: Satisfaction Guarantee

- Producers selling to restaurants should realize that food wholesalers regularly compensate for product failings, and should be willing to similarly compensate if necessary
- Establishing an understanding of how product will appear at delivery is crucial for the satisfaction of chefs and restaurant clients
- A producer should be willing to “go the extra mile”—but, as in any business, should not allow themselves to be subject to continued unreasonable demands

Best Marketing Practices: Satisfaction Guarantee

- ✓ I have explained to the restaurant how my product will be delivered and presented, and have heard any concerns that they have with my product
- ✓ I am working on a relationship with the chef that allows for honest dialogue about my product quality, and I am able to make production adjustments to improve final product quality if necessary
- ✓ I have other products or additional product to offer in the event that I need to compensate a restaurant client for poor quality in one area

Working Cooperatively

Chef Shane Henderson had a difficult time sourcing farm-fresh food at his position at one of Arkansas' largest catering companies. His interest in local food led him to Argenta Market, a startup grocery in North Little Rock sourcing food from across the state. Argenta Market will sell direct to retail, as well as direct to Arkansas restaurants. To accomplish that, however, requires some coordination.

“Having a farm that sells 20 dozen eggs a week doesn't really help when you might have a thousand possible customers,” says Henderson. “Plus it's not worth someone's time to drive two hours to deliver 20 dozen eggs here to Little Rock. So we've set up groups around the state where there are five or six farms with 20 dozen eggs coming together so that we can go and pick up 120, 150 dozen eggs at one time and fill larger orders from chefs.”

Delivery is critical to developing a restaurant or foodservice clientele. For smaller farmers, cultivating delivery networks and systems that get food from the farm to the restaurant is crucial.

“Delivery is the panacea,” says Nat Henton. Henton should know--he's not only the sous chef at Holly Hill Inn, a Kentucky restaurant with a locally-grown menu, but he's also a farmer producing beef, shrimp, and vegetables for Holly Hill Inn and other restaurants.

“The key for increasing sales to restaurants is to have somebody who knows what they're doing to be in charge of handling the product,” says Henton. “Then the amount of food sourced locally can increase.”

The chefs interviewed cited a variety of models for cooperative delivery. Some had

growers that had informal partnerships, where one grower delivers another grower's product along with their own. Others experienced more organized distribution systems, where a centralized grower-broker distributed product for multiple growers.

Like Henderson, Jay Denham also decided to become part of the solution to the problem he saw as a chef. He's involved in a new slaughterhouse that will process poultry, pork and beef from a 100-mile radius.

“One reason that I got involved in this—I saw a real need for protein and getting it to the markets easier,” Denham says.

Some restaurants or institutions with generous storage space have been willing to serve as “depots” for local product as informal networks for cooperation develop among farms and restaurants. Other chefs are solving the challenge from their own kitchens, or through buying efforts by their restaurant's ownership. Marc Bodenstein and Justin Dean, employees of Relish Restaurant Group in Cincinnati, Ohio, say they will be moving toward more contractual agreements with growers as their group increases volume purchased locally.

Be sure to have clear guidelines if engaging in cooperative delivery. One chef had heard that their restaurant's competitors had received a delivery that they were expecting to receive that week, and that wasn't a positive thing for the relationship with the farm.

Jeff Newman, chef at Boone Tavern in Berea, Kentucky, sums up how delivery of any kind fits into a restaurant's needs.

“It’s real simple: I need availability, I need a decent price, and I need you to deliver products to my restaurant,” says Newman.

Successful direct-to-restaurant marketers figure out how to get their product there through any number of transportation channels. Again, communication is critical.

Summary: Working Cooperatively

- Formal and informal transportation and distribution networks can help get farm products into the restaurant kitchen
- Farms should be sure that their products are being delivered as promised
- Some restaurants and chefs are taking their own steps toward cooperative delivery or group buying

Best Marketing Practices: Working Cooperatively

- ✓ I am aware of other growers that may be looking for ways to get their products to restaurants and have started conversations about cooperating in delivery
- ✓ I have the ability to ensure that my product is delivered as promised if I am not personally delivering it to the restaurant
- ✓ I am building good relationships with my restaurant customers so that, if deliveries are delayed or mixed up, we can have an honest conversation about their concerns

Marketing- An ongoing process

Gourmet magazine had been a fixture of fine food and dining since the 1940s. But in October, 2009, Condé Nast publications announced that they were shutting down *Gourmet*. The problem? A 50% drop in advertising revenues—even as broader food industry trends embraced many of the “good food” principles, including locally grown food, that *Gourmet* had championed for decades. Even with a circulation of nearly a million, the magazine’s main source of revenue came from its advertisers—and a tight economy had slashed their willingness to advertise.

You would be hard-pressed to find a chef that, all other things equal, would not prefer using local or farm-fresh products. Like the readers of *Gourmet*, chefs value the attributes of food grown responsibly by local producers. However, most restaurants are in a business that generates revenue from all kinds of customers, including those that may be outside the “foodie” or “local foods” movement.

Even chefs totally committed to sourcing food from the farm deal with the pressure of serving a clientele that may not value the food as much as the foodservice professional. “90% of my customers don’t care where the food is from as long as it is the quality they expect at my prices,” said one chef.

While farmers and farm marketing specialists are still working on discovering the value that customers place on buying and eating locally, growers should realize that, while most chefs understand the benefits that locally grown food can offer—especially from quality and sustainability perspectives—chefs are also in a business serving people that are

often looking for food values—especially chefs in smaller markets or smaller restaurants.

Chef Will Gilson of Cambridge, Massachusetts, describes the balancing act that smaller, high volume restaurants face in marketing locally grown fare.

“It’s tough,” says Gilson. “Sometimes we don’t even tell people (the story behind the food), because it’s almost better just to serve them something that sounds catchy to them and not have to go through the whole story. I would rather tell the story, but I don’t always have a captive audience in my dining room. I might have somebody who’s in a hurry and they just want a sandwich.”

“It might be a Cuban sandwich with a locally raised pig that’s been braised into briolettes—great, they’re eating a locally raised pig, but they’re also helping me because they’re eating a scrap part of it that’s been braised off. They don’t know that, and they might not have time to hear the story of the local pig.”

In addition to varying customer types and markets, restaurants also face the seasonality and fluctuation of locally grown food when developing marketing materials like menus, websites, and advertising. Many restaurants prefer to use generic terms when describing where the food is from.

“I know that I’ll be able to source products like local tomatoes, but I don’t always know what farm they’re coming from in a given week,” says Scott Wallen, Executive Chef at Upstream in Charlotte, North Carolina. “So we just use a generic term like “local” on our menus rather than mention the particular farm.”

Smaller restaurants, especially those catering more exclusively to the local food concept, may choose to communicate more specifically with their customers.

“We have the ability to print new menus every day if we want,” says Marc Bodenstein of Chalk in Cincinnati, Ohio. “It allows us to be specific about the food we’re serving that day.”

For his clientele, Bodenstein is using communication through the restaurant’s website. “Our general manager is also trying to Twitter, whatever that is,” he laughs. His website also features individual farms. If restaurants showcase farms in this way, it is beneficial to have a website for the farm.

Michael Mitchell, Executive Chef at Spring Lake Country Club in Quincy, Illinois, says direct print communication of any kind is ideal. He lets members know about local pork featured for Friday evening specials using weekly direct emails.

“I mention the farm name and the product we’re featuring in the email,” Mitchell says. “That goes to all 400 of our members. I also try to mention what we’re doing with local farms in our monthly newsletter.”

At some restaurants, chefs and managers have invited their farmer-purveyors in to visit with patrons on days that certain farm products are being featured. Another popular method across the country for connecting farms to customers has been food events outside of the restaurants—including those on the farm or at the farmers’ market. For example, in September 2009, Green City Market in Chicago, Illinois, featured several local chefs at “Melon Fest,” highlighting the market’s 17 varieties of melons available.

Events such as this outside the restaurant help synergize the connection between customers and their food—whether purchased on the plate at the restaurant or in the peel at the market.

If a farm is interested in developing a broader market for its products—for example, a beekeeper that wishes to develop a greater market for local honey—it may wish to coordinate with the restaurant for farm-specific product mentions. Patrons may be interested in purchasing locally produced or value added products, like preserves and honey, which the restaurant uses in entrees and desserts. Some restaurants may even offer these products for sale at checkout.

Farms can also help restaurants and chefs communicate information about the food they serve by providing farm-level descriptions and “stories” of where the food is coming from, as well as photographs to display. Farms maintaining their own websites can direct chefs or restaurant managers to their website for information to communicate to patrons. Simple brochures or similar materials may also be developed describing the farm and its products and practices. Many state departments of agriculture have generic materials available that highlight local produce. Some of these materials may even be incorporated or included with a farm’s pricing list.

Finally, producers should realize that chefs often face the challenge of creating a culture among their staff also valuing local food. George Frangos, a restaurant operations consultant that worked with Farm 255 restaurant in Athens, Georgia, recommends that farms invite not only the chefs but the restaurant’s entire wait staff out to the farm to see where the food is coming from.

“It’s easier for the staff to be enthusiastic about highlighting locally grown specials if they’ve actually been to the farm where the food was raised,” says Frangos.

Producers that keep open communication channels about their production while offering chefs creative and

useful suggestions for marketing locally-grown foods can help grow their farm’s market potential. In turn, that will help both farms and restaurants avoid the fate of *Gourmet* magazine: not translating an enthusiastic subscriber base into profitability.

Summary: Marketing – An Ongoing Process

- The farmer should understand who a restaurant’s customers are when offering suggestions for marketing materials to a chef or manager
- Mention of a farm’s name on a menu may be tied to how frequently a menu is printed.
- Direct communication with customers (email, website, special boards, etc.) is the most likely way a farm name may be mentioned through the restaurant
- Special events (food festivals, on-farm dinners, farmer visits in restaurants) seem to be popular with chefs and effective in creating connections in customer minds
- Simple marketing materials (brochures, websites) that tell a farm’s story may be used by restaurants in marketing a farm’s food
- Hosting the chef and restaurant staff on a farm visit helps create a connection and makes it easier for the staff to enthusiastically pitch locally grown products

Best Marketing Practices

- ✓ I understand what kind of customer typically eats at the restaurant I would like to sell to
- ✓ I know that it may not always be possible for the restaurant to mention my products by name in their communication
- ✓ I have simple, clear print materials (business card, brochure or website) that provide information that a restaurant could use to tell the story of my product
- ✓ I am aware of what kinds of promotional materials are available through sources like my state department of agriculture, grower association, or other third-parties
- ✓ I am willing to host the chefs and their staff to my farm for an on-farm visit
- ✓ I am open to being involved in events like food festivals, in-restaurant visits, and on-farm dinners that some chefs may be enthusiastic about participating in

Local Products for Local Markets

To sell locally what is produced locally makes sense and seems so simple. Yet, convenience and the low cost of transporting products across the country oftentimes “local” is deemed “too expensive.” Through the new interest in “local,” Kentucky producers and farm vendors now have the ability to sell within their local markets. A few of the recurring themes from this project were: communication, cooperation and responsibility.

Communicate! Just call or email, let your buyer know what you have or will soon have, quantity and price. Join forces with other farm vendors, come together as a **cooperative** group. Share in delivering costs, purchase packaging materials in bulk, and stand together. Sell integrity each time you sell product. Take 100% **responsibility** for it and be open to hearing questions and concerns from your buyers—this will strengthen your relationship too.

Best Marketing Practices: Local Products for Local Markets

- ✓ I am prepared to communicate with my buyer on a regular basis and know the best way to contact them
- ✓ I know what resources the Kentucky Department of Agriculture has available for Kentucky Proud and Restaurant Rewards
- ✓ I am prepared to cooperate with other local growers in order to aggregate inventory, and to coordinate storage or delivery
- ✓ I will take 100% responsibility for the integrity, quality and safety of my products

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