

# FIRST TIME VENDOR

## HANDOUT 2

### WHAT BEGINNING MARKET VENDORS NEED TO KNOW

#### TINY DONUTS BRING BIG SUCCESS

Travis and Erika Osurman moved from Hawaii to Cedar Falls to be closer to family. At the same time, they were looking for a way to channel their shared entrepreneurial spirit. Inspired by Portland's donut shops and coffee scene, they decided to open a farmers market stand serving li'ilili (Hawaiian for "tiny") donuts and craft coffee. At the Waterloo Farmers Market vendor meeting, Travis found the communal vendor atmosphere he was looking for. He paid the market dues, then dove into figuring out the expenses for all the needed equipment—from donut presses to a handwashing station. After six months of testing donut recipes and around nine calls to the health department to identify licensing needs, Li'ilili Donuts opened up for business selling made-to-order donuts and pour-over craft coffee from local roasteries. As a beginning market vendor, Travis says two of the most valuable resources were the Small Business Center at UNI and the farmers market manager. While doing his own research and homework got Li'ilili Donuts in a good position for the market, those resources accelerated progress and gave Travis and Erika confidence and support.



“I DID A LOT OF READING AND RESEARCH THROUGH HEALTH DEPARTMENT WEBSITES—BOTH STATE AND COUNTY—SO I COULD LEARN THE REGULATIONS AND MAKE SURE I HAD ALL MY BASES COVERED. THAT'S WHEN I STARTED MAKING PHONE CALLS, ABOUT A WEEK AFTER SIGNING UP AND PAYING DUES.”

- TRAVIS OSURMAN,  
LI'ILI'I DONUTS

#### WHAT MARKET MANAGERS WANT YOU TO KNOW:



#### Research the Farmers Market

What's the best way to get a feel for a farmers market you're looking to become a vendor at? Go! While there, scope out the vendors and check out their booths. What do their stalls look like? What are they selling? Are they friendly? Keep your eyes open for any gaps in products sold at the farmers market. Could you fill those gaps?

Also, be sure to stop and talk with the market manager about what it takes to become a vendor at the market. Every market is different and one set of rules may not apply to all markets (for example: local vs craft vs produce-only).

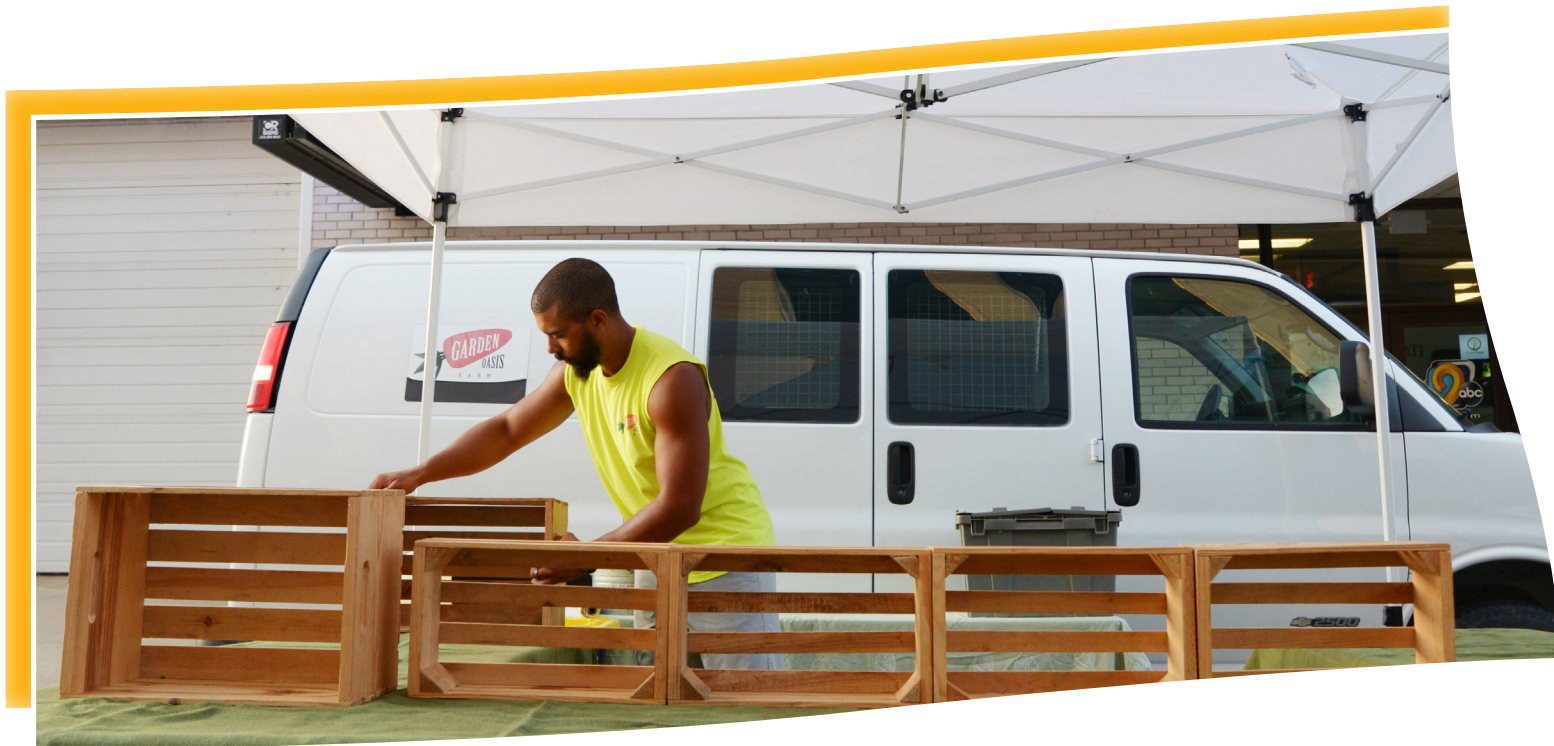
#### Know Your Strengths

Being a farmers market vendor is no cakewalk. It takes a time commitment (as markets usually happen every week) and an outgoing personality. Selling at the farmers market can be a fun, exciting, and profitable venture if you enjoy meeting new people and talking about your business.

# TIPS FOR MARKET SUCCESS

## FROM EXPERIENCED VENDORS

ADVICE  
FROM VENDORS:



### 1) Bring Extra Product

"Just because someone else has the same thing doesn't mean you can't bring it. There are always niches in the market! Also, your stand has to look full, so bring twice as much product as you think you'd sell. Set your prices based on what you need—not on what you're seeing set by vendors around you."

- Emma Johnson, Buffalo Ridge Orchard

### 2) Nice Looking Stand = More \$\$\$

"I wish I'd went to a larger market earlier on because I learned so much. You can increase your sales for a small amount of money by making the stand look nicer. For around \$150, I bought a few wood crates—and a nicer table cloth helped me look more professional. It is true that if you bring more you'll sell more."

- T.D. Holub, Garden Oasis Farm

### ✓ FARMERS MARKET PREP CHECKLIST

Table	Calculator
Shelter (tent, umbrella, etc.)	Bags (plastic/reusable)
Shelter Weights	Display Items
Tablecloths	Garbage Bag or Bin
Cash Box (with change)	Proof of Insurance
Product or Merchandise	Chair
Product Signage	Comfortable Shoes
Farm Signage	Helpers
Scale (if required)	Tape and Scissors
Water and Snacks (for yourself)	Good Attitude and Smile
Water and Spray Bottle	Extra Pens/Markers

### 3) Engage Your Customers

"I would tell my pre-vendor self that doing a farmers market is just as much a place to sell veggies as it is a place to connect with people. Some people aren't going to know what the romanesco or beauty heart radishes are. Be sure to engage with people so they leave the stand excited to try a new veggie!"

- Whitney Brewer, Grade A Gardens

### 4) Honesty and Authenticity

"Never cheat by trying to re-sell produce purchased at an auction or elsewhere. Many vendors have done this. Other vendors always find out and share the news—hurting both the market and the vendors in the end. Customers buy from a farmers market because they want to know their farmer and how the food was grown. Be honest and don't undercut prices of vendors. Charge a fair price for you and everyone."

- Shelley Squier, Squier Squash & Donnelly Farm

Contact  
Information

NORTHEAST IOWA RC&D  
101 East Greene Street  
Postville, IA 52162  
Tel. (563) 864-7112

IOWA VALLEY RC&D  
920 48th Ave  
Amana, IA 52203  
Tel. (319) 622-3264



This work is supported by the Farmers Market Promotion Program from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

