



Summer 2020 Newsletter

The New York Small Scale Food Processors Association (NYSSFPA) was formed to represent and inform all small-scale food processors. The organization's workshops educate by mentoring, teaching marketing, connecting farmers and processors for value-added production, and guiding food-entrepreneurs in the use of current approved processing practices.

NYSSFPA is composed of the following officers and committees:

President: Kathrine Gregory

Treasurer: OPEN position

Secretary: Deb Krajcik

Communication Committee: Ashley Rossi (Chair), Deb Krajcik, Andrew Dufresne, Kathrine Gregory, Beth Linskey, Nicole Borukhov

Education Committee: Alicia Lührssen-Zombek (Chair), Maria Grimaldi, Stephen Hadcock, Kimberly LaMendola

Membership Committee: Bob Bleistein (Chair)

Newsletter edits and design by: Bhavna Punjwani, Kathrine Gregory

SmallScaleNY@gmail.com

Have a question?

Need some info?

Email us and you will receive a response from one of our board members within 72 hours (remember we are all volunteers and running a business also)

Please add this email address to your contact list to receive our Quarterly Newsletters

Bi-Weekly E-blasts with Time Sensitive Information

CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS? OR EMAIL?

Please remember to let us know so that you don't miss receiving important information.

Send us an email with the update to

SmallScaleNY@gmail.com

President's message

I heard these words from the Brooklyn Borough President as he answered the question:

What do you think we will look like if many of the small businesses don't open?

"We are going to lose a little part of ourselves, a little bit of our soul. What makes each city/town/village special are the small businesses, each unique, based on heritage and the experiences of different immigrants. These entrepreneurs have taken risks, been creative and built their business; it is to be hoped that they will find the creativity to reboot in a slightly different manner. But when we come back, in true NY fashion, with grit and persistence, we will shape this place to be the special place it is."

We are entering a new phase-the "new normal". Re-opening will be anything but business as it was before...get ready to wear a mask all thru the summer! But entrepreneurs are up to the challenge of recreating and pivoting; we did it once and we will do it again.

As we retool, use the information presented in the following pages to help you formulate your plan of action. Take advantage of the free webinars being offered from so many organizations, via our eblasts. Do not be afraid to listen to new ideas from wherever they may come. We are in the business of feeding people, with passion and with quality products; a restaurateur may have an interesting viewpoint or simple solution: if you like it...try it!

Each of our board members has their area of expertise and they are sharing their knowledge to help you change; to adapt to a different way of doing business. They are sharing the concepts that they have tried (successful and unsuccessful) so that you can create your own roadmap to success. The next phase may be where we do things so that our customers will be safer, but the trend is still growing for artisanal products made with quality and love.

Be safe, wash your hands often & most of all, be positive!!

Kathrine

Kathrine Gregory *President, NYSSFPA*

GETTING CREATIVE WITH BUSINESS MODELS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Ask yourselves a few questions-

where are your customers now?
 what do they want to eat?
 how can I reach them?



Let's take a minute to understand your customer (relate it to ourselves and neighbors). There is a fear that we will all be forced to stay indoors for another month. The information coming from various platforms (print; television, internet) is confusing; unfortunately, it is incomplete and many times, it is inaccurate! Will we forever have to sanitize our cereal boxes (by the way, the latest update is no, you do not)?

As we enter the different phases, we will see more movement but probably not as much as before, a lot of people will still be staying at home, venturing out for specific needed items.

****Your customers will plan to find everything in one or two stores, saving on time and interaction. How can you reach them? The internet and social media are life savers. Shopping carts on your website or delivery platforms are another way to get your product into their hands. Drop-off locations with symbiotic shops- saving your customer the shipping fee. What about your website- do you have recipes on creative (fun) ways of using your product to make their life easier? What about the verbiage on your website or product label? Does it say enough, but not too much?**

****Are they tired of the same food, the same spices, the same way of making something? I am sure they are. I know I am. Can your product help them cook their dinner easier, with unusual tastes, making them feel happy about doing something different?**

****How can you reach...? Driving all over the place to drop off a box or two of your products to their doorstep is a waste of your time -you are not Amazon with its 2- hour delivery window. Why not collaborate with a small store in each neighborhood or area? Ask them if they would be the designated pick-up point for your pre-paid products. This may be a financial transaction where you pay the store a fee for every box. They might appreciate scheduled pick-up times with new customers. Here you want to think of independent stationary stores, chemists, florists where an impulse purchase is not unusual, and you are not cannibalizing their inventory. In return for them being a pickup location you would publicize the store and some of their great items on your website.**

At the Entrepreneur Space we are looking for unusual outlets of sales generation for the foodpreneurs.

1) We partnered with the Queens Borough President's (QBP) office to get meals delivered to the hospitals. The QBP looked at her budget and found some money to pay Queens caterers and restaurants to prepare packaged meals for 'hospital runs'. To date we have done over 20 'runs' to different Queens hospitals. Each caterer was paid for their efforts with a fixed price per meal. The Entrepreneur Space gave the foodpreneur free kitchen space and the QBP paid the Entrepreneur Space a subsidized rate for the kitchen shift and paid the entrepreneurs for their food, hence providing them with revenue.

2) We created a delivery service (which was NOT successful) for our immediate area. I think we had a few issues we didn't consider-lack of publicity about the delivery service; not enough of our clients participated; we combined immediate consumption with shelf stable confusing the consumer. We also only thought we would be doing this concept for a month or two, so we didn't plan long term. It was a way to generate immediate sales and keep our staff working. The one good part was there was no delivery fee unlike other delivery platforms.

3) We are currently creating an 'artisan gourmet box' concept filled with only shelf-stable products delivered to the home. We are working out all the operational details and to get approximately 35-40 of the Entrepreneur Space clients participating so we will have a wide range of products for the consumer to consider. How they order?; how the pay?; and when it will be delivered?; are all the operational issues we need to iron out. But the basic issue is collaboration which is going to be especially important in our New-Normal.

Alicia Luhrssen-Zombek

Education Committee Chair, NYSSFPA



ONLINE MARKETING -AN EMERGING NEW ROLE FOR FOOD ENTREPRENEURS

The current pandemic has disrupted businesses around the world. One of the many unforeseen ramifications during this time has been missed opportunities for connection and routine communication between food entrepreneurs and consumers. For many, the reliable in-person connections ceased entirely, markets closed, and selling outlets severed completely. Taking on new approaches has led businesses to seek online interaction.

Where to Start Connecting Virtually

Social Media has potential benefits in linking the narrative of your food business to many people in various creative ways. It is a source of feedback and a tool for market analysis. All of this is ingested instantly. Lastly, the web of connectivity is projected further than both market and brick and mortar.

There are Essential Impacts on Getting your Product(s) Visible

First, tell your story. Secondly, be yourself, reveal you are human. Finally, here is an opportunity to give back while reaping the benefits of getting more. Promote exclusive sales and the latest outlets of distribution will pique your audiences' interest and investment.

Where to Start

Not all consumers are identical. Insight into purchase behavior is very crucial for not only branding your product but also looking for the best overall connection to your audience. By reviewing the Global Web Index (<https://www.globalwebindex.com/>), currently, Baby Boomers have a stronghold on Facebook but there has been a current increase in Instagram/WhatsApp from both Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. Millennials nevertheless hold firm to both platforms. The essential point is trying to expand the spotlight without overwhelming one of the many caps worn. When advancing in marketing within social media, a platform such as Hootsuite, which unites multi-channels, would be a great management tool for keeping track of several platforms at once.

Diving in

It is challenging to feel comfortable when starting. The initial pressure will be to continue to keep posting. This can feel overwhelming and exhausting. I'm here to remind you to take your time. Start slow but with anything you do, please start. Current followers will be excited to see your fresh activity. Supporters will want you to be successful and showing your human side will connect them to the direct source of the product's story.

Beyond Social Media

Markets in New York are taking a precautionary process in opening their doors to consumers. Community interaction during markets has been dramatically disconnected. Safe social distancing is creating quicker trips to stores where your product may be sold and overlooked. Finally, and unfortunately, doors of many retail businesses may not open again. Many food entrepreneurs are pursuing e-commerce platforms to sell their products. Shopify, Square Online, Wix, Squarespace, Big Commerce, Barn to Door, Local Food Marketplace, What's Good, Lightspeed, WooCommerce (connected to WordPress), etc, are all just a few of the top online point of sales platforms. Here is where you can highlight your entire inventory for sale and directly market to the consumer with the excitement of purchases of products.

Getting the Viewers Drooling for Your Product

Once you take the first steps to join others online, the next step is making your media viewers, your consumers. Images can help tell your story. They can excite and assist the consumer to take the next step and purchase your products. Programs such as Canva, Recite, Over, Photovisi, etc. are just a few handy applications to assist in bringing your photos and information up to the next level. Most are free to start. While these programs can bring the message one step closer, good quality photos are imperative.

An Image Can Speak a Thousand Words

As a food brand, your content needs to be visual. Be consistent in telling your story. Is your product in "action/use"? Who is using it and how? Is the image clear and crisp? Try to avoid making the viewer turn their head, squint their eyes. Good resolution equals good quality...this goes a long way.

The Composition Highlights

Use the "Rule of Thirds". It's a fail-safe rule for making sure your images look great. By framing four important parts of your image as focal points of interest will entice the viewer to connect the two-dimensional image as "realistic". Highlight your main focus and make sure light is distributed evenly without any harsh angles. The best light is sometimes a cloudy day outside.

Start Small

Find a plan for your online business and marketing to fit your capabilities and your needs. The most important key out of this entire article is to find a plan and a platform that you can build with comfortability overtime.

Ashley Rossi, *Communication Committee Chair, NYSSFPA*

WHY A GOURMET FOOD STORE CHOSE TO SELL ON ETSY

Red Kill Mountain Homestead Farms, LLC, was launched in the fall of 2019. We are an apple business, so we very much feel the pressure of seasonality. We started the business knowing that 2019 would be our “test” or “beta” year. We set some small and achievable goals so that we could enter the 2020 apple season with production targets and much more strategically.



One of the big decisions we had to make was regarding our online presence. Having had experience working with e-commerce in a previous company, I truly understood the time and commitment required to create a custom website. This was several years ago, before the expansion of website building and hosting platforms like Squarespace and Wix. Fast forward to today, I knew I wanted to stay “light” and not spend a ton on creating that online presence. A friend and colleague suggested Etsy and at first I wasn’t sure if it would be a good fit. Etsy is more of a “maker-space,” I thought, for artists making material goods. After searching Etsy, I discovered there are actually many makers of small food products. To be clear, I do not know and I am not able to validate that all of the food products have a HAACCP plan or are made in a commercial space with a scheduled process. Some of the vendors may or may not have home licenses. Needless to say, you should not be selling without the proper licenses, online or in person!

I was excited. Etsy seemed to have it all, and now that our store has been open for almost a full year, I can attest that it was a great way to get started with an online store.

Here’s why:

1. It’s inexpensive to get started. It costs 20 cents per listing to host a listing.
2. The “back-end” of Etsy is easy and intuitive.
3. It’s easy to upload photos of your products right from your phone and they look great.
4. The messaging system with your customers is quick and easy to understand.
5. You can purchase shipping labels right from Etsy for USPS and print them out. This does take some time to set up your shipping requirements but this is totally worth it.
6. Your customers can easily leave reviews for your products. Etsy attracts discerning shoppers that seek out hand-made, small batch items.
7. Etsy searches will show up in google, meaning that if someone searches for “sugar free apple sauce,” my apple sauce can potentially show up in their google search and link to my Etsy store.
8. Your store is totally customizable, including your biography and a description of your business. You can link your social media and update photos and really curate your Etsy shop.

Obviously, there is nothing better than a custom-built website that you create with a designer you trust and know. But for many of us small business owners, especially with the uncertainty lingering in the air these days, Etsy is a great way to get your products online for a reasonable price with little to no risk. Please reach out if there are any more questions you have about getting started! I am just a phone call or email away.

Nicole Borukhov, *Communication Committee, NYSSFPA*

HOW TASTE NY IS TAKING PRECAUTIONS IN COVID-19 IN LI

Taste NY at the Long Island Welcome Center is an essential business that has remained operational during the New York State PAUSE executive order that was put in place in March of 2020. We continue to take precautions to ensure that all employees and customers are practicing social distancing recommendations while shopping for grocery essentials such as local milk, meats, cheeses, eggs, and pantry staples. Dedicated Taste NY employees wear appropriate face coverings and sanitize self-check-out fast lanes and surfaces in between customers.



Our management team has been consistently communicating with vendors to better understand their needs during this crisis and to showcase the ways they have been supporting their communities. Many have been donating products to frontline workers, offering discounts, or partnering with local agencies to express their gratitude. We are incredibly proud to have such dedicated, community-minded vendors who have gone above and beyond in this time of need.

Taste NY at the Long Island Welcome Center has been increasing social media presence, specifically on Facebook, to educate consumers and potential customers about products, vendors, and local initiatives throughout the region. We have also been highlighting virtual shopping opportunities to connect consumers with direct access to high-quality, local products through <https://shoptasteny.com/> and individual vendor sites with online ordering capabilities.

As of March 2, 2020, we have three road signs displaying the Taste NY logo on the Long Island Expressway, the first time we have had signage since our inception in 2016. This will provide additional recognition for travelers passing through the area, especially as weather improves and the public resumes traveling. We do currently offer themed and customizable gift baskets, highlighting a variety of New York products at different price points. As restrictions ease, we anticipate further developing this area of business to include hostess gifts, refrigerated bags for chilled and frozen products, and more.

If you have a locally made product and would like to explore becoming a Taste NY vendor, please reach out to LiTasteNY@cornell.edu.

Stephen Hadcock, *Education Committee, NYSSFPA*

RESOURCES OFFERED BY CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Cornell and Cornell Cooperative Extension's response has been to supply pertinent and timely information to farmers and small-scale food processors as it becomes available. A few Extension Educators across the state have been assisting direct market businesses to learn about and start using online marketing channels.



The Institute for Food Safety has compiled a "Frequently Asked Questions" for food manufacturers. It can be found here <https://instituteforfoodsafety.cornell.edu/coronavirus-covid-19/food-industry-resources/food-industry-faqs/>

Cornell Ag Workforce Development website provides assistance for agricultural businesses to prepare their business safety plan <https://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/ny-forward-business-safety-plan/>. While the examples are for production agriculture, a small scale food processor may find the considerations and references of help.

The Institute for Food Safety has a Good Manufacturing Practices online course. A link for the course can be found here <https://instituteforfoodsafety.cornell.edu/trainings/good-manufacturing-practices-registration/>. While small-scale food processors may not need to comply with these regulations, the online course does provide a solid foundation.

Kimberly LaMendola, Education Committee, NYSSFPA

SELLING YOUR PRODUCTS AT FARMERS MARKETS DURING COVID-19



Farmers markets were declared as essential businesses in New York State's first delineation of vital businesses authorized to maintain operations throughout the evolving public health crisis. But as people working in the business of growing or making food, we knew that already, right? What you also already know is that the way we sell our products at NYS farmers markets has radically changed to accommodate the public health protocols established to stop the community transmission of the virus and to protect personal health and safety to the extent that is preventable. Customers love and support their favorite farmers markets and vendors for so many reasons, especially for the ability to interact directly with the farmer or producer, to hand-pick the freshest veggies or just the right jar of kimchi, and also to linger while socializing with other market shoppers. Farmers markets build community, farmers markets generate vital revenue and economic impacts, and farmers markets help strengthen a community's food access and food security indicators. But many of those beloved elements of a farmers markets are on hold for the near-term, leaving vendors and market managers to find creative ways to stay connected with customers, to maintain sales and revenue levels, and to operate as seamlessly as possible to meet loyal customers' expectations and sales retention.

Early indicators from markets that operated throughout the height of the pandemic and from those that had early season startup indicate that there was a lag in sales and customer counts compared to same weeks of previous years. It's not surprising since, as consumers of things ourselves, most of us have also changed our purchasing patterns, possibly shifting more to online buying to reduce exposure to crowds, frequent touch point surfaces, and adherence to social distancing and wearing of masks. Markets are showing incredible resiliency in their operating protocols and offering a variety of ways for customers to continue their loyalty shopping, from pre-order and curbside contactless pickup, ticketed timed shopping slots to fully drive-through setup and curated online vendor marketplaces. Some of these new options are easier than others for customers to shift to, but customers are pretty loyal to their favorite farmers market, and more current indicators show that some markets are experiencing an increase in sales despite changes in market setup or models. No matter where you might fall on the continuum of farmers market sales patterns this year, there are a few strategies to consider that could stabilize or enhance food business income.

Communication: Getting your message of "open for business" throughout the community is more important than ever. Market operators and vendors should be working in tandem to do marketing pushes on all media platforms with messaging and branding that is consistent, clear to understand, and assuring to the customer that their favorite vendors and market still can meet their shopping needs. More importantly, clearly communicate the market's public safety protocols so that customers can come prepared for a pleasant market experience. For vendors who don't have a stand-alone social media presence: get on social media, like Facebook, now and use it. Social media is where most shoppers turn first for updates on market operations and vendor status, but don't rely on your market's social media to feature your business. Establish a social media presence (or hire someone to do it) and connect with existing and potential customers in an affordable, effective, and broad reaching approach. If you have a website, make sure your social media feeds are seamlessly connected, that your web content is current, and that customers can easily find your critical contact info. If you have captured your farmers market customers' emails or phone numbers, consider using an e-mail marketing program like MailChimp or text messaging software (known as SMS marketing software) to communicate with your customers in real time about items you will have at the market, items that you are short on, the market protocols, or how they can purchase from you on non-market days.

Diversification: The pandemic has exposed many vulnerable functions in food systems resulting in some food shortages in grocery and other food retail channels. Farmers markets and local food producers are experiencing an uptick in demand for local food but may also experience a tipping point toward scarcity of product if conventional supply and value chains lag in stabilizing. An increased demand for local food is a good "problem" to have, but if your only market channel is farmers markets, you should consider diversifying to add other outlets to capture the fullest customer base and develop high levels of customer satisfaction. If you are running out of inventory at the weekly market but have available stock during the week, consider other points of sale to augment your weekly market appearance. Consider adding your own online ordering option either through your social media page or your website. As a bonus to your local online customers, you could add contactless home delivery. There are many user-friendly, affordable, and customizable online farm food software programs with all the bells and whistles that are familiar to how customers are shopping for all sorts of online items.

Continued on the next page...

FARMERS MARKETS DURING COVID-19 CONT'

Most of the time, any subscription or payment processing fees are more than reasonable for the additional sales captured. When thinking about diversifying your sales channels, you need to make sure you are aligning with how many customers are now shopping for everything: online, home delivery, themed meal kits, contactless delivery and pickup. If you grow or make products throughout the seasonal calendar and there's still time to plan your fall/winter crops or food production outputs, consider starting a pre-pay CSA program so that customers have the assurance that there will be food available to them later in the year and you will have upfront income from prepayment or payment plans.

Farmers markets will remain as a primary venue for customers to purchase from local farm and food producers, as vibrant agricultural market places featuring New York State grown and made food products, as places where consumers can use their nutrition benefits to purchase nutritious food options, and especially as places where the community fabric is woven and strengthened. All of these attributes and more are especially important during our pandemic times, and market operators and vendors are innovating ways to seamlessly deliver the farmers market experience for shoppers and sales potential for vendors...ala social distancing style.

Beth Linskey, *Communication Committee, NYSSFPA*

HOW A GOURMET FARMERS MARKET PIVOTED DURING COVID-19

Currently, I am involved with Fulton Stall Market, a non profit 501c3 Farmers Market in the Seaport District in NYC. What we had to decide when Covid-19 hit all of us was: were we an ESSENTIAL BUSINESS? The answer is yes.

Our market promotes farmer and producers products on a consignment system. We also have a CSA (food box or Community Supported Agriculture) and it was ready to start its Spring 12-week plan. Everything was in place so we decided to go forward with the plan. It was good for the farmers who had committed to us and the 47 consumers who had already paid for their shares. This CSA was definitely essential to our clients because you may remember the grocery stores were having inventory issues at the start of the pandemic. Our offerings are not only vegetables and fruits but beef, pork, fish, eggs, mushrooms, heat-and-serve meals as well as pasta, soup and cheese. We had the 'essentials'.

During operation however, we had some issues that needed addressing:

How could we best serve the community?

Who would staff the shop?

How would the supply chain work?

We decided to keep the store open and work closely with the farmers and vendors to supply the CSA.

Our two main managers and one employee had to work from home. Also one employee, the CSA coordinator, was sheltering in place in Oakland, CA as she continued to work. We hired 3 new people, trained them quickly, and set up the in shop protocol. We are open 6 days a week, not the usual 7 and the CSA expanded to 70 people. We are not the most savvy crew on Instagram, so it was not utilized effectively at first. But our numbers grew and people found us and bought butter, eggs and homemade bread. We also had milk, which many of the local stores did not.

Supply chain was shaky at first, but our farmers and meat people made delivery work and we depended heavily on the Union Square Greenmarket for supplies- we always do but with the new health protocols, there was a learning curve.

Our staff got the hand washing sink and protocol established, and the store was reconfigured so no one could walk around. Since most of our CSA members are community members who shopped at the store, they were aware of what we had besides the CSA offerings and our sales increased.

Fulton Stall Market has a full 20c kitchen so our Chef Paul who usually makes soups and sandwiches for the lunch crowd pivoted and now makes homemade bread regularly as well as ice cream, cookies and heat-and-serve items.

We have 2 people working at a time, only one customer is allowed into the shop at a time, and you have to wear a mask and wash your hands. The menu for our heat-and-serve is on our website daily. We do some Instagram but not faithfully. There are so many other channels we could be using but we do not have the bandwidth: no ordering online, no delivery service, no shipping. There are just so many things a small shop can do.

On June 21st, we will start our Summer CSA, and we will have more offerings. We hope the demand continues to draw more community members to 91 South Street. We offer consistently excellent products from farmers, fishers, and NY based vendors. Come visit our shop Monday through Saturday from 11:30 to 5. Become a CSA member if you can pick up on Thursdays or Fridays. Visit our website www.fultonstallmarket.org.

