



## Summer, 2019 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: Maria Grimaldi

Secretary: Deb Krajcik

Communication Committee: Deb Krajcik, Andrew Dufresne, Kathrine Gregory, Beth Linskey

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

Membership Committee: Bob Bleistein (Chair)

Newsletter edits and design by: Bhavna Punjwani, Kathrine Gregory

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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

*"If you don't sell you don't have a business"*

*"An entrepreneur is someone who has the ability to create an appetite in those who are not hungry"*

*This issue is filled with practical tips to help you sell. Each of our board members has taken a specific focus, and with their expertise, have given you some things to do to increase revenue. Now is the time to prepare for the holiday season, which starts in late September. You may have the most delicious product, but how do you convince someone to buy?*

*Selling is hard; as new foodpreneurs, we don't believe in our product and the price we need to charge. Get rid of that belief! Your product is artisanal, high quality, special, delicious, hand crafted and many more wonderful traits. Make sure that you convey that to your customer (the general public or a store owner). You know you make a wonderful product so remember to project that to the person buying it.*

Good Fortune

Kathrine



Crazy Mike's Jerky  
at NOFA 2019



Board Meeting  
at NOFA 2019

## The Essentials of Setting up a Booth in a Market:

Your Business card. Is it current in all categories, correct business name and contact information? True scenario: A business card picked up at a fundraiser was a franchises invitation to visit their local store for a sample. The card gave no clue as to store location, phone number or web contact. Do not let this be you. An effective business card has your business name, your name and current contact information.

2) Your Sell sheet: Housed in an 8 ½ X 11 plastic display frame. The header matches the name on your business card and shows how to contact your business. It lists your products with their prices. Having this piece enables you to pay closer attention to your customer without the constant interruption "How much is this?"

3) Your Product: As a business person, it is your job to know everything there is to know about it. While you cannot anticipate every question you may receive make a list of questions with answers you gave to friends and neighbors.

4) The Big Day: Business cards, sell sheet, product, tablecloth, calculator, bags, paper towels, receipts, pens, lunch, a fanny pack or money belt. Never, ever put your money in an old box then walk away from your table even for a moment. Keep your money and essentials such as car keys on your person at all times. Enjoy the show.



**Deb Krajcik**  
**Secretary, NYSSFPA**

## Creating Your Sell Sheets

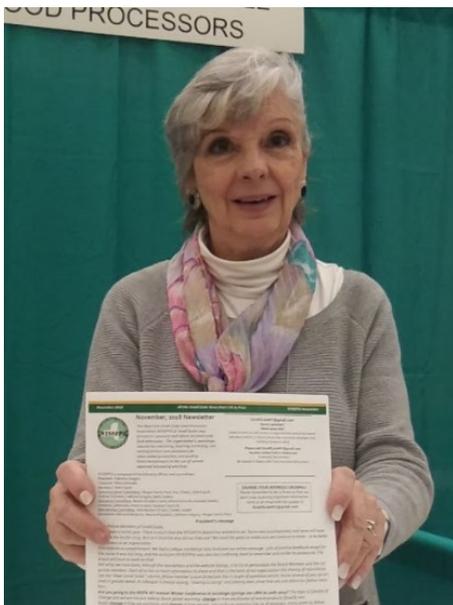
### SELL-SELL-SELL

In order to sell, you need to be prepared. Your price needs be calculated so that you make a profit on each unit sold. Have you done your recipe pricing chart? If you need a blank worksheet; please email me at MiKitchen1866@aol.com.

Do you know the words that will convince the customer the price is a fair value for the high quality of your product? If you can describe the value (special features) of your product, they will pay the needed price. Twenty years ago, would you have paid \$3+ for a cup of coffee? Starbucks educated the consumer, describing the value and uniqueness and now you are willing to pay their price.

Sell sheets are a necessity if you are going to sell wholesale. Selling retail (direct to the consumer at markets or online) is fine, but to build additional revenue you need to sell wholesale. Gourmet stores, high end grocery stores and so many other places are looking for artisan products especially locally manufactured. For that you need a sell sheet which will list your products with pictures, case count and the wholesale price of the case.

Remember the store owner is buying a minimum of a case and they need to mark it up to make a profit. Please remember to include your contact information and the unique selling points of your product.



**Kathrine Gregory**  
**President, NYSSFPA**

## FEATURED ARTICLE

### Selling at Farmers Markets: Tips to Maximize Your Sales Potential

**By Kimberly LaMendola, NY Sustainable Agriculture Working Group**

Farmers markets remain in high-demand by customers seeking to buy fresh local food and specialty value-added food products directly from the people who produced those items. Whether you are an experienced farmers market vendor, who has name recognition and a legacy stall location, or are an emerging direct-to-consumer seller, testing the farmers market sales waters, there are several simple strategies that could help you maximize your farmers market sales potential:

#### Find a Market that Fits

Just like a good-fitting pair of jeans, some farmers markets might be a better fit than others for your products, values, and expected total sales. Know what your expectations are and then shop for a market that fits. Visit the potential markets over several weeks and at different times in the market day, to glean a perspective of the mix of existing vendors, customer traffic flows, items that appear to be flying off the tables, and to gauge the level of market management presence. Talk with the market manager, ask for a copy of the vendor application, and discuss the market's rules and governance. You will want to be assured that management has clearly defined rules and disciplinary actions that protect vendors and maintain a consistent ethos for the market. As a potential vendor who could attract a new and diversified customer base for the market, you have the potential to benefit the market's operating entity and other vendors, but you'll want to make sure that the market's governance and mission are aligned with your expectations. Many markets are struggling to recruit the diversity of fresh and value-added food vendors that customers want, so if your products fill a desired niche for the market, you might be able to leverage an introductory new vendor fee package without having to commit to vending for the entire season; if the market fits, you can always commit to more weeks.

Looks Do Matter...at least your booth's looks matter!

You will attract more customers to stop at your booth and linger longer with tables that have been cleverly merchandised, are clean and not cluttered, and have items clearly labeled and priced. Use a variety of colorful table coverings or swags, baskets and tiered shelves to place items at different heights, ground displays for larger items, booth banners or draping for the tent legs. As customers walk past market booths, there is generally a window of just several seconds from the time they spot your booth to the time their brain tells them to stop at your space, so you will want to take the extra time to create a unique and engaging look to your booth. Remember the saying that we eat with our eyes first? The same applies to your food vending space at a farmers market: if it doesn't look appealing or clean, the customers won't stop. Don't forget to prominently display your farm or business name, a tag line if you have one (ie: Growing for generations in our community), and primary contact info (website, social media icon, phone, etc.) in a large font, preferably on a banner that spans the back of your booth, as the first step in establishing your unique brand and identity with your customers.



**Kimberly LaMendola; Education Committee, NYSSFPA**

## FEATURED ARTICLE Cont'd

### Lean In

To borrow a trending term from the traditional business world, lean in broadly connotes taking opportunities as they arise, even if they are out of your comfort level. Even if you've found the good fit farmers market and your booth merchandising is a customer magnet, your sales figures expand the more you directly engage with your customers: believe it or not, vendors still report that talking with customers is their area of greatest discomfort and ill ease. Many market shoppers are there to learn more about how their food was grown or made and place a premium value on building relationships with the farmer or producer and even expect to have conversation with fine vendor folks. Don't be afraid to initiate conversation (even a simple "hello" works as people pass by your booth), make comfortable direct eye contact, and stay engaged with your customer during conversation. Not comfortable initiating small talk or even big talk? Lean in with your customer and punt a question to them, like "Tell me what items you want to see more of at the market," and then lean in some more as you actively listen to what they tell you. Active listening can help you identify potential opportunities for your own business model or product development, and what customer wouldn't want to continue to support your business when they see how proactively you understood what they had communicated to you. A simple open-ended question to a customer could provide you with a glimpse of your next best product!

Build community and, of course, be nice to your competitors. Farmers markets really are one of the first business incubators for farm and food entrepreneurs, allowing for the experience to hone direct-to-consumer sales methods, merchandising strategies, customer relations, logistics and handling, and more. But markets are also excellent environments to build a community around a shared value (i.e.: fresh is best) or a food trend or culture (i.e.: locally sourced ingredients, craft beverages, etc.), or among producers (i.e.: alliance of local maple producers). Regardless of the unifying theme, customers recognize collegiality as quickly as they identify competitive divisiveness and tend to support those business that support each other. The saying, a rising tide lifts all boats, holds true in the farm and food marketplace: businesses offering similar products will tend to capture more customer spending when it's evident that there's mutual support among the businesses. Don't be fearful that you might be one of three raw cheese vendors on market day, be fearful of losing customer spending over the long term with an appearance of divide competitiveness with your vendor raw cheese producers. Demonstrate to the customers the collegiality by not hesitating to cross promote your peers' products, directing customers to another vendor if you don't make a particular item, and lifting all of the boats of the raw cheese producers because customers will support all of your businesses with a higher percentage of their weekly farmers market budget. Also, lean in to your peer farmers and producers with an authentic interest in sharing best practices, building quality into everyone's products, collaborating on thematic promotions or development of new products, and product influencers among your customer base.

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## Communicating Your Message to Your Customers

What do you feel is important to say or do to connect with customers? Is it how good and tasty your product tastes? How it is made and where it is made? While communicating these facts to customers is important, an entrepreneur needs to go further. Traveling around and looking at displays, etc., this is the usual messaging strategy food entrepreneurs use. Yet, how can you distinguish yourself from every other salsa maker (for example) that uses the same strategy?

What is important for you to convey in your customer messaging is a way to develop trust and a way customers feel connected to you. What customers are most interested in is what values you have for your business and bring to every product you produce. Research has shown that values your customer share with you are 3-5x more important in building trust than sharing facts or demonstrating technical skills/expertise.

To help you think more about the values that are important for your business, I would suggest watching this Simon Sinek video <https://youtu.be/7dAaWweraQ4> where he explains "The Golden Circle." Using this method of how to look at your business can help you greatly on how you wish to communicate your message to your customers.



**Stephen Hadcock**  
**Education Committee,**  
**NYSSFPA**

## Gearing Up for Seasonal Sales



**Alicia Lührssen-Zombek**  
**Education Committee,**  
**NYSSFPA**

As our summer winds down after a challenging northeast growing season, the scents of apple cider and pumpkin pie start to fill the air around us. The idea of wearing a sweater becomes enticing. We are tiptoeing into the Holiday Day season and before you know it, we will be smack in the middle of many celebrations with family and friends.

This is the time to review your plan on managing seasonal sales fluctuations making sure you start off with a "big bang". These sales can assist in making up for some of the shortfall and lackluster sales you may have run into during a prior part of the year while for many, this fourth quarter may be extremely important to your overall year profitability. This is why focusing on your marketing plan, who your competitors are and having clear, efficient and succinct communication plans with your current and new consumers will help with the struggles of the ebb and flow of the holiday season.

Here is your chance to try and leverage new ways to drive sales. Try new ways to communicate, build new audiences and possibly collaborate with another non-competitive small scale processor to gain a bump of new clientele. Additionally, collaborating may also mean more avenues to sell your item and more spotlight that otherwise you weren't aware of.

Whatever your push is during this season, document your progress to adjust future sales. All lessons learned will not go wasted.

For more information in recipe to market assistance, building inventory, seasonal sales plan, marketing strategy and juggling producer/value-added entrepreneurship, please contact Alicia Lührssen-Zombek at [aml439@cornell.edu](mailto:aml439@cornell.edu)

## Finding and Keeping Your Markets

As an organization of small-scale food processors, we often focus on production and meeting the ever-increasing regulations of safe food processing required by the FDA.

However, when I advise and mentor NYSSFPA members, I begin by asking the question, "Once you produce it...how are you getting rid of it?" In fact, when writing a business plan, the scary details of starting a business, it is the end of the process which is addressed first. Where and who is your market?



***Maria Grimaldi; Treasurer, NYSSFPA***

We know that specialty stores and now big box stores carry a wide selection of gourmet packaged food items. Can a small-scale food processor count on breaking into such a market? The short answer in most cases is NO. Finding suitable retail outlets that will carry relatively small batches of an artisan product requires foot work and personal visits. A Google search of retailers close enough to warrant a personal visit with samples for tasting can be a good beginning. Often retailers are willing to allow a tasting event at their establishment with a share of the profit of any items sold that day. Another avenue of introducing your product is to test its appeal through direct sales. Farmers markets traditionally have provided producers with an inexpensive marketing tool. Taste NY stores operated by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets also provide exposure of regionally produced items. These stores are designed to appeal to tourists traveling through New York and are located along major highways that bisect vacation destinations, in airports, and in train stations. Once your product is purchased at a wholesale price and is delivered to the retailer, the job of pricing and selling is out of your hands. If you are a person who does not enjoy dealing directly with a customer, wholesaling may be the best marketing route for you to choose. This leaves you time to focus on production, packaging and the business of pricing for profitability.

Pricing of artisan products for wholesale can be challenging. You must be convinced that your product can compete in the market. What will set your product apart and what makes it special and worth the "extra" dollar (or two) to the consumer? Often it is the label and packaging that can tell the story of your company. Health and environmental concerns are popular, such as organic, non-GMO, and pasture raised when listing ingredients. These labels are being used, perhaps now overused, throughout the food industry. More effective for small scale producers is a few lines on the history of the product. A good example is NYSSFPA member Red Kill Mountain's introduction of Apple Molasses. The label tells us that for generations the centuries old traditional production of apple molasses was used as a primary method of preserving and extending the value of the apple season. The label further instructs the purchaser on how to use apple molasses as a glaze, and as a natural sweetener in place of sugar in everything from oatmeal to cocktails! The ingredient list contains one item, wild apple cider. Production costs for this product are not inexpensive; apple molasses must conform to food safety regulations and must be produced using a scheduled process in an Agriculture and Markets inspected kitchen. Ashley Rossi, the producer of Red Kill Mountain's Apple Molasses says she is "sticking to direct marketing for now to ensure profitability for this unique item as the ticket price for 10 oz. bottle is about \$8.00." Ashley tells me that presently there is no room for wholesaling below that cost.

Many retailers, food editors, media personalities, chefs and food distributors visit farmers markets to discover unique and creative approaches to food. Designing and maintaining an informative and creative website may also be used not only to inform but to sell directly to consumers. I highly recommend direct marketing as a beginning to understanding the challenges of retail selling.

## **Don't be so fast! Take your time before your hire someone**

Hiring staff can be a daunting job, especially hiring your first employee! But perhaps there are ways to make this slightly easier. The following are ways to help:

- 1) Just because you need someone .... can you even afford to hire someone? Besides paying this person, do you have enough money to pay this person and wait until more sales or more customers come in. Also, how much are you willing to pay someone? what is the frequency of payroll (once a week, at the end of a shift, every other week)? These questions are good ones to float with your accountant.
- 2) Write a job description of what this new person would be doing. You need to be very clear and know what you expect them to do. Get into as much detail as you can because the more you understand this role and your expectations, the better the hire. Then prepare your interview questions from your notes. Remember to keep your questions broad since open ended questions will give the candidate a chance to express more freely.
- 3) After you figure out pay and job description, figure out how much time you will need to train. Don't just give them a phone, or paper and pen and wish them luck, but show them EXACTLY how to do it and then do it again to make sure they truly understand. Then, have them do the task to ensure they do it your way.
- 4) You are now ready to find someone. But how do you find someone who is good enough to be working for you? The best way to start is by asking people you know if they know of someone who can do this job. Talk to people when you are at your local market, kitchen, or the bank. Word of mouth, just like getting new customers usually is the best way to go. After that then go to a local Facebook page, hang a sign or post jobs online. There are always good solid people looking for jobs, sometimes you just have to ask.



**Bob Bleistein, Membership  
Chair, NYSSFPA**