

Farmers Market gearing up for May 23 reopening

Safety protocols, new online portal, mark additions in response to COVID-19

May 15, 2020 — Niagara's bounty will soon be back on the table, literally and figuratively.

After weeks of closure in response to the spread of COVID-19, the St. Catharines Farmers Market is preparing to open its doors to the public, albeit with a different look and feel, alongside a laundry list of safety protocols to ensure the health of both vendors and patrons. The market will return Saturday, May 23, from 8 a.m. to noon.

"Our patrons have been looking forward to this day for a while now, and our vendors have been counting on it as well," said Community and Market Coordinator Deanna Chakarova. She was quick to note the market won't have its normal social feel as patrons will be asked to move through without their typical chat with vendors.

"Things will be a little different, you won't be able to pickup and inspect your produce to find just the right pick, but the market will once again be open, serving up the best Niagara has to offer."

Chakarova said guests can expect the full range of produce, meats, cheeses, wines and baked goods they have come to love at the market, in addition to newly-introduced safety measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"We know everyone missed the market, but the closure was necessary to ensure that shoppers and vendors can conduct their business safely," said Chakarova, adding the City has been cooperating with Niagara Region Public Health alongside Farmers Markets Ontario to ensure best practices as the market reopens its doors.

Newly-introduced requirements and safety actions for customers include:

- Self-assessment for COVID-19 exposure and symptoms
- Admittance of only one customer at a time, pairs or groups are asked to have only one individual enter the market
- No more than 16 customers being admitted to the market at any given time
- Requiring of customers to sanitize their hands before entry
- All customers and vendors must wear a face mask or covering due to limitations on other typical preventative measures such as sneeze guards. Wrapped scarves, bandanas, surgical masks and face shields will all be considered acceptable face coverings

- No handling or sampling of food will be permitted; vendors will set up a display table to showcase their products but sale items will be stored behind the table for completion of customer orders
- Maintaining a safe physical separation of two metres from other shoppers, including in the entry line
- Distancing and traffic-flow lines will be clearly marked outside and inside the market
- Reusable bags will not be permitted for the time being

Based on stipulations set out by the Province of Ontario, only farmers and vendors selling food items will be featured during the State of Emergency. Vendors selling beauty supplies, flowers, crafts and other non-food-chain products will not be featured. Even with these limitations patrons can expect 20 vendors on site May 23.

Vendors will also face a host of new restrictions and protocols to help limit the spread of COVID-19, including:

- Mandatory use of face masks
- Preferred use of electronic payments, cash payments will require a second individual whose sole duty will be handling of cash
- Maintaining a two-metre separation when possible with patrons and fellow vendors who do not reside in their household
- Prepackaging of products when possible
- Frequent hand washing / sanitization
- Self-assessment for COVID-19 exposure and symptoms

Moving forward the St. Catharines Farmers Market will run on a limited schedule, on Saturdays only from 8 a.m. to noon. A list of vendors participating in the market during COVID-19 restrictions can be found at www.stcatharines.ca/COVID19.

As part of the reopening the market will introduce a new online shopping portal, a feature that will continue even after COVID-19 restrictions ease. Those who still have a hankering for fresh meats, veggies, fruits, cheese and more, but might not yet be ready to physically enter the market, can head over to www.openfoodnetwork.ca/st-catharines-farmers-market/shop to fill up their virtual shopping cart with an array of items from all the vendors they would normally find at the market. From there they simply place their order and it will be prepared for pickup at the market the following Saturday.

-30-

Contact:
Brienne Wilson
Community and Events Supervisor



News Release

bwilson@stcatharines.ca