



Go loco for local

Farmers' markets offer **fresh produce** and more BY BRIT MOTT



ARE YOU CRAVING A MEAL bursting with flavor? Champions of farmers' markets say locally grown fruits and vegetables are fresher and tastier than produce that travels from great distances to the supermarket.

Vegetables purchased at the supermarket, in many cases, have spent days or weeks in transit and more time in the produce aisle. Studies have shown that over time, vitamins and minerals leach out, whereas produce purchased soon after harvest delivers maximum nutrients.

Fostering local food production reduces our carbon footprint, too, by decreasing emissions associated with transporting food across the country. So, going local is going green.

The Department of Agriculture estimated that the number of farmers' markets has increased 70 percent in the last 10 years, from 2,746 in 1998 to 4,685 in 2008. Foodies are discovering a world of flavors, textures, and nutrition at their local farmers' markets.



*With gold-rimmed glasses and a smile that shines brighter, 76-year-old **Alfred Machala** works part-time at the farmer's market once owned by his late sister Georgia.*

Georgia's Farmer's Market

Drive along 15th Street in downtown Plano in the spring, and the flowers outside of Georgia's are bursting with color just as much as the produce inside is bursting with flavor.

Owners **Vick and Carmela Woolsey** have

been in the produce business for more than 30 years and obtain their crop from the Dallas Farmer's Market. They say that local produce is fresher than produce at a grocery store. "When customers eat our produce, we've got them hooked," said Vick, "because it is all so much more flavorful."

If it's not on Georgia's shelf, it's probably not in season. "That's the advantage with us," said Vick. "We go to market every day, seven days a week, to see what's fresh."



*Bee pollen is the "number one hot item in the store," said **Carmela Woolsey**.*

Vick and Carmela buy on demand, whereas grocery stores buy by the pallet, and must turn over that pallet before purchasing more. "But if, for example, our blueberries turn bad," said Carmela, "we don't sell them."

Instead, they put the produce in an organic bin for the City of Plano to pick up and turn into fertilizer. "We recycle everything," said Vick. "We



Georgia's Farmer's Market in old downtown Plano.

Profile photos

recycle our cardboard boxes and reuse our strawberry and blueberry baskets. We care for the environment.”

Aside from the produce, the most popular item at Georgia’s is their honey and honey bee pollen. Local pollen has been proven to rid allergies. Small doses of it stimulates one’s immune system to produce antibodies that eliminate allergies.

In addition, Georgia’s offers gourmet coffee, handmade candies, nuts, and trail mixes, as well as jellies, sauces, and relishes. The market also sells cheese from Mozzarella Company in Dallas, and chips and tortillas from Cardona’s in Fort Worth.

“Everything we buy we get from the source of supply,” said Vick. “We skip the middleman, so everything tastes good. That’s what everybody tells us.”

Georgia’s is open March 1–December 24, Monday–Saturday, from 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m., and Sundays from 10 a.m.–5 p.m. In the summer, it opens at 8 a.m.



Frisco Farmer’s Market

Not as “ripe” to the Collin County scene, but abundant with fresh produce, the **Frisco’s Farmer’s Market** is in its third year. Organized by the Frisco Noon Lions Club, the market sits in front of city hall at the corner of Frisco Square and Coleman boulevards.

Farmer and vendor Keith Copp helped plant the seeds to yield Frisco’s first farmer’s market. The owner of Copp Family Producers grows 40 acres of squash, zucchini, tomatoes, and

lettuce on his farm in

Ponder. Farming allows his three children and their friends to earn money for their education.



Said Copp, “We’ll work about seven or eight kids each summer and they usually make enough money to go to college.”

According to the farmer, agriculture is responsible for one in seven jobs in Texas. He’s owned his company for seven years but has been in farming his whole life. “I’ve always had dirt in my blood,” he said.

Copp agreed that local produce bears more nutrients. “When [mass marketers] transport produce, they have to gas it for color, then take it to a packing place before it goes to the grocery store. The shelf life has to be weeks, which kills a lot of the nutrients.”

Not only does the Frisco Farmer’s Market include home-grown fruits and vegetables, but it also sells grass-fed meats, gulf shrimp and seafood, Alaskan salmon, fresh pasta and gourmet sauces, and honey. The market sells handmade jewelry, custom embroidery, custom glass, and designer flip flops, too.

Brandy Griffin, president of the Frisco Noon Lions Club and secretary of the Frisco Farmer’s Market, said, “A farmer’s market is a beautiful thing. There are real people, real food, and delightful products.”

The market is open on Saturdays from 8 a.m.–2 p.m., May 2–September 19. Visit friscofarmersmarket.org.



Fairview Farms Marketplace

Just off of the northeast corner of Hwy. 75 at Parker Road, **Fairview Farms Marketplace** features stalls of



Georgia’s Farmer’s Market co-owners **Carmela and Vick Woolsey**.

savory selections. Operated by the Haggard family since 1990, the market sells fruits, vegetables, and nuts from Texas farms. Its most popular items are watermelon, tomatoes, strawberries, and pumpkins. The market also sells plants.

“We have been fortunate to have loyal customers keep us in business



Dublin Dr Pepper chocolate cake mix is another popular find at Georgia’s.

every year,” said **Alysen Cramer**, event coordinator for Fairview Farms. “Most of our customers enjoy being able to take a break from the Dallas traffic by stopping in on their way home from work. It’s a quick and easy way to pick up those pesky few ingredients that always seem to be missing.”

Fairview Farms Marketplace opens May 9 at 8 a.m. Call 972.422.2500 or visit fairview-farms.com. ■