

# "Basically" Farming



Helpful hints for new and existing farmers

PENNSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences  
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## What Retail Produce Marketing Is About!

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The incentive to be a retail marketer is obvious. The closer you can get to retail customers, the more retail dollars go in your pocket instead of the middleman.

If you want to sell retail, you have to provide services the wholesalers, packagers, distributors and retailers provide.

This article reviews some of the key details of operating a direct-to-the-consumer produce marketing enterprise.

### Visual Display

Fresh produce is responsible for creating the image of a store. Proper presentation of products increases sales. Shoppers receive a positive impression if products are top quality, clean, and tastefully displayed.

Remember that high-quality products are the strength of produce markets.

A lively, well-stocked produce department entices the customer to buy and increases sales and profits. Think of yourself as an artist, with several palettes of colors to choose from: visual (color, contrast, shape, size), smell (herbs, fruits), and touch (soft or firm).

Make displays that look like they came from the farm. Wooden crates or boxes work well. Baskets are beautiful; slant them toward the customer.

Even an attractive tablecloth can add to your sales. Stair-stepped displays create an array of depth, color and texture; however, they may not be easy for the

customer to reach or easy to restock.

Utilize vertical space by hanging products from slings or hangers.

### Merchandising

"Pile it high and kiss it goodbye!"

Full, well-stocked displays make customers want to come and get it. Customers don't like taking the last of something from a bare, picked-over display; they want the best.

A cornucopia of produce conveys abundance, prosperity, and quality. Never overstock, however, to prevent the risk of crushing tender items on the bottom.

For most products, avoid piling them higher than six or eight inches — they might bruise or tumble. Avoid steep pyramid displays, for instance, where products continuously roll off the top.

Stock fully, but not so picture perfect that customers hesitate to disrupt the display by removing produce. Removing one or two may even help customers start buying.

Make it easy for the customers to reach for the produce. Your display should be no more than an arm's reach in depth, and between knee- or waist-level and eye-level in height. Don't put your merchandise on the ground.

Instead of placing your boxes flat, try slanting your produce to give the customer a more pleasing visual sense of your product.

Organize products in related groupings. Such groups might include dessert items, salad items, cooking vegetables, apples and pears, etc. Displaying compatible products together serves as a suggestion for additional purchases and uses of the products.

Place high demand items in strategic locations throughout the market. Large displays attract attention, so use bulk displays to generate sales, especially for high-volume seasonal crops such as apples or corn.

Use color and texture to enhance eye appeal. People enjoy food with their senses, so displays must be eye- and sense-appealing. Mix a row of radishes between the mustard and kale, tomatoes between the lettuce and cukes, or intersperse peaches with blueberries to create dazzling color displays.

### Good color groupings:

- Red and yellow or green
- Light green with yellow or purple
- Dark green with red, orange or yellow

If you don't have a lot of variety, create a color mixture with flowers or signs.

Creative touches can enliven a produce display, e.g., carrot wheels, fresh flower bouquets, garden-like groupings of lettuce and greens, baskets in displays, or hand stacked yams.

Seasonal themes work well on dry tables, such as fall squash and yam displays, or summertime berries. Produce has its best flavor, holding qualities, and overall value in season, when it is available at its greatest volume and lowest price.

### Price signs

Prices should be clearly marked on or near the display. Most shoppers are in a hurry and will not search out the manager to find out how much something costs.

Restock displays frequently, rotate products as needed, and remove damaged, decayed, or unsaleable products promptly. Unsightly produce left on your stand not only detracts from sales, but it leaves the customer with the notion that you sell rotten produce. If you'd buy it, leave it, if not, pull it out.

### 10 Rules Of

#### Customer Service

Of course, an abundant supply of customers makes retailing a little easier.

One component of ensuring a steady stream of buyers is effective customer service.

Good customer service skills can be learned. As you consider the following customer service guidelines, remember back to a particularly pleasant, or unpleasant, customer service encounter you may have experienced.

1. The customer is never an interruption to your work. The customer is your real reason for being in business. Chores can wait.
2. Greet every customer with a friendly smile. Customers are people and they like friendly contact. They usually return it.
3. Call customers by name. Make a game of learning customers' names. See how many you can remember.
4. Remember, you are the company! As an owner and an employee, the way you represent yourself to your customer is the way your

# Where's The Beef?



From left, Andy Marchevsky, president of Lebanon Valley Farmer's Bank; John Moose, senior vice president of agriculture lending group; Mike Firestone, senior vice president of agriculture lending group; and Rink Ashby, Fulton Bank CEO, serve food to farmers from Elizabethtown, Mount Joy, and surrounding areas during the annual customer appreciation event this week.

Photo by Nicki Lefever, special correspondent



John Moose, senior vice president of Fulton Bank's agriculture lending group, serves a beef sandwich to Raymond and Emma Gruber of Mount Joy. The Grubers were among 450 local farmers invited to Fulton Bank and Lebanon Valley Farmer's 17th annual beef roast at the Elizabethtown fairgrounds. Bank employees served beef sandwiches, corn-on-the-cob, and hand-dipped ice cream to show their appreciation to their customers.

Photo by Nicki Lefever, special correspondent

## New Members Appointed To USDA Committee

WASHINGTON, D. C. — Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman recently announced the appointment of five new members to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Advisory Committee on Emerging Markets.

Newly appointed are: Gail R. Carlson of Arlington, Va.; Geryn C. Contini of Baton Rouge, La.; Harriett A. Paul of Tallahassee, Fla.; John F. Tarburton of Dover, Del.; and James J. Willrett of Malta, Ill. These new members will join the other 15 members currently serving on the committee.

The committee reviews funding proposals under the Emerging Markets Program, which is managed by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. This program supports private and governmental projects to promote U.S. agricultural exports in emerging economies.

The committee also advises USDA on the U.S. private sector's efforts to enhance food and rural business systems in developing countries. Congress reauthorized this program in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Committee members must have expertise in international agriculture, trade and development, especially as they relate to emerging market economies. They serve without compensation.

business will be perceived by that customer.

5. Never argue with customers. The customer is always right (in his or her eyes). Be a good listener; agree where you can, and do what you can to make the customer happy.

6. Never say "I don't know." If you don't know the answer to a question say, "That's a good question. Let me see if I can find out for you."

7. Remember, every dollar you earn comes from the customer's pockets.

Treat them like the boss.

8. State things in a positive way. It takes practice, but will help you become a better communicator.

9. Try to get your customers to remember a good experience at your market.

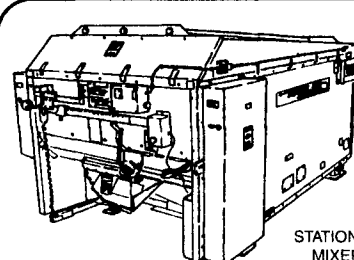
10. Always go that extra mile. Always do just a little more than the customer expects.

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