

Kellie Sebastian: Triumphs and challenges of farmers market season

By Kellie Sebastian Guest columnist

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As August rolls on, it occurs to me that we're just a little more than halfway through the year. We've had some cooler weather but summer isn't over just yet. There's still tons of summer produce growing in the fields and much more to harvest. This week, I was able to elicit responses from a few Franklin County Farmers Market vendors as I checked in about challenges and triumphs thus far.



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Here's what they had to say:

Raye Scott of The Field Farm joyfully reports, "We are new to the market this year, so the most challenging thing for us was just getting started and figuring out what we wanted to do. We dabble in a lot of hobbies, farming, crafting and cooking so narrowing down what we wanted to sell was necessary since we have a busy home life as well. While we're still figuring that part out, we do know that by far, the most rewarding thing for us has been getting to know everyone and feeling a part of the market community. Everyone has been so welcoming and kind from the very start. We have made so many friends and have enjoyed getting to know all the other vendors, volunteers, staff and customers!"

One of our favorite civil servants and owner of Wild Woman Bakes checked in on both sides of the coin with this, "The most challenging part of this year would have to be juggling full time work, childcare, being a partner and trying to find time for this dream venture of Wild Woman Bakes. It's also tough figuring out new flavors for each month's market. The most rewarding thing though, is seeing my business thrive, my daughter growing up seeing her mom follow her passions, and having a partner who supports, and is proud of me for following my dream. I'm so excited and thankful that I have repeat customers and am able to offer something that isn't very available in

Frankfort." Like the s'mores cookies that are available this week, don't miss out!

Another new vendor Antonia McIntosh echoed some of the same sentiments, "The most challenging part of this year has been navigating parenting two littles while growing my business. Trying to give 100% to both doesn't add up but I'm still trying; will keep pushing forward. The most rewarding part of this year has been each time a customer tells me a product worked them! It gives me so much joy and really fuels my passion and drive to keep going."

Veteran producer, and market anchor Diana Hogan, expressed the reality of being a market member and full time farmer, “Mefford Family Farms sells Bluegrass Meadows Beef (from locally grown Belgian Blue cattle) and baked goods from the Bread Lady Bakery. The most challenging part of this year, and every year for the last 20 years, has been getting all the baking finished in the wee hours of the morning (we want it to be fresh!) and then getting to the market early enough to get the trailer full of freezers and meats into the parking spot before the sides of the market fill up and block the way in. Saturdays usually involve a nap in the afternoon to make up for the lack of sleep, haha. The most rewarding part is two fold: providing an excellent product for the community, and getting to visit with all the special people we see at the market. Lifelong friends have been made there and I look forward to seeing them each visit. The Farmers Market is my favorite social event and luckily it happens every week!”

Trina Peiffer’s friendly face is one you know if you’ve been shopping at the market for any length of time. In true form she mentions, “Tim and I both had COVID, which was hard, but happened a few days apart from each other, so when one of us was in bed, the other was able to work. Our 16-year-old, Eric, pitched in with remarkable cheerfulness to harvest. So the good and the bad came together, keeping us grateful.”

I, of course, am biased, but our market has some of the most talented bakers I’ve ever encountered. If you haven’t had Lisa Overton’s sourdough english muffins, you’re missing out. She wraps up our section of market thoughts with this, “The most challenging part this year has been getting supplies, whether it’s been the basics of flour, yeast, dry products etc., or the more obscure items like labels, bags, stove gaskets and ranges. The positive happenings this year include our wonderful garden of fresh herbs, flowers and veggies, trips with our granddaughters, and making plans for vacations next year! Of course a big thank you is due to all our customers, friends and family.”

I’m sure it’s not an overstatement when I say that some of you started as customers, became friends and have been adopted as honorary members of our families. We are oh so grateful for last week’s Kids Day sponsor, Bluegrass Realty & Investments. Also, Yes Arts was one of the only groups that didn’t cancel on us due to COVID. While Elle Travis was actually quarantined, her amazing helpers stepped in and pulled through for us. Community Farm Alliance made right on their commitment to us, too.

Amanda White’s Kentucky Dance Academy, and Toby Penny’s Roaming Studio, literally jumped in with less than 24 hours notice and provided amazing activities for the kids. The Western Hills FFA chapter also pulled up with a truckload of chickens and a host of helpers just in the nick of time. It was a true display of community in action.

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