

# Top 10 rules of market displays

By Jessica Pierson

## 10. Have a shelter

As simple as an EZ up tent, a sturdy shelter will protect you, your products, and your customers from the inevitable weather challenges of selling outside. It is also an opportunity to create a professional look. Taking the time to put up shelter shows that you care about your products and your customers. Additionally, you can personalize your shelter by adding a banner with your farm name or using colors consistent with your style. This creates an identity that can be noticed from afar.



## 9. Create a flow

As customers and potential customers approach your stand, is it clear which direction they should go? Creating a stand that is easy to navigate will result in more sales, because more people can be accommodated. Creating an obvious direction for people to move can be as easy as placing bags at the side of your stand where you want people to start, and placing the cash box at the other end. Always try to face customers. People will make eye contact to get your attention before they will ask for help. This can help keep the flow going as each customer follows the one in front of them. You will be directing less and selling more.

## 8. Display clear signs

Along with creating a flow, clear signage will free up your time for making sales. Customers want to know what you have for sale and how much it costs without having to ask. Some people won't even stop at your booth if they don't see prices listed. Consistent colors and fonts will create uniformity which can make you recognizable and unique. The more descriptive you make your signs, the less time you will have to spend answering questions. Of course, sometimes you may want to use signs to engage customers and create discussion.

## 7. Brand your farm

Everything you do at your stand creates an identity. People come to recognize you and your products and they may become loyal to your stand as they build a relationship with you. You can make this happen faster by using a logo or a simple phrase to identify yourself. Put your logo on



Top photo: A plain white canopy becomes an eye-catching advertisement with the addition of a colorful banner. This one belongs to Kevin Irick of Linwood, Kansas, selling at the Lawrence Farmers Market.

Above: Austin and Mary Ellen Chadd, pictured on page 1, let customers know a bit about themselves and their farm with the use of multiple signs at the Portland, Maine, farmers market.

At left: A clever and inexpensive price sign holder is made from a clothespin glued to a paint stick at the Tomato Allie booth, pictured on the next page.

Photos by Lynn Byczynski.

recipe cards, on your canopy, on your hat or shirt, on your truck. By creating a brand name for your farm you will become instantly recognizable not only to your current customers, but to everyone who picked up a recipe card, who visited market that day, saw your truck drive by, or saw you at the hardware store with your logo shirt.

## 6. Keep it simple and consistent

When thinking about your logo, signage, and flow remember what you want people to notice. Your products! To this end, keep it simple. Your products can get lost on a patterned table cloth. Use solid bright colors to show off what you have for sale. Creating color contrasts will make your products stand out. Contrast creates interest and increases visibility. Consistency of color and style will keep visual distractions to a minimum which will also help customers see your products. If you don't have an assigned space, try to set up in the same area each week. People want to be able to find you easily.

## 5. Use three dimensions

Just putting your products on a nice tablecloth isn't enough. Build your display up and use all three dimensions to show off your products. Tilt baskets toward the customers. Use wooden boxes or bushel baskets to add depth. Stack vegetables high to create an appearance of abundance. You can also use display racks to bring products to eye level, where they may be more likely to catch someone's attention.

continued on the next page



Jerry and Jane Wohletz make an impact at the Lawrence, Kansas, Farmers Market with a signature color and neat display. Photo by Dan Nagengast.



A few other merchandising tricks for producer sellers: Above, a basket is overturned on a table with haricot verts cascading outward, creating an appearance of abundance. This technique can be used effectively when there's actually a shortage of an item.

At left, alternating berry or tomato varieties creates a colorful pattern that catches the eye from

afar. Remember that yellow is the most visible color from a distance, so put your yellow produce or flowers out in front where they will call out for notice. Photos by iStockPhoto.com.



## Display tips

continued from page 5

### 4. Keep it clean

Your stand is a reflection of you and your farm, and your neatness at market sends customers a subtle message about the cleanliness and safety of your food. It's important to keep your area looking tidy and well kept. When you aren't helping customers, pick up any debris that may have blown into your area. Pick up any vegetable scraps off the ground. Not only will this make your area look well tended, but it will save time when you're packing up.

### 3. Talk with customers

The reason many people choose to visit and buy from farmers markets is that they appreciate knowing the people who grow, make, and create the myriad of products at farmers markets. Talking with your customers will only intensify this feeling. Building relationships with your customers will increase your sales, and there is no better advertisement than the word of a happy customer. Talking with



As the Crystal Springs Farmers Market in Brunswick, Maine, winds down after a busy Saturday morning, farmers Nate Drummond and Gabrielle Gosselin of Six River Farm keep the energy high and positive. Farmers who act like they're enjoying their work are a magnet for customers. Photo by Lynn Byczynski.

your customers will also help you spot trends that you may not be aware of. Suppose sorrel was featured on the Food Network. You may have never even thought of growing sorrel, but now everyone is looking for it.

### 2. Plan ahead

Considering all of the aspects of a successful market display is no easy task. You probably aren't going to be able to get it all together on market day, so it is in your best interest to plan ahead. Set up your display a few times so you are comfortable assembling it in the dark, or the rain, or any other stressful circumstances. Look at it from the customer's point of view. Have some friends walk around and see if they can figure out your intended flow. Can your banner be seen from far away? What are the first impressions people get as they approach your display? All of these questions should be answered before you get to market.

### 1. Have fun!

Nothing is more contagious than laughter. If you are having fun, people will be attracted to your booth to see what is going on. After all, what is the market all about if it isn't fun? Smile and relax. Your display looks great, your products are selling, you're making new friends. Sounds like fun to me. 🍃

*Jessica Pierson grows vegetables and raises goats at her farm near Lawrence, Kansas. She is also the office manager for Growing for Market. She can be reached at [jessica@growingformarket.com](mailto:jessica@growingformarket.com).*

## THE VALLEY OAK WHEEL HOE for Ecological Farming

**Wipe out weeds without harming the environment!**  
No herbicides or fossil fuels • Faster & easier than hand hoeing



7 sizes from 5" to 18"  
Rugged steel - built to last

**WATCH THE WHEEL HOE  
IN ACTION NOW:**  
[www.valleyoaktool.com](http://www.valleyoaktool.com)

*Mention this ad for a FREE Speedy Sharp  
tool sharpener with purchase*

P.O. Box 301 • Chico, CA 95927  
530-342-6188 • 8am-6pm Pacific  
[david@valleyoaktool.com](mailto:david@valleyoaktool.com)

