

April 20, 2020

For Immediate Release:

Portland, Maine

Portland Farmers' Market Set to Begin Summer Season on Schedule!

- Saturdays in Deering Oaks Park, 7am -1pm, starting April 25th
- Wednesdays in Deering Oaks Park, 7-1pm, starting April 29th

Portland Farmers' Market's Summer Season will open on schedule Saturday, April 25th in Deering Oaks Park, despite the COVID crisis. Wednesday, April 29th, will kick off the Wednesday Market season Wednesday markets will also be held in Deering Oaks Park, rather than the usual Monument Square. The market hours both days are 7am to 1pm, and the first hour of the market is reserved for shoppers 60 years old or older and immunocompromised folks.

The Portland Farmers' Market provides essential service to the community of Greater Portland. To continue to supply agricultural products during the COVID-19 emergency, the farmers are paring back the market to more of a grocery grab and go experience where customers efficiently shop and then promptly return home. Even though farmers love the relationships they have with customers, during this emergency, we cannot chat the way we wish.

The words "Farmers' Market" conjure a joyous festival of food, botanical wonders, and social interaction. To maintain service during this time of physical distancing the farmers have collaborated with the City of Portland to redesign the market's layout to allow customers to shop for plants, vegetables, fruit, cut flowers, herbs, eggs, meat, cheese, milk, soap, maple syrup, oysters, ferments, pickles, honey, and jams while avoiding crowds and lingering.

Parking within the bounds of Deering Oaks Park will be limited to King's Court Road, toward King Middle School, and the parking lot between Tiqa and State Street Extension. Additional parking is available on Deering Avenue, State Street extension, in the circle at King Middle School, and the lot by Fitzpatrick Stadium. The market encourages customers who live in nearby neighborhoods to walk to market.

To prevent crowding, farmers are directing customers to plan ahead, pre order when possible, and send only one shopper per household. Customers are asked to wash or sanitize their hands often and wear a face covering when at market. Shopping during this crisis is not the family outing and friend meet up we remember, but rather a dash in and out situation.

The foot traffic pattern is changing, as vendor booths will be spread over thirty feet apart and across both the usual Farmers' Market Road and Tennis Court Road. Both of those roads will be closed to vehicular traffic to allow extra space for shoppers to navigate the market while being mindful of social distancing. Market displays will be redesigned to leave a wide walkway for circular one way travel. Customers may use the sidewalks just beyond the market roads and the walking path that crosses between the two roads to make shortcuts and back tracks while remaining 6 feet apart.

The market's Information Booth which runs the market's SNAP program will operate in a pared down version during the emergency. The SNAP Booth will only be processing SNAP benefits and Maine Harvest Bucks. In 2019 the Portland Farmers' Market vendors distributed over \$69,000 of locally produced food to community members that was purchased with SNAP benefits and matching grant funding.

Credit and Debit Customers will need to pay the farms directly rather than purchase tokens. Customers may still spend any credit/debit tokens they may have on hand, even though the market is not currently issuing more. Many but not all vendors accept Credit and Debit cards. Many farms offer ways to pre order and pre pay for products to remove the minor contact required for payment.

Farmers' Market in Deering Oaks Park is a harbinger of spring. The Portland Farmers' Market firmly believes that access to local food is a key to good public health, and that the Portland community will adapt to these changes with patience and grace as we all navigate these times together. Portland has been enthusiastic about buying agricultural products directly from farmers for over 250 years. Customers and farmers make direct access to local food a matter of priority and routine. Times of crisis remind us how important these relationships are.

The market will need several volunteers each Wednesday and Saturday to greet customers and help them get acquainted with the new layout and traffic pattern. Anyone interested in volunteering should email portlandfarmersmarketinfo@gmail.com or sign up for our volunteer mailing list on our website.