The Farmers’ Market
A detailed battle plan for shopping for local foods. By Julie

The Moscow Farmers Market is held every Saturday from 8am until noon in downtown Moscow, ID. The Market takes place in the parking lot behind Main Street. It is a small, but mighty, market. The earlier you arrive at the market, the better chance you will have to purchase the best goods from the best vendors. You see, unfortunately everyone else knows about the Market as well -- it's not our little secret -- and gets there at the crack of 8am. If you get there later in the morning you run the risk of arriving only to find out that Affinity Farms has no more gigantic onions or that Nikki Eaton has run out of steaks. So try to get there as early as possible...

As stated previously, the Market is small but mighty. You will note that many of the vendors have the same crops for sale and they will all look wonderful. How are you to know which vendors to patronize? Hopefully the list below will give you a bit of a starting point; the list is of the vendors we especially adore. This is not to say others vendors aren't awesome, but we are confident in the quality of goods from these particular vendors and they tend to get all of our money.

The list is written in order of appearance at the Market, but only if you walk through it from a specific starting point. Namely, if you park on Main Street or thereabouts and walk into the Market area through the little playground area. If you do this, the first "aisle" of vendors will include Tonnemaker Hill Farm at the head of the aisle on the right, and a woman selling danishes out of the back of her van on the head of the aisle on the left. Tonnemaker's table will have a long line at the checkout.

* Tonnemaker Hill Farm is famous for their cherries, which at this point in the season are mostly gone. At their stand now you will see many bins of tomatoes -- especially cherry tomatoes of various colors and textures. Additionally, they have approximately one billion different kinds of peppers. Stone fruit and large melons also make an appearance.

* The danish lady on the left -- the danishes are good. Try one or five.

Continue down the row until you hit the end of it. Two vendors up from the end, on the right, you will find the Harvard Honey Bees
Harvard is the name of a small town in Idaho and it is next to Princeton, Idaho. This has nothing to do with the quality of the honey -- which is very, very good and highly recommended -- but it always makes me chuckle that Harvard Honey Bees is actually located in Princeton and not Harvard.

* Directly across from the honey folks, two vendors up from the end on the right side of the aisle, is one of our special personal favorites: Leah Sempel of Pokey Creek Organics in Santa, Idaho. Leah is super nice, helpful, and makes some seriously good jellies and jams. She also makes the best pickled beets (garlic, onion, basil go in the pickling mixture). Most of all, her cabbage is very tasty and dense. I once bought a cabbage from her and she apologized that it cost so much (it didn't) because it was so dense and heavy. I told her that's exactly why I purchase my cabbage from her! She's very sweet.

* At the end of the aisle on the right is the spread from Elizabeth Taylor's (not THAT Elizabeth Taylor) Santa Creek Farm. Anything they have available is worth getting, but their turnips, carrots, zucchini, cucumbers, herbs (basil and dill especially), and potatoes are especially good. They also have eggs, but unless you're there at 8am those will be snatched up by others.

Having finished with the first aisle, walk back to the beginning and look for the set of tables running lengthwise next to the side of the building. These are the tables for Affinity Farm and you will likely find a long line here as well...and it's worth the wait.

* Kelly and Russell of Affinity Farm have some serious crops at their table. Every single item is top-notch, and will likely be cheaper than any of the other vendors (we still like to spread our money around, though). Highlights here include their various varieties of potatoes, their Walla Walla onions, their leafy greens (chard, kale, spinach), various types of beans, their herbs, and mixed greens. Like Santa Creek, they also have eggs but only if you arrive early. Additionally, Kelly and Russell sell lovely flowers, especially sunflowers.

* Moving down the line toward aisle two, but still against the wall of the building, is Kathleen Jaeckel of Orchard Farm. She always has some sort of vegetables but she is known for her soaps. Her soaps are amazing and come in regular sized bars, small "guest bath" bars, tins of lotions, and so on. Her table is definitely worth a visit. Also, her husband (Brad Jaeckel), is the manager of the WSU Organic Farm.
* The second aisle of vendors includes craftspeople, mostly, but also the table from Wheatberries Bakeshop. Wheatberries operates a storefront on Main Street in Moscow, but this table features all their bread loaves, baguettes, focaccia, danishes, and other sweet and savory pastries...all good.

* The third aisle of vendors features many of the prepared food vendors -- you can get empanadas from the Mexican food vendor at the head of the aisle, but the middle and end of the aisle features some amazing ethnic food: Filipino, North African, West African, Greek, and a few more I'm forgetting. Put it this way: it's food you don't imagine getting in Idaho, and you can only get it at the Farmers Market because the area can't sustain an actual Filipino or West African restaurant seven days per week. Take advantage of it.

* At the head of the third aisle you will find the a vendor with fine vegetables but also baked goods. This vendor features really good stone fruit, potatoes, apples, beans, and okra, but their corn is top-notch. Also, when you are waiting in line to pay you will find various loaves of bread calling your name. I recommend the dill braid.

* The pièce de résistance of the Farmers Market, for us anyway, is a vendor near the middle of the third aisle. Look for the blue coolers and the large EATON BEEF sign. Nikki Eaton of Eaton Beef (along with Brad Jaeckel, mentioned above, and Kelly Kingsland of Affinity Farm) is on the Board of Directors of Rural Roots, a local farm and food organization for the Inland Northwest. The Eatons, a 4th generation farming family in Colton (10mi outside of Pullman), raise cattle who never receive hormones, antibiotics, steroids or ionophores. They're free range, vegetarian, spring-water fed, happy cows who eat grass from pastures that are maintained manually by people and hard work, not machines and herbicides. And this beef? It's the best. Not the best in Washington or Idaho, but simply the best I've ever had. Nikki Eaton sells various cuts at the Market: roasts, slices, summer sausage, cube steak, tenderloin, kabobs...you name it and she has it. Their 85% lean ground beef tastes and acts like 98% lean. It's freaky. It is also ridiculously inexpensive for the quality of meat you're getting.