

Farmers' Market Finds

In Portland, we are blessed with farmers' markets that rival those of Provence. Each spring, as asparagus spears and delicate young greens peek from the ground, the Portland Farmers' Market returns, marking the end to a long, cold winter with the promise of a new season's crop. On Saturdays dozens of farmers, ranchers, fisherman, and artisan food vendors set up shop on the campus of Portland State University as an eager community of food-conscious consumers flock to the market.

Farmers like Gus and Barbara Eberhardt, of Raynblest Farm in Elkton, Oregon, haul three varieties of prunes, a swarm of beeswax products, and up to 100 dozen free-range eggs to market each week. In a greenhouse, Gus grows fruits that aren't commonly found on Oregon farms. Not only are there lemons, but also Rangpur limes—an odd name for a hybrid of mandarin orange and lemon. The tangerine-colored citrus fruit is the size of a small lime, with a pleasing acidity fit for a refreshing cocktail of gin and juice. Then there's the tamarillo: a deep, blood red fruit with the texture of a kiwi that tastes of plum tomato and a hint of passion fruit. The sweet and savory characteristic of this "tree tomato" is ideal for sauces, salads, or even baked desserts.

In the next stall over, Leslie Lukas-Recio from Viridian Farms stands at an empty table. Her piment d'espelette is already sold out for the day, which comes as no surprise. In the last two years, since she and husband Manuel Recio sourced seeds for the Basque chiles, they have become a favorite ingredient of many Portland chefs. The bright red conical peppers are traditionally dried on ropes hung from houses and shops in the village of Espelette, France. Viridian Farms dries its fresh peppers for a month, and then sells them at the market. Demand always exceeds supply.

Then there's Fritz and Barbara Foulke across the way at Freddy Guys Hazelnuts. For years the Foulkes have been spooning out samples of raw or roasted hazelnuts and thick, gooey hazelnut butter. This year they took their business a step further, creating a veritable retail store of hazelnut products. From their 8,000-tree hazelnut orchard near Monmouth come hazelnut pizza dough, granola, and pancake mix, as well as spiced, candy-coated, and chocolate-covered hazelnuts. In addition, they sell their hazelnuts whole, chopped, or ground into flour. Here, Oregon's state nut shows no limit to its potential uses.

Due to the bounty of local produce, fresh-caught seafood, sustainably-raised livestock, and world-class wines from the surrounding area, we Portlanders are a city of discerning eaters, eager to buy directly from producers like these. Beyond the fingerling potatoes and barrels of greens, there are many unusual food finds to behold. A Saturday trip to the market, wicker basket in hand, is a sure bet for unearthing a new ingredient to enliven your next meal.

Portland Farmers Market

Portland State University in the South Park Blocks between SW Harrison & SW
Montgomery

March 21–December 19

8:30am–2:00pm, April–October

9:00am–2:00pm, November & December