



MICHIGAN FARMER MARKET VENDOR JOURNEY MAP

A Step by Step Guide for First Time Farmers Market
Vendors Selling Food in Michigan



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Center for
Regional Food Systems

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SUPPORT FOR THE MICHIGAN FARMER MARKET VENDOR JOURNEY MAP



This resource is made possible by the Great Lakes Midwest Regional Food Business Center with the purpose of increasing market access.

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The Michigan Farmer Market Vendor Journey Map was developed in collaboration with Amanda Shreve (Executive Director, Michigan Farmers Market Association), Madelina DiLisi (Michigan Food and Farm Network Specialist, Great Lakes Midwest Regional Food Business Center), and Emily Britton (M.S. Student).



LOOKING TO JOIN YOUR LOCAL FARMERS MARKET?

**Start your journey
today.**

The Michigan Farmer Market Vendor Journey Map is designed for first-time farmers and food producers interested in selling their products at a Michigan Farmers Market. The Journey Map walks prospective vendors through every step. Whether you need help finding a market, understanding licenses and regulations, or gearing up for your first ever market, we've got you covered.

The journey map is jam-packed with resources and insight from Farmers Market professionals so you can jump start your journey with confidence.





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You have a product and a dream, but you need a market.

START HERE

Market Research

How do you find a local farmers' market that is right for you?

Product Research

Consider what you will sell, how much you can provide, and how much you will charge.

Food Safety

How to produce and sell food safely.

TIME TO APPLY

Vendor Etiquette

Understand how you can contribute to a welcoming and thriving market.

Application

What you need to know when you submit your application.

Licensing and Regulations

What you need to do in order to sell your products legally.

Food Assistance Programs

Understand what programs you can participate in and the benefits of participating.

Marketing and Displays

How to make your business stand out and keep customers coming back week after week.

Market Checklist

Let's make sure you have everything you need to be successful!

MARKET DAY

MARKET RESEARCH



Step One: Find your market

Why should you research local Farmers' Markets before applying to be a vendor?

Every market is unique. Consider these factors when deciding if a market is the right fit for you.

Location

How close is the market to you? Consider travel time and fuel expenses.

Culture

Does this market align with your values? Do you feel safe? Are you a part of this community? Can you build relationships with customers and fellow vendors here?

Profitability

Is the market oversaturated with your product? How much would you need to sell to make a profit each week?

Operating Costs

- Vendor fees (daily rate or season pass)
- The cost of a tent, tables, chairs, and marketing displays
- Electricity hook up
- Electronic payment systems

WHERE TO LOOK?



[Find a Farmers Market](#)

Michigan Farmers Market Association's interactive map can help you find a market near you

[USDA Local Food Directories](#)

Find a farmers market wherever you are using USDA AMS's National Farmers Market Directory

[Michigan Farm Fun](#)

Seasonal Farm Guide published by Michigan Farm Fun

PRODUCT RESEARCH

Assess Product Yields

If you have researched your market, you should have an idea of how much you should bring to market. Consider products that have high yields, are easy to grow/produce, and are in demand.

Pricing Your Product

The price of your products should reflect your work and inputs, while also being affordable for your area. This can be tricky for first time vendors. Consider using a pricing guide from the USDA or MIFMA.

Competition and Collaboration

There is bound to be crossover in the products sold at the market. You want to sell your products at a competitive price, but there are other ways to stand out without price gouging your fellow vendors. Diversify offerings, highlight your growing practices, your business story, and collaborate with fellow vendors when you can! *More is more.* **Everyone thrives in a packed market.**

Seasonality

Does your growing season align with the market season? Most markets are not open year round. Weather can be unpredictable & growing seasons are limited.



FOOD SAFETY

**You are responsible for implementing food safety practices.
Do your part to prevent food-borne illness!**

Michigan Cottage Food Law along with specific food licenses and regulations are designed to minimize the risk of food-borne illnesses.

Food Safety starts at home and on the farm.

Michigan On-Farm Produce Safety

Michigan is the only state that offers **free and confidential** produce safety risk assessment on site at your farm. Produce Safety Technicians are not there to regulate you. Technicians visit to identify risks and work with you to implement food safety practices.

[Schedule a free visit](#)



Food Safety Resources

Michigan Farmers Market Association Resources

- [Food Safety Resource Page](#)
- [Frequently Asked Food Safety Questions](#)
- Providing Safe Food Samples Handout

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Resources

- Guidelines for Providing Safe Food Samples

MICHIGAN FOOD LAW

Michigan Cottage Food Law

Non-potentially hazardous foods that do not require time and/or temperature control for safety can be produced in a home kitchen for direct sale at farmer's markets. No license is required when following Cottage Food Laws. Cottage Food Law products must comply with the labeling, adulteration, and other provisions in the Michigan Food Law.

Regulated by [MDARD Food and Dairy Division](#)

Michigan Food Law

Whole, unprocessed, fruits and vegetables. Only allowed one cut at the time of harvest. No license is required when following Michigan Food Laws.

Regulated by [MDARD Food and Dairy Division](#)



Resources

[MSU Cottage Food Law Training](#)



[MIFMA Farmers Market Product Licensing Requirements](#)

[MDARD Michigan Cottage Foods Information](#)

KEY POINTS

- Individuals can sell up to \$25,000 yearly in gross sales with no license, registration, or inspection.
- Must be made, packaged, and labeled in your home.
- **Tricky:** Jams, jellies.
- **Pay attention to what is not allowed:** No pickles, canned fruits or vegetables, meat, fish, dairy, beverages, pet food.
- Anything that has to be refrigerated after being made needs to be prepared in a commercial kitchen.
- **If your product needs to be refrigerated it cannot be sold under cottage food law.**

Michigan's Cottage Foods

A Guide for Cottage Food Businesses



What's Allowed: Up to \$25,000 yearly in gross sales of certain foods with no license, registration, or inspection. Cottage foods businesses may advertise online and collect payments in-person or through a pay app.

What's Required: Cottage foods must be made, packaged, and labeled in your primary residence (home). The label is required to include the statement, "Made in a home kitchen not inspected by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development." Cottage food products must be transferred from producer to consumer in-person by the producer. Mail-orders, shipping, selling to businesses, or having a business sell products for you is not allowed. Only low-risk foods that do not require refrigeration after preparation may be considered for cottage food businesses.



<div>X</div> <div>Cannot Be Cottage Foods</div>	<div>✓</div> <div>May Be Considered for Cottage Foods</div>
<div>X</div> Bread with fresh vegetables or chunks of cheese	<div>✓</div> Breads, quick breads, muffins, cookies
<div>X</div> Custard or cream-based pies	<div>✓</div> Pies – shelf-stable
<div>X</div> Cakes requiring refrigeration (e.g., cheesecake)	<div>✓</div> Cakes – cupcakes, birthday, wedding, etc.
<div>X</div> Frosting or glaze made from ingredients requiring refrigeration (e.g., cream cheese frosting)	<div>✓</div> Frosting or glaze made with shelf-stable ingredients or from tested recipes
<div>X</div> Freeze-dried products made from temperature-controlled foods (e.g., ice cream, cheesecake)	<div>✓</div> Freeze-dried products from shelf-stable foods (e.g., candy, herbs, some fruits, raw vegetables)
<div>X</div> Tinctures	<div>✓</div> Extracts (e.g., vanilla extract)
<div>X</div> Other jams/jellies (e.g., vegetable, hot pepper, low/no-sugar) or fruit/vegetable butters	<div>✓</div> Fruit jams or jellies (as defined in 21 CFR part 150) in glass jars
<div>X</div> Garlic in oil mixtures	<div>✓</div> Vinegar and flavored vinegar
<div>X</div> Salad dressings, sauces, or condiments	<div>✓</div> Mixes - dry baking, dips, soup, dry herbs, or herbs
<div>X</div> Cut melon, tomato, or leafy greens products	<div>✓</div> Dried pasta with or without egg
<div>X</div> Fresh pasta	<div>✓</div> Snacks - popcorn, granola, nuts, or chocolate covered pretzels, bananas, strawberries, apple slices, etc.
<div>X</div> Caramel apples	<div>✓</div> Roasted coffee beans
	<div>✓</div> Whole and sliced dehydrated fruits or vegetables
See our website for more examples: www.michigan.gov/cottagefood	

These Categories Are NOT Allowed:
<div>X</div> Beverages
<div>X</div> CBD, cannabis, or foods containing these products
<div>X</div> Dairy or dairy products
<div>X</div> Dietary supplements
<div>X</div> Fish or fish products
<div>X</div> Canned fruit or vegetables
<div>X</div> Ice or ice products
<div>X</div> Meat or meat products
<div>X</div> Pet food or treats
<div>X</div> Pickled products

Questions?

Visit MDARD's website by scanning the QR code.



Call **800-292-3939** or email MDARD-CottageFood@michigan.gov to connect with a food inspector in your area.

05/2025

COTTAGE FOOD LABELS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



1 **NAME OF PRODUCT:**
This is an opportunity to brand and market your product. You could just call your product "Zucchini Bread," but "Ashley's Homegrown Zucchini Bread" will help customers identify you in the future.

2 **INGREDIENTS:**
Ingredients need to be listed in descending order of weight. If a prepared item is used in the recipe, all sub ingredients must also be listed.

3 **ALLERGENS:**
Federal labeling requirements specify that you must identify ingredients from the following food groups: milk, eggs, wheat, peanuts, soybeans, fish (including shellfish, crab, lobster, or shrimp), and tree nuts (specifying which tree nut was used).

4 **NET WEIGHT OR VOLUME OF PRODUCT:**
The measurement must be in both imperial and metric. Conversion chart available at mifma.org/foodsafety.

Materials are supported by a Food Safety Training and Education Grant through the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Produced on: __/__/__

1 **Ashley's Homegrown Zucchini Bread with Michigan Walnuts**

2 **Ingredients:** Enriched flour (wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine, mononitrate, riboflavin and folic acid), vegetable oil, zucchini, walnuts, sugar, eggs, cinnamon, salt, artificial vanilla extract, baking powder, baking soda

3 **Contains:** wheat, eggs, walnuts

4 **Net wt. 6 oz (170.10 g)**

5 **Produced by:**
Ashley Baker
480 Market Lane
Barn City, MI 40499
www.mifma.org
ashleybaker@mifma.org
555-555-5555

6 **MADE IN A HOME KITCHEN THAT HAS NOT BEEN INSPECTED BY THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT.**

5 **NAME AND PHYSICAL ADDRESS OF COTTAGE FOOD OPERATION:**
You need to include the physical address of the home kitchen so customers know where the food is produced. Post office box addresses are not acceptable.
Optional: Include a website, email address, or phone number to help customers find your products in the future.

6 **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT:**
This statement is required and must be in at least 11-point font (1/8" tall) on the label.

LICENSES AND REGULATIONS

Retail Food Establishment License

Required for Beef, Pork, Lamb, Poultry, Eggs (for producers with over 3,000 hens), and Value-Added products not eligible for Cottage Food Law (Salsa, pickled products, dairy products, etc.)

Commercial Fishing License

Required to sell wild caught, farmed, fresh or smoked fish.

Wild Mushroom Expert Certification

Required to sell wild foraged mushrooms.

Special Transitory Food Unit or Temporary Food Service Establishment License

Required for foods prepared at the market.



TIME TO APPLY



VENDOR APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- Read and understand the Farmer Market's rules, policies, and guidelines.
- Understand the Market fee structure.
 - Are you signing up for the entire season or paying per individual market?
 - Some markets will require your vendor fee before the start of the season, while others accept daily drop-in fees for the market day you wish to attend.
- Proof of insurance.
- Any licenses required for your specific product.
- Signed vendor agreement sourced from each market you wish to participate in.

Questions? Ask the Market Manager!

VENDOR ETIQUETTE

Farmers' Markets have the unique ability to unite people and strengthen communities through the shared love of local food.

Learn how you can contribute to a welcoming and thriving market as a vendor.



VENDOR ETIQUETTE



- **Respect** your fellow vendors, market manager(s), market staff, and volunteers.
- **Arrive on time for set-up.** Many markets require vendors to be ready 30 minutes before opening.
- **Do not sell to customers before the market opens.** This creates confusion for customers and stress for your fellow vendors and market staff who are still setting up.
- **Stay for the full duration of the market.** Even if you sell out, it's important to stay. Use this time to connect with new customers or review your sales. A market that "thins out" halfway through is bad for all vendors!
- **Respect market property.** If you are borrowing a tent or table, make sure that you wipe it down so it's clean for the next vendor. Bring any damage of property to the attention of the market staff.
- **Keep it clean.** Don't leave food behind to rot. Pick up garbage left behind. Pack it in, pack it out.
- **Be kind!**

FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS



Michigan Farmers Markets can participate in a number of state and federal food assistance programs. Participating in food assistance programs is a great opportunity to make food accessible, expand your customer base, and support your community.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is the largest and most popular program in Michigan. SNAP benefits can be spent on produce and some eligible food items.

WIC Produce Connection

WIC Produce Connection supports women, infants, and children access food by adding benefits directly to their EBT card. Farmers must apply to accept WIC directly through the program and have the ability to process the EBT card.

Double Up Food Bucks

Double Up Food Bucks is an incentive program that works alongside SNAP. For every \$10 spent in SNAP, Double Up Food Bucks will match that purchase up to \$10 a day to be spent on fresh produce.

Senior Project Fresh

A coupon-based program through MDHHS. Coupons are available to seniors through the lead agency in their county. Coupons can be used to purchase Michigan fruits, vegetables, and honey.



Learn More about Food Assistance Programs with resources from [Michigan Farmers Market Association](#)

MARKETING AND DISPLAYS

Clearly Display Your Business Name and Branding

Make it easy for new customers to remember and returning customers to find!

Tell the Story of your Business

Use signs, displays, and packaging to communicate your unique business story.

Offer Digital Payments

Don't miss out on money. Offer digital payments using platforms like Square, Venmo, Paypal, or Cashapp.

Stack Them High and Watch Them Fly!

Stack and stagger your products to catch your next customer's eye from farther away. This can help folks see what's available without crowding your table or cutting in line.

Dress Your Table Up

Use things like washable tablecloths, chalkboard signs, display cases, printed cards, and laminated signs/banners to set yourself apart from the competition.

Use Large Legible Price Signs

Label product prices clearly so customers know exactly what they're getting.



MARKET DAY CHECKLIST



Parking & Unloading

- Know where to park and unload your vehicle
- Confirm where your space is
- Check on electricity/outlet if required
- Set up your tent and table before unloading
- Bring a dolly or wagon to unload

Table & Display

- Tablecloth
- Bins, crates, and shelving
- Put out displays, prices, signage, and business cards
- Stack your product
- Safe place for your lockbox

Cleaning & Safety Supplies

- Hand sanitizer
- Paper towels
- Food-safe disinfectant spray
- Disposable gloves
- First aid kit

Equipment & Supplies

- Tent with weights
- Chairs
- Folding tables
- Table display Items (tablecloth, crates, shelves, chalkboards, banner)
- Produce bags, market bags
- Food scale
- Point of Sale System (POS) (Charged!)
- Extra receipt paper
- Card Reader / QR code for digital payments
- Change (small bills and coins)
- Lock box
- Calculator
- Record keeping book
- Business cards, stickers, marketing items

Personal Items

- Water bottle and snacks
- Dress for the weather: rain jackets, sunhats, sunglasses, and layers.
- Sunscreen, insect repellent
- Cell phone and POS chargers

YOUR FIRST MARKET IS IN THE BOOKS.

NOW WHAT?



Reflect and Ask Yourself These Questions

- What went well?
- What was your best-selling product?
- What didn't sell?
- What challenges did you run into?
 - Can they be prevented at the next market?
- Is there anything you forgot to bring?
- Was the day profitable?
 - Did you make enough to cover your vendor fee for the day?
 - Did you make enough to cover the cost of your supplies?
 - Keep track of these numbers to see how you grow over the season. Adjust your products and prices accordingly.
- **What can you improve at the next market?**

RESOURCES REFERENCED

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD)

- [Michigan Cottage Foods
Information](#)

Michigan Farm Fun

- [Find Your Fun](#)

Michigan Farmers Market Association

- [Find a Farmers Market](#)
- [Food Assistance](#)
- [Food Safety FAQs](#)
- [Food Safety Resources](#)

Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems

- [Resource Directory](#)

Michigan State University Extension

- [Michigan Cottage Food Law
Online Course](#)

Michigan On-Farm Produce Safety

- [Resource Library](#)
- [Schedule a free on-farm visit](#)

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- [National Farmers Market Directory](#)