

TIPS FOR BUYERS AND SELLERS

NOTES TO A FARMER

1. **Commitment.** Restaurants, for cost control, need to be somewhat automated in their purchasing patterns. When a chef commits to buying a certain amount, the chef anticipates it to be delivered accordingly.
2. **Delivery Schedule.** Chefs depend on the arriving product. Work with your chef so the restaurant can have a steady stream of fresh product during the week. Also, try to establish a delivery system that works for both the kitchen and your schedule. Know your restaurant's busy times and plan your calls & visits around these times, not in the middle of them.
3. **Sell what you can deliver.** If you are selling meats make sure that you have the appropriate permits to sell to restaurants or retailers. Also, don't short the kitchen, the chef is expecting a certain quantity. If the product is different than what you offered call the chef and ask if they still want it.
4. **Sell your product.** Chefs love free samples. Be generous with your prized product when you first stop by the restaurant (do call in advance!) and on that first delivery day encourage them to try & taste the difference. Sample at farmer's markets, where chefs are known to cruise and taste.
5. **Know your customers and their customers.** Eat in the restaurants where you deliver. Lunch is a cheaper alternative if offered. Just as important as having a chef visit you, you'll see how your product is used. You'll be inspired.
6. **Be Professional.** Part patience and part diligence - remember to be consistent in your work and with your product. Assist the person receiving the delivery by collecting your boxes, be on time, courteous, and prepare invoices ahead. Call if you will be late.
7. **Billing.** Like any other businessperson you have a right to be paid on time. First time deliveries may be paid in cash, but it is far more efficient for everyone to establish an account.
8. **Specialize and diversify.** Diversify the product that you offer and make yourself unique. Research the market so you know what others are growing and where the holes are. Talk to your chef about what they would like to see on their menus in the future. Be creative.

NOTES TO A FOOD BUYER

1. **Commitment.** Buy consistently from a core group of farmers so they know what to expect, or communicate with your farmer that you may be making purchases once in a while. Remember, if one of your producers has an item ready now and it isn't picked up, it may end up being tossed at a financial loss to the producer.
2. **Delivery.** Establish a delivery schedule with your farmer.
3. **Buying.** Both buyers and sellers think about their bottom line. Expect to pay a fair price and consider that a local farmer's cost may be more than commercial shipped-in product. Don't expect the farmer to be selling at a discount. Buy willingly and challenge yourself to use it well. Establish a predictable routine with your farmer for phone calls, orders, and questions. Communicate what works for you, and you will receive great product.
4. **Education:** Continue to learn about the items your farmer grows. Inspire your co-workers and employees to do the same. Items coming directly from a farm may look different from commercial items that your employees are used to seeing. They need to know how best to take advantage of that difference. Use the farmers as a resource for learning about seasons, product use and availability.
5. **Talk to your grower.** Taste the product with them and talk to them about what you plan to do with it and what it will be paired with. Ask your grower how they use it. Most farmers are great cooks because they cook directly from their garden. If you are unhappy with something let them know and why. It is in their interest to make you happy. Talk to your grower about trends and request varieties you're interested in.
6. **Cultivate trust.** There is always a degree of uncertainty regarding the crop size and quality. Remain flexible and patient with your farmer. It often takes weeks of production time and lots of luck to come up with a crop, and things can happen overnight!
7. **Be Flexible.** Use what is fresh and in season. It will make your plates better. Generalize your menus. If certain vegetables are fresh that day they can be incorporated into a dish without changing the menu. Take advantage of daily specials.