



Farmer's

# Market

An exciting new venture, the launch of Western Maine Market in April, 2009, gives folks an opportunity to shop for fresh produce from local farmers online. The virtual marketplace will be live from Friday afternoon to Monday morning with pickup set for Tuesdays from 4 to 6 p.m., at Tranten's new grocery store in Farmington.

Where to buy, how to buy and the face of local foods is still an elusive concept. Direct marketing through the internet provides a new opportunity for small farms to reach consumers and for consumers to get the information they want on what's available, who's selling it, and how to get it.

What the market does is make the products of local farmers, growers and producers more readily available to the Franklin County market. It really is an extension of the Farmer's Market concept, making the produce available to people who cannot make it to the market because of distance, work or other obligations. It has the additional convenience of letting consumers know in advance what is available.

Participating farmers email the selection of what they have to sell to Western Maine Market by Friday, at noon. The products are then posted to the Web site, [westernmainemarket.com](http://westernmainemarket.com). People can place their orders from Friday afternoon through Monday morning.

The online orders will be processed, and farmers notified what has been ordered. They will package up the products and drop off their orders on Tuesday, from 3 to 3:30 p.m. Volunteers and the site coordinator sort the products by farm, and then buyers come by from 4 to 6 to pick up their prepaid orders.

While the market seeks to accommodate all parties involved, there are strict deadlines and time frames in order to provide the best possible service. The farmers need time to process the orders, and buyers need time to make their selections. Items not picked up by 6 p.m. on the day of the market will be donated to a local food pantry.







## Farmer's Market Locations:

### Farmington

The Sandy River Farmers Market is held on Tuesdays 2-6 p.m. (new this year) and Fridays 9 am-2 p.m., May through October on Front Street in Farmington, in the parking lot between the Better Living Center and Narrow Gauge Cinema. FMI 857-225-1199

### Kingfield

The Kingfield Market is held Wednesday's, 3-6 p.m., May through October in front of Narrow Gauge Realty on Main Street in Kingfield. FMI 207-635-3573

### New Sharon

The Douini's Farmers Market is held Saturdays, 8 a.m.-12 noon, May through October in the parking area of Douin's Market at the intersection of Routes 2 & 27 in New Sharon. FMI 207-778-4111

### On-line

[www.westernmainemarket.com](http://www.westernmainemarket.com)

The online market opens up a whole new arena to local people. Because many farmers grow a small number of specialty crops, it can be difficult for the customer to buy local products, because they have to travel to from one farm to another to get the variety of products they may want in any given week. By consolidating everything that farmers grow into one on-line marketplace, the buyer can get more of what they need, while supporting local farmers.

Meanwhile, the farmer can get more of the market share. Buyers who are willing to go to the farmers market or farms for onsite sales are already consumers of local foods. But farmers can increase their share of the market (the folks that currently use large supermarkets for convenience), by pooling the harvest and making it available all in one place.

Another benefit from the market is that the Website features short biographies and photos of participating farms. Look for the "Meet the Food-Makers" link featured on the Website.

While the concept is new to Franklin County, the online farmers market is modeled after a successful venture in Plymouth, N.H. Products being featured initially include maple syrup, eggs, Angus beef, pork, chicken, cheese, baked goods, jams, vinegars, milk and more. What is offered will vary depending on the time of year. And several farmers may offer eggs; there's not a limit to who can offer what. Buyers will have the option of shopping from whichever farmer they choose as they browse through the market.

Of course, fresh air farmer's markets offer an experience not found online and for those who like to see, smell and taste fresh products before they buy - visit one of the local markets in Franklin County (see information box above for locations and times).

By BJ Bangs, Special to The Original Irregular,  
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