



STROLLING AND SAVORING NORTHERN MARKETS

BY ANN DOUGHERTY

Outdoor markets and the farmer-vendors of Northern Michigan do it all: **grow** and raise so many products that Michigan has the second most diverse food economy in the United States (after California), **show** us the beauty of the season through weekly displays on their tables and carts, and **create** lasting value-added products—pies and jams, salsas and dilled vegetables, syrups from trees and honeys from bees, wreaths and pots. They do all the work; we just show up on market day and stroll. So let us stroll together, through four great northern markets...

When I think of Charlevoix, I think of Cross Fisheries, the spectacular public library, mushroom houses, the bridge and now fruit and the shining market on the harbor. The **Charlevoix Farmers' Market** is a great stop on a summer morning. I pulled in last summer, en route to Cherry Capital Airport, to see Judy Kerr and her mom, Grandma Friske, the ever-present matriarch of this hard-working farm family. I was on a mission, to secure perfectly ripe peaches for a mascarpone dessert I was making that evening for a reception west of Chicago, and from the moment I approached the market wagon, there was no doubt I was going to be successful.

Pointing to four baskets of peaches at the front of the table, I outlined the situation to the women behind the wagon. No, that would not do, they explained; those peaches were packed to ripen over the next week for home use, and my peaches had to be ripe in ten hours. As they murmured together, consulting

about this complicated case, the mother and daughter felt through a bushel of beautiful peaches, and I stood delighted. Like going to a great auto repair shop, there was expert knowledge literally at their fruit-savvy fingertips. No bruising but barely firm, color good, of a certain size for consistent flavor. I received a five-minute education in peach selection, a new appreciation for the art of the stone fruit, and a cushioned box of the perfect 40. I did not stuff the peaches into my rolling bag as planned, but carried these beauties onto the plane in Traverse City, carefully placed the box in the storage bin, landed at O'Hare, and made my way with the precious cargo to the Mississippi River Theatre for the dessert reception.

The peaches were a hit. But I knew the real value: the kindness and knowledge of these market vendors from the city on the harbor.

The **Harbor Springs Farmers' Market** is nestled in fully shaded roadside Ottawa Stadium Park, across from Bay Bluffs on M-119 south of Harbor Springs, overlooking the high school athletic fields and Little Traverse Bay. Kerrie Bianchi and her family are frequent vendors. Why do her girls come to the market, I ask? Kerrie laughs. "Actually, they are not enthusiastic about the 6:00 a.m. picking or cleaning," she admits. "But my elder daughter likes talking with people and running her own business."

And Kerrie and husband Paul like the informality and slower pace, which means they can bring a little and

WHEN TO GO

These four wonderful markets are open Wednesday through Saturday and offer warm interaction, beautiful bounty and fantastic views:

Charlevoix	Thursdays	9 AM – 2 PM
Harbor Springs	Wednesdays	8 AM – NOON
	Saturdays	8 AM – NOON
Petoskey	Fridays	9 AM – 12:30 PM
Boyne City	Wednesdays	8 AM – NOON
	Saturdays	8 AM – NOON

Plan ahead if you also eat the other three days of the week!
For more information on locations, see Directory page 8.

Above: Market Manager Jen Lewis at the Boyne City Farmers' Market.

Photos by Sheila Barnes/Paperdragon

go back to their garden for more if needed, or if one customer wants a more orangey-colored sunflower.

But even a gentle market has busy times, so get there early on Saturdays for lettuces by Ryan and Bonnie, who regularly sell out. Mary Cooper and her sons Nick and Vince, responsible for the charming Farmer White's wagon display, are faithful attendees (with my favorite, peach salsa). A great Wednesday harbor lunch is tomatoes and salad, sun-kissed and fresher than fresh, according to Diana Bailey of Bay Bluffs. And there is a rumor that fresh organic cheese may be offered this summer... somebody has a sister. It would be another great addition to this lovely market.

Who goes to the **Petoskey Farmers' Market**? Downtown businesspeople on their lunch hour, faithful summer residents, resorters visiting from far afield, and many more. A familiar sight is restaurateurs Julie Adams, of Julienne Tomatoes, and Scott Schornak, of Feast, picking their ingredients for Friday and Saturday fare. Picturesque streets slope down to a bright blue bay between century-old treasured buildings. Tucked into the side of the venerable J.C. Penney department store, across from the Chamber of Commerce, Petoskey's reconstituted farmers' market was moved downtown from the county fairgrounds in 2005 and given city hours.

What does it have to offer? A diversity of products—fish, meats, poultry, honey and maple syrup, flowers and a full range of vegetables, fruits and herbs—plus many vendors who follow sustainable growing practices, plus a closed-off block for market-strolling pedestrian shopping, plus music and entertainment (and I include the knowledgeable and good-looking vendors in “entertainment”). Some perennial favorites are charming farmer Dan Berg and his mom with tomatoes, chef/market gardener Mike Everts with culinary herbs and lettuces, Helen King with the fabulous fresh fish mobile, Greg Krause with meat and dairy products of grass-fed animals from his Engadine farm and his Healthy Traditions information—always educating someone in his deep bass voice, Jimmy and Marcie Spencer with healthy meats and veggies and mom Sharon's amazing canned treasures, as well as the wonderful flowers, turkeys, maple syrups, honeys and more. For all of this—the people, the atmosphere, downtown

shopping and an intangible quality of character—Petoskey is a gem of a market.

Boyne City's long-running Farmers' Market is located off M-75 in downtown Boyne City, among the stately trees of Old City Park. With more than 20 vendors, this is the powerhouse market in the north, a working market for the working person, with a faithful following from Walloon Lake and Boyne Mountain resorters. With this central location, my first question was about service: Being roadside, have any of the vendors offered roadside delivery? Is it a drive-through? “Bring me two heads of organic lettuce, and some supersize tomatoes!” No, I learn, this is a market for savoring at a leisurely pace on foot. Boyne City resident Jessica McGeorge recounts the joy of walking her dog on a Saturday morning, foraging for breakfast at the market while picking up fresh ingredients for lunch and dinner. She says she appreciates “what I think of as an old-time market, with arts-and-crafts vendors who put the ‘market’ back in ‘farmers’ market,” allowing her to check off Saturday both gift and food shopping in a gorgeous outdoor arcade. Market manager Jen Lewis is excited about the summer and already looking ahead to fall. Jen wants autumn's spectacular bounty to be valued as highly as the summer fare already is and plans a range of cooking demos and activities for late summer, after Labor Day. *eGT*


Ann Dougherty, P.E., is an environmental engineer and tour guide. In 2005, she founded Learn Great Foods, offering culinary farm tours and retreat weekends in Northern Michigan—Petoskey and the Leelanau Peninsula—and in the Driftless Area of northwest Illinois, including Iowa and Wisconsin. Ann is working to change our food systems, one food tour at a time. For more information visit learngreatfoods.com, or call 231-758-3407.

FARMERS' MARKET CULINARY TOUR

To give enthusiasts of fresh, local foods a chance to meet the Petoskey Farmers' Market vendors up close and personal, the Lansing-based Michigan Farmers' Market Association (MIFMA) is sponsoring a Farm Market Culinary Tour. Guests will take a safari through the market collecting ingredients and ideas, then cook hands-on with Chef Ken Willoughby at the Crooked Tree Arts Center and eat a scrumptious late lunch made with local ingredients. It's all happening on Friday, August 1, 11 AM–4 PM. The cost is \$95 per person. For more information or to reserve a spot, go to learngreatfoods.com/mi_petoskey or call 231-758-3407.

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