

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Coronavirus Protection at Farmers' Markets in Massachusetts

Why can't I touch the produce?

We know it makes the farmers market experience different. We know in some cases that it slows down service. We don't like it any more than you do and neither do the farmers. However, there's not much we can do about it.

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) issued guidance and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) issued an order that each prohibits customers from touching produce at farmers markets. This restriction is unfortunately one of the prices we have to pay for farmers markets to be open at all right now.

Why can't I eat in the market?

Eating involves bringing your hand to your mouth, which can spread germs. Eating is prohibited to reduce opportunities for contamination and transmission of the virus.

Why do you spray my gloves with hand sanitizer when I enter?

We don't know where those gloves have been. What did you touch with them before you entered the market? Where they nestled in your pocket next to a used tissue? Did you wear them at the last place you shopped?

Wearing gloves is about protecting YOU. Washing or sanitizing hands is about protecting YOU & OTHERS from what might be on your hands (or your gloves), so we spray your gloves to ensure they are hygienic. You're welcome to wash them instead if you prefer.

Why can't I bring my pet to the market this year?

Pets attract people. Why wouldn't they? They are cute, fun, social animals. A perfect stranger may walk up and interact with you and your pet. Is that person going to maintain social distancing when they do that? Maybe not.

Pets encourage socializing and congregating and those activities need to be minimized at farmers markets right now to protect everyone's health.

During the COVID-19 crisis, we are encouraging shoppers to get in, do their shopping, and get out as quickly as possible.

In addition, some local Boards of Health (BOH) prohibit pets in farmers markets. Service animals are always welcome.

Why can't I enter through the exit? The vendor I want to go to is right there.

We're sorry that the new setup of the farmers market means you have to do a bit more walking. We know that this can be challenging for shoppers with health or mobility issues.

Markets are doing everything they can to maintain the one-way flow of people through the market to protect your health. This way, you're not breathing in what a person walking towards you just breathed out.

Markets are also required to monitor and control the number of customers allowed within the market at a given time. We do that by counting people as they enter and exit. If you enter through the exit, that throws off the count.

Why do I have to wear a mask?

Gov. Baker issued an order requiring the wearing of masks or cloth face covering in public. The CDC also recommends that everyone wear cloth face coverings when leaving their homes, regardless of whether they have fever or symptoms of COVID-19. This is because of evidence that people with COVID-19 can spread the disease, even when they don't have any symptoms.

I wear a mask to protect you and you wear a mask to protect me. Our vendors and staff are required by DPH to wear a face covering or mask to protect you. We need you to help protect our vendors and staff so there will continue to be a farmers market for you to shop at.

Do I really have to cover my nose with my mask? It's so hot and uncomfortable and fogs up my glasses.

Yes, you REALLY do. Covering your mouth is only half the battle. You MUST cover your mouth

AND your nose to protect against virus transmission. If you experience fogging of your glasses, consider trying a mask with a nose wire or add a nose wire to one of your existing masks.

Why do I see a few people walking around the market without a mask? Why aren't you doing anything about them?

There are a few exceptions to who is required to wear a mask:

Children under the age of two should NOT wear a mask.

For children between the ages of two and five, it is at the parent's discretion.

There are also certain medical conditions that can prevent someone from wearing a mask.

Market staff are doing everything they can to ensure that everyone who is required to wear a mask is doing so.

Can I bring my reusable bag?

You can bring your reusable bag, but keep in mind that vendors can't touch your bag. They will bag your produce in a bag (recyclable paper, compostable plastic, or single-use plastic) and hand it to you. You then need to put it in your own reusable bag.

While we're talking about reusable bags, please don't put your reusable bag down on a vendor's table. If you do, the vendor needs to stop what they are doing and sanitize their table, costing them valuable time when they could be helping the next customer in line. We can all do our part to keep the lines moving.

Why aren't there more vendors at the farmers market? Where are some of my old favorites?

Some markets have been forced to reduce the number of vendors due to a combination of social distancing requirements and limited space.

Some markets are welcoming back the same number of vendors but not all of the vendors are ready to sell. We had a cool spring this year, so many farmers are running behind schedule with their planting, unless they have greenhouses. In addition, vast amounts of uncertainty this spring around COVID-19 and whether farmers markets would open have also led to delays.

In many cases, your favorite vendors ARE coming back. It may just take them a little while to get up to speed. Check at the market managers tent to find out

if your old favorite is coming back this year. If not, think about checking out other vendors to find a new favorite.

When are farmers markets going to return to "normal?"

We wish we knew! We don't anticipate any changes to any of the new requirements or restrictions at farmers markets anytime soon. With that said, when we do receive the green light to relax restrictions, we'll be sure to let you know!