



## A Visit to the Lexington Farmers' Market

**During a visit to the Lexington Farmers' Market we saw colorful tomatoes, peppers, melons and more -- and talked with a few of the dedicated farmers who work there.**

Scott Evans is a Jessamine County farmer and a 15-year veteran of the farmers' market. Drought! It's hit much of Kentucky hard this year.

Still, we saw proof that the farmers at the Lexington Farmers' Market have found ways to work around the obstacles of a hot, dry summer.

During a recent visit to the market, our mouths watered at the sight of the colorful, warm tomatoes, peppers, melons and squash covering the tables.

We stopped by to talk with several farmers—all trying to keep cool under the clean, white canopies they set up to shade their garden wares. We asked for advice on how they get started, about their biggest challenges--and what they do with their leftover produce.

Scott Evans, who owns a farm in Jessamine County, Ky., has been farming for about 20 years—and has been coming to the farmers' market for 15 years.

Pay a visit to the Lexington Farmers Market or find a farmers' market near you. Surrounded by luscious orange and red tomatoes and baskets of bright green peppers, Evans echoed the words of other farmers saying the biggest challenge for vegetable farmers like him is the weather.

"It's the growing conditions," he says, "and managing diseases, too."

(Even our CSA is struggling a bit to fill our vegetable boxes this month—but that's part of the risk we accepted when we signed up to share in the bounty of the local harvest.)

Evan's advice to farmers wanting to enter the farmers' market business, "Be patient."

Roland McIntosh runs the Pawpaw Plantation in Powell County, Ky. "It takes a while to build up a customer base," he says. "But once you do, customers will come; they appreciate the fresh, local food. They know I grow everything I sell. They're looking for that."

Roland McIntosh, who runs Pawpaw Plantation in Powell County, Ky., has this advice for those who want to set up shop at the farmers' market. Research: "This should come first. Talk to other farmers at the market, observe and see what is being sold," he says. Learn: "Then learn how to grow the crop that you decide on. Your university cooperative extension service is a great place to start." Start Small: He encouraged farmers to start small, visit farmers' markets to see what works--and then, later on, consider adding more to their stalls.

Over at the Crooked Creek Farm stall, Jason and Darlene Bailey offer a spread that looks like a mini grocery store.

Darlene and Jason Bailey took over the Crooked Creek Farm after Jason's parents retired.

The



couple took over the Jessamine County farm from Jason's parents--and their life-long farming experience showed.

Jason takes the farmers' market challenges in stride. His biggest business challenge: making sure he has enough staff available to help in the fields and getting all the produce to the market.

Otherwise, he tells other farmers' market hopefuls, "Just go for it!"

Another burning question for the farmers: What do you do with all the tomatoes, beans and other produce that doesn't sell?

Give it away to people who need it.

Plan ahead and try to grow only what you know you can sell.

And as Jason Bailey says, "Just feed it to the cows and the goats!"