

Tips for Selling to: Restaurants

NCAT Marketing Tip Sheet Series

Restaurants are businesses that provide full meals and drinks, and try to offer a unique atmosphere and menu for customers. Some restaurants, especially locally owned ones, now want to feature dishes using local produce. This presents a good marketing opportunity for farmers to sell to them directly.

Advantages

★ key point

- Chefs value fresh, high-quality products.

Considerations

- Expect small order size and frequent delivery.
- Chefs value top quality produce.
- It's important to provide the buyer with a weekly availability list.
- Chefs may require a consistent supply of particular items.

Tips

- ★ **Be consistent.** Chefs expect a product will be delivered if they put it on the menu.
- Build a relationship with the entire staff. Chefs move frequently.
- ★ **Chefs are on a tight schedule and generally require deliveries when they're not busy, such as before 10 a.m. or between 2 and 5 p.m.**
- Introduce new products by dropping off free samples with your regular deliveries.
- ★ **Fax or email a list of available products for the chef to order from.**
- Use the chefs as your best source of market information. They may know what the next big thing is before you do.
- Know how the chef is using your product and be prepared to talk about other ways to use it.
- In the autumn, ask the chefs what products they want you to grow next season.
- ★ **Ask about each restaurant's needs, including pack, size, variety, post-harvest preferences, new items, and how they would like to place orders (by fax, phone text message, or email).**

For this market you can expect:

- Low-to-medium volume
- Higher prices

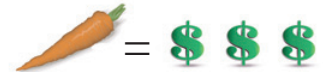


Photo: Tammy Hinman, NCAT.



Key Questions to Ask Yourself

- ★ **How far in advance do the chefs need to see an accurate schedule of product availability in order to allow them to plan their menus?**
 - What restaurants are the best fit for my product profile? Ethnic restaurants, specialty bakeries, high-end gourmet restaurants?
 - What production, handling, storage, and delivery methods will I use to ensure the freshest and highest quality products to high-end chefs? Highlight these in outreach to chefs.
 - How frequently and quickly am I able to deliver to restaurants? What are the chef's expectations about this?
- ★ **How do the restaurants want to communicate with me? Cell phone, email, text message, fax?**

Resources for Selling to Restaurants

- **ATTRA Publications**
Prices vary for individual publications. Many are free. An inexpensive subscription to ATTRA will give you access to all 350+ publications and databases.
www.attra.ncat.org
 - **Selling to Restaurants** (2004)
 - **New Markets for Your Crops** (2008)
(also available in Spanish)
 - **Scheduling Vegetable Plantings for Continuous Harvest** (2008)
 - **Season Extension Techniques for Market Gardeners** (2005)
 - **Postharvest Handling of Fruits and Vegetables** (2000)
 - **Illustrated Guide to Growing Safe Produce on Your Farm: GAPs** (2011) (also available in Spanish)
- **Chefs Collaborative** works with chefs and the greater food community, including farmers, to celebrate local foods and foster a more sustainable food supply.
www.chefscollaborative.org
- **Selling Directly to Restaurants and Grocery Stores.**
Washington State Department of Agriculture. 2010.
<http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/DOCS/3-sellingDirectlyToRestaurantsAndGroceryStores.pdf>



Photo: Markristo Farm.

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