Best Practices for Sampling at Kentucky Farmers Markets

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Center for Crop Diversification Webinar
Tim Woods, Sharon Spencer, Miranda Hileman, and Linda McMaine
2011 Regional Farm Market Sampling Survey

Tim Woods
University of Kentucky, Agricultural Economics
Why is sampling important?

* Sampling gives you the ability to showcase your product the way that you know it is best!

* Our research has shown strong direct effects between sampling and purchasing at farmers markets, the impact also extends to future purchases and referrals. Sampling can be a vital part of your direct food marketing program.

* Customers want to taste your products and know how they were produced. Give them a chance with sampling!
Note: Based on 302 patron intercepts in 11 different Kentucky Farm Markets, 2009. Services rated on 1 = ‘not important’ to 10 = ‘very important’
2011 Regional Farm Market Sampling Survey

- 3,406 respondents from 8 states
- Favorite food items to sample:
  - Fresh fruit
  - Fresh vegetables
  - Cheeses
- Primary reasons patrons sample food products:
  - To determine if they like the taste
  - To decide if they will buy the product
Top reasons visitors tried a sample:
* Friendliness of the vendor
* Ease of accessing samples
* Presentation of samples

Sampling had an IMMEDIATE purchasing impact:
* 55% purchased the product they sampled when they had not planned to.
* 17% that did not buy the sampled product that day planned to in the future.
* Sampling significantly impacted ALL purchases from vendor
  * 45% purchased from the vendor
  * 38% recommended the product to a friend
  * 34% recommended the vendor to a friend
  * 20% purchased other products from the vendor

* Barriers to sampling were noted:
  * No samples available
  * Crowded sampling areas
  * Uncertain taste/ingredients
  * Food safety concerns
* 56% of respondents had an EXCELLENT experience!

* They want to try more!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate your sampling experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 3,406.
Other Places Farmers Market Patrons Sampled Food Products

Figure 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sampled (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grocery food store</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community farm market</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival or event</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club store</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supercenter</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-farm retail market</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gourmet or specialty food store</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural food store</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 3,406
“Best Ever” Food Sampling Venues

Figure 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community farmers market</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery store</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club store</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-farm retail market</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival or event</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/can’t recall</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty food store</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural foods store</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 3,406
Frequency of Product Purchasing

Figure 7.

Yes, and I hadn't planned to 55%
No, but planned to in the future 17%
Yes, but I already planned to 16%
No, and I didn't want to 8%
Was going to but changed my mind 3%
Can't recall 1%

N = 1,132
Top 5 Reasons Farmers Market Patrons gave as barriers to sampling:

- No Available Samples
- Crowded Sampling Area
- Uncertain of Taste
- Uncertain Ingredients
- Food Safety Concerns
To access the full report, it is available online: http://www.ca.uky.edu/cmspubsclass/files/extensionpubs/2012-19.pdf or as a File Download in this Adobe Connect meeting room.

Or, contact Miranda for a hard copy: miranda.hileman@uky.edu or 859-218-4384
Sampling at Kentucky Farmers’ Markets

Miranda Hileman, Center for Crop Diversification
Sharon Spencer, Kentucky Department of Agriculture
What is a Sample?

* A sample is “a food product promotion where only a bite-sized portion of a food (or foods) is offered free of charge to demonstrate its characteristics. A whole meal, individual hot dish or whole sandwich, is not recognized as a sample.”

* Kentucky allows samples to be offered free of charge to farmers’ market customers without obtaining a temporary food service permit from a local health department.
Samples in Practice

Ayres Family Orchard Jam and “Fried Dried Apple Pie” Samples
Home Town Creamery Cheese Samples

Tracy Curtsinger says, “Sampling is hard to do, when the market is in full swing and we both are dealing with customers. We almost need another person to be here, doing the sampling for us...”

“...but sampling does teach customers about my products and helps them understand why my cheeses are more costly.”
Elsie Ewbank of Sweet Virginia’s Homemade Treats says, “We are glad people can taste our products, because they are more expensive and people want to know they are getting something very good.”
Samples in Practice

Grand Opening Celebration at the Jackson County Farmers Market
June 2012

Steamed Cabbage samples
To offer samples at a farmers market, you must obtain a Sampling Certificate from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

- Read the Sampling chapter of the Kentucky Farmers’ Market Manual
- Complete the KDA Farmers’ Market Sampling Application
- The application will be reviewed and approved and you will be issued a sampling certificate by KDA.
- No formal classroom training is required.
Sampling Certification in Kentucky

(continued)

* It is valid for 2 years.
* Vendors offering raw or unprocessed foods must also be GAP trained.
* The certificate must be on display at the markets when samples are being offered.
* The sampling certificate is only issued to an individual.
Two types of sampling certificates are available, depending on what products you will be sampling.
Clean Produce

* All raw produce MUST be washed well with running potable water (water must carry away any dirt or contaminants).

* Water used to touch your product or utensils MUST be potable. Municipal water is potable.
  * If using water from a well, cistern or non-municipal source if must be tested and the records must be retained.

* Many farmers choose to prepare samples at home where the quality of water, surfaces, utensils and vegetables can be easily controlled. The samples may be washed, cut up and placed in disposable, individual cups with lids.
**Clean Hands**

* Hand sanitizers DO NOT substitute for proper hand washing.
* Gloves DO NOT substitute for proper hand washing.
* The proper way to wash your hands is:
  * Wet your hands
  * Apply liquid soap
  * Briskly rub your hands together including fingernails and backs of hands for a minimum of 20 seconds
  * Rinse your hands under free-flowing water
  * Dry your hands with a disposable paper towel.
Example of a Hand Wash Station

Hand Wash Station Components:

1. Table
2. Potable Water – 15 gallons
3. Free-flowing spigot
4. Used water discard bucket
5. Liquid hand soap
6. Paper towels
7. Wastepaper basket
Hand Wash Station in Practice

Note: Paper towels and the wastepaper basket were located on another table. This picture also shows the three compartment wash-rinse-sanitize station.
**Samples in Practice**

**Clean Utensils**

* Any utensil that touches a sample must be washed in a detergent, rinsed in clean water, and soaked for 60 seconds in a sanitizing solution.

* Sanitizing solution must be made by approximately 50ppm of household bleach to water solution (one capful of bleach per gallon of water).

* If more than one or two different utensils are used, a cleaning, rinsing, and sanitizing station is required.

* If you prepare samples at the market, bring your clean utensils in a CLEAN bag to the market, and also bring a bag marked DIRTY for the used utensils.
Samples in Practice

Three compartment Wash – Rinse – Sanitize stations.
Sampling in Practice

Raw or Unprocessed Food Sampling

* Generally fresh fruits and vegetables
* Must be rinsed thoroughly in clean, potable water
* Samples must be protected from contamination at all times.
* When preparing cut samples ahead of time, wrap cut product in plastic wrap.
* Mechanical refrigeration is recommended, but if ice is used remember to continuously drain the items to prevent them from soaking water.
* You MUST have an **All Samples Certificate** to sample raw or unprocessed foods.
Cantaloupes and Muskmelons need a good scrubbing!
* This will remove all the dirt deep in the netting of the melon.
* Recommended to wash melons in a 200ppm chlorine solution prior to slicing.
* After slicing, store at 41°F or below.
* It’s easier to do this at home. Once melons are washed and ready to come to the market, make sure to keep them clean by separating them in clean bags or containers from unwashed items.
Samples in Practice

To prepare sliced apples for sampling at the market:

- Knife must be properly cleaned
- Use a plastic cutting board
- Wear gloves when slicing apples and placing them into disposable sample cups

Lakeview Farms – Paula Red Apples

Apples sales skyrocketed as a result of “A Taste of the Market.” Boone County Extension’s Diane Mason said, “That little boy just sampled an apple and ran right over to buy some!”
Samples in Practice

Cooked or Processed Food Sampling

* Items in this category are: baked goods, jams, jellies, canned goods, meat samples, eggs, etc.

* All foods must be protected from environmental contamination and insects at all times
Cooked meat products are eligible to be sampled at farmers’ markets, here are a few guidelines:

* All meats must come from inspected and approved sources
* Meat items may be served directly from a covered grill using sanitary methods, such as toothpicks, tissues, or sample cups
* If foods are cooked and held, the meat must be held at 135°F or above.
* Foods must be protected from environmental contamination and insects at all times
Catalpa Acres Farm in Walton, Kentucky produce all natural meats, cheeses, fresh produce, and canned goods. “A Taste of the Market program definitely sells products for us; it especially helps sell the products that are being sampled on a given day.”
Nothing but net!

An easy technique to keep flies out of your samples. This is a good way to cut the cost of putting lids on each sample cup.
Where to get “bug nets”?

* Set of 2 from Bed, Bath and Beyond is approximately $7
  http://www.bedbathandbeyond.com/

* Set of 3 from www.amazon.com is approximately $15
Signage: Free Samples!

A sign is an easy way to draw customers to your booth.
Spinach Slaw

2 cups chopped iceberg lettuce
2 cups chopped red cabbage
2 cups chopped green cabbage
1 1/2 cups fresh spinach
1/4 cup canola mayonnaise

1/4 cup hummus, original flavor
2 tablespoons local honey
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper

1. Wash, quarter, and core lettuce; red cabbage and green cabbage.
2. Thinly slice lettuce and cabbage quarters; chop slices into small pieces.
3. Wash and tear spinach leaves into small pieces.

Buy Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmer's market, or roadside stand.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings.
Nutritional Analysis: 70 calories, 4.5 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 133 mg sodium, 11 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 6 g sugars, 2 g protein.

Watermelon Tomato Salad

3 cups seeded watermelon cubes (1/4 inch)
3 cups of cubed tomatoes (1/4 inch)
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
6 lettuce leaves

Sprinkle with cracked black pepper to taste.
Yield: Makes 6 to 7 cups servings.
Nutritional Analysis: 100 calories, 5 g fat, 2 g protein, 18 g carbohydrate, 0 mg cholesterol, 105 mg sodium.

Directions: Combine watermelon and tomatoes in a large bowl. Sprinkle with salt; toss to coat. Let stand 15 minutes.
Stir in onion, vinegar, and oil.
Serve chilled on lettuce leaves, if desired.

Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand.
Pooled Sampling

* Testing practice that requires 1 or 2 people to operate a table with samples from several vendors at the market

* Much easier for producers

* Customers can try several things at once, then go shop!

The Pooled-Sampling Project table at the Owenton Farmers Market, 2009
Pooled Sampling

Boone County Extension Agents host “A Taste of the Market” sampling event once a month during the summer market season.
Other staffing ideas

* Kentucky Champion Food Volunteers
* Culinary School students
* High School or College Agriculture Club students
* FFA students
* Summer Farm Interns

* Be creative—talk to you Farmers Market Manager, invite your friends to help you out and enjoy a day at the farmers market. Just remember they need to have their own Sampling Certificate before helping you.
Plate it Up! Asparagus Sampling

Asian Asparagus Salad

1 pound fresh asparagus
1/2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
2 teaspoons sugar or artificial sweetener
1 tablespoon olive oil

1. Snap off and discard the root ends of the asparagus.
2. Wash remaining stalks thoroughly.
3. Slice stalks into 1/2 inch lengths on the diagonal.
4. Blanch asparagus for 1-3 minutes in boiling water, until bright green in color.
5. Cool immediately.

Combine soy sauce, sugar, olive oil, and sesame seeds in a small glass bowl. Mix dressing until sugar is dissolved.
In a gallon zip-seal bag, add asparagus and dressing. Turn bag to coat asparagus with dressing and chill in the refrigerator for 15 minutes. Turn bag again and chill for an additional 15 minutes before serving.

Yield: 4 1/2 cup servings.
Nutrition Analysis: 70 calories, 4.3 g total fat, 3 g sat. fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 250 mg sodium, 7 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 3 g protein.

Buying Kentucky Proud is easy. Look for the label at your grocery store, farmers market, or roadside stand.

Kentucky Asparagus

SEASON: April through May.

NUTRITION FACTS: Asparagus is a good source of vitamin A and folate. One-half cup of fresh, steamed asparagus has 22 calories, 2 grams of protein, and 4 grams of carbohydrate.

SELECTION: Choose bright green stalks with tightly closed tips. The most tender stalks are apple green in color with purple-tinted tips.

STORAGE: Fresh asparagus will keep 1-2 weeks in the refrigerator. Refrigerate upright with cut ends in water or with cut ends wrapped in wet a paper towel in a plastic bag.

PREPARATION: One pound of asparagus will yield 4 one-half cup servings, about 6 spears per serving. Wash asparagus thoroughly in cool, running water. Eat asparagus raw or lightly boil, steam, stir-fry, or grill. Overcooked asparagus will be mushy. Try seasoning it with herbs, butter, or Parmesan cheese.

ASPARAGUS
Kentucky Proud Project
County Extension Agents for Family and Consumer Sciences
University of Kentucky Nutrition and Food Science students
March 2011

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service are available to all people regardless of age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. For more information, contact your county’s Extension agent for Family and Consumer Sciences or visit www.ca.uky.edu/askfrt.
Steve’s Ready to Dip Beer Cheeses provide a variety of cheese dips and spreads. Nancy Trevino, an employee, says, “Being next to the cheese case is my favorite spot because I’m able to reach over and pick up hand my product to the customer while I have them captive. This way, they don’t forget to pick it up on their way out.”

The Good Foods Market and Café hosts “Sampling Saturday” on the first Saturday of every month and is a great way for coop customers to meet the producers. Four to five producers participate each month; each is set up as close to their product on the shelves as possible.
Screamin’ Mimi’s sauces are hot and tangy, and will certainly wake up your taste buds!
Donna Madden of Screamin’ Mimi’s does sampling events in several grocery stores in Lexington, Kentucky. She said that, “sampling is fun for me, I like to show people my products and I hope they enjoy them as much as my family does.”
Erik Walles of Berries on Bryan Station has been processing and selling his own pickled okra. Erik views sampling as a “great way to get my pickled okra product into people’s minds and it also lets people get to know me, the producer, and while I have a captive audience, I’ll tell them about all the health benefits of my okra.”
There will be folks that visit your market that are highly allergic to nuts, milk products, glutens and other common ingredients. It is your responsibility to let those sampling your value-added products know what is in your samples, as well as if the product was in contact with allergens at some point.

Food safety signs, like those pictured at right are available at: www.safetysign.com/ or www.compliancesigns.com/
Hygiene

* Wash hands properly and frequently
* Avoid bare hand contact with food samples
* Food employees should have clean outer garments and wear hair restraints (hair net or ball cap)
* All food must be stored at least 6 inches off the ground
* Keep garbage and trash covered and empty often
* Ensure that food transportation is in clean and sanitary vehicles
The vendor offering samples **assumes all liability**

- **Liability insurance** covers the farmers market for accidents that may occur at the market during business hours, such as customer falls and injuries.

- **Product liability policies** cover the individual vendors for liability from the products they have sold. Producers who sell value-added products and do sampling events may want to purchase this type of insurance. Policy cost is usually based on gross sales.

Be sure to discuss both types and your specific needs with an insurance professional.
Producer Perspective on Sampling at Farmers Markets

Linda McMaine
McMaine’s Riverhaven Farm
Producer Perspective

* Linda McMaine
* McMaine’s Riverhaven Farm
* Salvisa, Kentucky
Producer Perspective
Producer Perspective

Rolling out hay as a mulch for weed control.

Summer Squash!

Melon!
Sampling *Jams/jellies*

- Unusual items benefit most—tomato and hot spiced tomato jam
- Use of cream cheese on cracker works well for selling hot pepper jam and hot spiced tomato jam, since that is the most common way to use hot jams
- Sampling Concord grape jelly shows it is worth the additional cost over store bought grape jelly
- Target the kids—they invariably ask to try the Concord grape, and are very influential in purchases!
- Give a mystery sample (I use this with the spiced tomato usually)
Producer Perspective
Bean soup
* We sell a 6 bean soup mix complete with a seasoning pack and recipe. When there is power available we make a slow cooker full and give out samples.

Eggplant
* We made two kinds of baba ghanoush and gave out samples to help promote the sale of eggplant.

Edamame soybeans
* We gave out samples (in the shell) of our edamames to give people an exposure.
Producer Perspective

* Relative results: The sales/sample ratio is better at the farmers’ market than at special events such as a holiday bazaar.

* Focus on the long term. People who try and buy a product new to them may become a customer for life.

* Tie the sampling with something else, such as a recipe handout.
* Sampling sells our products!
* It is hard to do by yourself at a busy farmers’ market, but still worth it.
* It’s not expensive to do.
I understand that signs can help draw people to my booth, improve product presentation, and can help build my product’s identity

I have presented my products in a way that I hope provides customers with easy access to samples

I will have products available to sell on days I provide samples, and will showcase them on my table

I have enough help (employees, volunteers, etc.) to provide samples during a busy market day

I have taken the opportunity to define terms like “certified,” “sustainable,” and other phrases mean when I use those terms
Best Practices Checklist: Sampling Event Preparation (cont’d)

* I have developed storage guidelines for my products available for customers that may be new or unfamiliar to handling my farm’s products
* I have acquired the proper utensils, materials and equipment (hand wash station, wash-rinse-sanitize station) to provide my customers with a safe sampling experience
* If selling meat, dairy, or processed products, I understand my legal regulations for sampling and labeling those products
* I have thought about offering coupons, gift cards, or special offers during sampling events
* As a market vendor, I have the necessary product liability insurance coverage for my farm
I understand that growing relationships with my customers is just as critical as producing quality products.

I am prepared to engage customers by offering samples to each of them.

I provide nutritional information, a list of ingredients, and health benefit information when sampling.

I have prepared recipe cards or idea lists for customers to learn how to use my products.

I have simple, clear printed materials (like a brochure or website) that provide information about my product and how it is produced.

I will discuss the benefits of my product’s quality, freshness, or locally-grown attributes.
Best Practices Checklist: Follow-up After the Sampling Event

* I have access to email, websites, social networking sites, and other communication channels to discuss products and availability
* I have thought about opportunities to create an event around sampling at different venues
* I have thought about working with other market vendors to do a pooled sampling event
* I have considered having a chef do a cooking demonstration using my products
Helpful Resources


* Farmers’ Market Coalition, http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/


* Kentucky Department of Agriculture, www.kyagr.com/marketing/farmers-market.html


* University of Kentucky, Center for Crop Diversification, http://www.uky.edu/Ag/CCD/
Like us on Facebook!

- Center for Crop Diversification, https://www.facebook.com/CenterforCropDiversification
- Kentucky Proud, https://www.facebook.com/kentuckyproud
Participants of this webinar will not be issued the Kentucky Sampling Certification, but please fill out the KDA Farmers’ Market Sampling application and return it to Sharon Spencer for your renewal or to be certified for the first time.
Please help us plan future training opportunities by participating in our post-webinar evaluation.

* Click the **Sampling Post-Webinar Evaluation** in the Web Links box. Then click, “Browse to”.

Thank you for joining us!
Questions?

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