

## Stepping On The Soapbox (for just 1 minute)



I just spent the weekend visiting two of my lifelong best friends in New York City and a conversation we had while strolling through Union Square Market brought to mind the misconceptions many of us have about farmers markets. One friend commented that the price of strawberries at \$7/quart was too high and that she was often disappointed by the “high prices” at farmers markets.

As a farmers market advocate, but also a gal who hates to nag, I wrestled with holding my tongue versus sharing what I knew to be true. Given the 40 years of

friendship between us, I decided to step onto the soapbox.

Yes, I said, \$7 might seem high, but the berries in question were the first of the season and very likely grown with extra effort. The farmer may have used row cover (an extra expense) or picked off some of the blossoms—a technique that would encourage the remaining flowers to mature into berries faster, but would sacrifice overall production.

I reminded my friends that those slightly more expensive berries at the farmers market were also likely to be fresher, more nutritious and more delicious than their grocery store cousins. That's because farmers who sell directly to consumers are more willing to experiment with heirloom or new varieties in an effort to grow produce with exceptional taste. Those strawberries from California and Florida are road-warriors, grown first for their ability to make it through a cross country road-trip. Sometimes flavor rides in the backseat.



There's more to to consider. The berries at the Union Square Market in New York City were grown less than 40 miles away from the market on Long Island. The berries at the Yarmouth Farmers Market are typically grown within a 20 mile radius. Buying locally grown produce helps farmers stay on their land and

preserve open space. Once it's gone, it rarely comes back. Our farms are part of our heritage and our quality of life. ***Can you imagine a childhood in Maine without berry picking?***

But the number one reason I remember my tote bags every Thursday is the farmers themselves. I want their small businesses to succeed. Buying directly from vendors at a farmers market gives them a better return for their product and a fighting chance in a global economy. It helps the economy in Maine. I am grateful for their hard work and the delicious products they bring to market every week. I know you are too.

So, thanks in advance for supporting the Yarmouth Farmers Market this season.

Truly, we appreciate your business.

Amy Sinclair  
YFM Manager

P.S. That's my son Zach in the strawberry patch in 2008. Time sure flies.