



# THE VOTES ARE IN!

## American Farmland Trust's Inaugural America's Favorite Farmers Markets Contest Celebrates Locally Treasured Markets that Connect Farms, Food and Communities

THE SUMMER MONTHS are best enjoyed when paired with freshly picked regional produce, and one of the best ways to indulge in the season's best local food is by shopping at a farmers market. "Farmers markets supply the great seasonal foods we love," says Julia Freedgood, managing director of American Farmland Trust's Growing Local initiative. "And they help consumers better understand where their food comes from—fostering a closer relationship between farmers and communities."

Over the summer, American Farmland Trust embarked on a national campaign to celebrate local farmers markets. More than 800 farmers markets registered for our inaugural America's Favorite Farmers Markets contest—vying not only for the title in large, medium, and small categories, but also for a shipment of special *No Farms No Food* tote bags to distribute to market customers. Nearly 30,000 farmers market customers went online to AFT's website to cast their votes for their favorite farmers markets.

The contest helped us bring national attention to many locally treasured farmers markets, which play a pivotal role in keeping their local farmers in business. By the conclusion of the contest in August during National Farmers Market Week, hundreds of stories in the media called

attention to the contest and its participating farmers markets. Market managers and shoppers alike enjoyed the opportunity to make their voices heard about the benefits that farmers markets provide to their communities. As a market manager from Pennsylvania told us, "Even though we didn't win, the contest was a great way to get our customers involved and to show them that we are proactively making a difference by joining the market movement around the country!"

In coming years, we hope the contest will continue to support the tireless efforts of farmers market managers, while giving a platform to consumers to celebrate the local farmers that produce such a bounty for their tables. As one farmers market customer enthused after voting in the contest, "The market has strengthened the community in this small town, increased neighborliness and brought people together. From May to November, my family buys almost all our food at the market, thus preserving our local farmers and farmland. We love our market!"

We hope you enjoy reading about the three winning markets. They each have a great story to tell about the importance of local farms, local food, local consumers and the place in the community that brings them all together.

## COLLINGSWOOD FARMERS MARKET, NEW JERSEY: A Thriving Market in a Classic American Community

WINNER: *Small-sized Market*

Named a “classic” town by its regional planning commission, Collingswood, New Jersey, is a place that builds for the future by restoring the past. Its farmers market has staked out a unique location in Collingswood’s bustling downtown, setting up shop by the raised train track that carries customers along the Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO) line to nearby Philadelphia. The location has one key benefit: in the event of inclement weather, customers and vendors can move under the shelter of the track.

Now ten years old, the market began as an all-volunteer effort of Proud Neighbors of Collingswood, launched at a time when South Jersey farmers were reluctant to give the community market concept a try. Today, many of the original farmers from the first season are still bringing weekly harvests, and the market has grown into an established part of the community. Many of the market’s 28

vendors are family farmers who operate relatively small, multi-generational farms: farmers like the Jarvis family of Springdale Farms, who operate the last working farm in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

During the market day event to celebrate Collingswood’s win and hand out the *No Farms No Food* tote bags, New Jersey Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Al Murray introduced us to the farmers, including one who spoke about the economic importance of the market to his operation. The farmer recalled that his father was not sold on direct-to-consumer sales until he learned that the farm’s gross sales for one day at the farmers market had equaled the gross sales for a truckload of fruit sent to a wholesale market.

Lessons from the success of Collingswood’s much heralded farmers market can be learned by nearby communities, where farmers face similar challenges operating on the urban-edge but have opportunities to gain by selling their products directly to consumers. In nearby Burlington County, New Jersey, for instance, American Farmland Trust experts are helping the county’s farmland preservation program address challenges while building a vibrant local food and farming system.



Young local food advocates and shoppers at the Collingswood Farmers Market in Collingswood, New Jersey.



## WILLIAMSBURG FARMERS MARKET, VIRGINIA: A Modern-day Market on a Historic Commons

WINNER: *Medium-sized Market*

Held on Merchant’s Square in Williamsburg, Virginia, the Williamsburg Farmers Market retains the air of a modern-day marketplace, bustling with trade amidst the historic buildings that once played a key role in our country’s Colonial era. From pawpaw fruit to peanuts and seafood, the vendors at the Williamsburg Farmers Market showcase a true variety

of local and regional products. (The market is also known as the place to meet for the community’s canine citizens.)

Nearby, a statue of Virginia’s native son and founding father of our country, Thomas Jefferson, looks on. As a noted farmer himself, Jefferson likely would be pleased to see the success of this young farmers market, which is re-viving agricultural commerce on the streets where he once may have shopped himself.

At the event celebrating the market’s selection as one of America’s Favorite Farmers Markets, Todd P. Haymore, Commissioner of Virginia’s Department of Agriculture

## America's Favorite Farmers Markets Top 20

SMALL

Collingswood Farmers Market, Collingswood, NJ  
 Rue and Gwen Gibson Farm Market at Fresno State, Fresno, CA  
 Smart Markets at Mason, Fairfax, VA  
 Crossroads Farmers Market, Takoma Park, MD  
 The Farmers Market at the Williamsville Mill, Williamsville, NY  
 City of Virginia Beach Farmers Market, Virginia Beach, VA  
 Bloomingdale Farmers Market, Washington, DC  
 Winters Farmers Market, Winters, CA  
 The Historic Eastern Market, Lancaster, PA  
 Point Reyes Farmers Market, Point Reyes Station, CA  
 West Chester Growers Market, West Chester, PA  
 Pearl Farmers Market, San Antonio, TX  
 Urban Oaks Organic Farm, New Britain, CT  
 Amherst Farmers Market, Amherst, MA  
 New Baltimore Farmers Market, New Baltimore, MI  
 Dallas Farmers Market, Dallas, GA  
 Beaches Green Market, Jacksonville Beach, FL  
 Gloucester City Farmers Market, Gloucester City, NJ  
 Boyertown Farmers Market, Boyertown, PA  
 Burlington County Farmers Market, Moorestown, NJ

MEDIUM

Williamsburg Farmers Market, Williamsburg, VA  
 Capitol Market, Charleston, WV  
 Farmers Market at Minnetrista, Muncie, IN  
 Historic Lewes Farmers Market, Lewes, DE  
 Franklin County Farmers Market, Frankfort, KY  
 Mount Pleasant Farmers Market, Mount Pleasant, SC  
 Historic Roanoke City Market, Roanoke, VA  
 Yorktown Market Days at the River, Yorktown, VA  
 Westfield Farmers Market, Westfield, NY  
 Concord Farmers Market, Concord, CA  
 Emporia Farmers Market, Emporia, KS  
 Red Stick Farmers Market, Baton Rouge, LA  
 Market Square Farmers Market, Knoxville, TN  
 Saratoga Farmers Market, Saratoga Springs, NY  
 Poulsbo Farmers Market, Poulsbo, WA  
 Morgantown Farmers, Morgantown, WV  
 SKY Regional Farmers Market, Bowling Green, KY  
 Prosser Farmers Market, Prosser, WA  
 Goochland Farmers Market, Goochland, VA  
 Rehoboth Beach Farmers Market, Rehoboth Beach, DE

LARGE

Davis Farmers Market, Davis, CA  
 Ithaca Farmers Market, Ithaca, NY  
 Downtown Farmers Market, Salt Lake City, UT  
 St. Paul Farmers Market, St. Paul, MN  
 Downtown Lawrence Farmers Market, Lawrence, KS  
 Sunset Valley Farmers Market, Sunset Valley, TX  
 Memphis Farmers Market, Memphis, TN  
 Bloomington Community Farmers Market, Bloomington, IN  
 Downtown Phoenix Public Market, Phoenix, AZ  
 Lancaster Central Farmers Market, Lancaster, PA  
 Portland Farmers Market, Portland, OR  
 Ferry Plaza Farmers Market, San Francisco, CA  
 Dane County Farmers Market, Madison, WI  
 North Union Farmers Market Shaker Square, Cleveland, OH  
 Durham Farmers Market, Durham, NC  
 Chicago's Green City Farmers Market, Chicago, IL  
 Cache Valley Gardeners Market, Logan, UT  
 Carrboro Farmers Market, Carrboro, NC  
 Austin Farmers Market, Austin, TX  
 Marin Civic Center Farmers Markets, San Rafael, CA



(TOP RIGHT) Dogs love local food; (TOP LEFT) Thomas Jefferson spreads the “No Farms No Food” message; (BELOW) Commissioner of Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Todd P. Haymore, with AFT’s Julia Freedgood

and Consumer Services, joined local leaders and American Farmland Trust in congratulating the community. “The market’s success is the result of years of hard work and a commitment from our board, generous sponsors, staff and loyal customers,” said Marty Wilson, chair of the Williamsburg Farmers Market Board of Directors. “We are proud to be recognized by American Farmland Trust, whose goals are in line with our own: healthy farms, healthy food, and healthy communities.”

As Betsy Lackey, one contest voter and enthusiastic supporter of her local market, said, “What better location for a market than just minutes from Jamestown, Virginia, where first settlers landed and grew their own produce to live. Our farmland in this area, as it did when the settlers first landed, continues to produce many varieties of fresh food, which is a requirement of life. Saving farmland is our best source to grow and provide nourishing foods for everybody.”

## DAVIS FARMERS MARKET, CALIFORNIA: A Social and Economic Hub of the Community

WINNER: *Large-sized Market*

In California, the challenges of protecting farmland are immense, given the extent of the development pressure in one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. Fortunately, the customers of the Davis Farmers Market in Davis, California, are passionate about their farmers market, supporting it even when economic times are bad.

“We’ve seen a nice uptick in sales this year,” says market manager Randi MacNear. “It’s almost ironic that the overall economy seems to have driven a return to the kitchen and cooking, eating at home, and buying locally. People are realizing that it makes you feel cheerful to shop at the market, makes you feel physically and mentally better, and it’s good to be outside, talking in the community.”

Over the course of the summer, markets in two communities with agricultural colleges—U.C. Davis and Cornell University in Ithaca, New York—fought to the last hour of the contest, with Davis finally garnering over 10 percent of the nearly 30,000 votes cast nationwide to capture the “large-sized” market title.

California Secretary of Agriculture A.G. Karamura was one of the featured speakers at the event to recognize



Watermelon and tutus at the Davis Farmers Market

the market’s first place contest victory. The Yolo County Board of Supervisors declared September 12th to be “Davis Farmers Market Day,” and the California Senate added a proclamation of congratulations. “There was amazing friendship and support at the event,” adds MacNear. “Farmers markets are the face of agriculture. Our community thought it was important to tell the rest of the world just how important we think farmers, farmland and farmers markets are!”

“The commitment that the people of Davis and Yolo County made to their farmers market is second only to their commitment to farmland preservation,” says American Farmland Trust’s California director Ed Thompson, Jr. “They recognize that if there are no local farms, there can be no local food. And they have taken aggressive actions to prevent urban sprawl and keep the best land in agriculture.”

Passionate consumers of local food are important to American Farmland Trust’s work in California, where we are involved in projects that encourage local food production and consumption while protecting farmland: from San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom’s Blue Ribbon Commission to partnering with the California Board of Food and Agriculture to create a strategic plan for the future of the industry. “In all of these issues,” says Thompson, “the lovers of food and farmland are a critical voice.”



(LEFT) Davis market manager Randi MacNear speaks to the press about her market’s victory; (RIGHT) The Davis market bustles on a busy day.