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**PASO ROBLES FARMERS MARKETS CELEBRATE THEIR RESILIENCY FOR NATIONAL FARMERS MARKET WEEK 2020**

**Learn about delicious recipes, explore the market on a scavenger hunt with your kids, and learn more about using CalFresh EBT benefits to purchase fresh, local produce!**

The Tuesday and Saturday farmers’ markets in Paso Robles join other markets across San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties and across the country in celebrating National Farmers Market Week from August 2-8, 2020. Both markets will celebrate with scavenger hunts for kids, ideas for delicious recipes using market produce, and a raffle drawing. Come celebrate National Farmers Market Week at both markets near Downtown City Park at 11<sup>th</sup> and Spring Street on Tuesday, August 4th from 9 am - 11:30 am, and Saturday, August 8th from 9am - 1pm!

In the midst of a global pandemic, farmers’ markets — like all other small businesses — have been scrambling to continue operations for the farmers and communities that depend on them. Market managers have been at the forefront of adapting rapid solutions and innovation to protect staff, customers, and community. When conventional food supply chains failed at the start of the pandemic, farmers markets and local food systems clearly displayed the resiliency of short supply chains and interest in local foods spiked nationwide.

National Farmers Market Week is an annual celebration of farmers markets coordinated by the Farmers Market Coalition, a membership-based 503(c)3 nonprofit organization that supports farmers markets nationwide through training, technical assistance, and network-building. This year, the campaign is centered around the essential role that farmers markets play in the food system as demonstrated by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Tuesday market first opened in 1986, and the Saturday market in 2003. Both currently host between 10-20 farmers and vendors selling a wide variety of products, including: berries, peaches, dry farmed watermelon, zucchini, cauliflower, artichokes, honey, seaweed, fresh juices, artisanal bread, baked sweets, and delicious Mexican, Greek, and Italian food. In the past, the markets had more vendors and shoppers. Due to a lack of customers and community support, food vendors and farmers seek opportunities to sell at markets in other communities. However, both farmers’ markets have stayed open for the community during the COVID-19 Pandemic. They are ready to grow to accommodate customer needs. These markets are an essential service because they provide a safe place for the public to shop outside in fresh air, with plenty of room for social distancing, and offer “produce freshly picked the day of the market, [that] has only been touched by a few hands, [and] traveled just a few miles from the farm to the market.” – Robyn Gale, Market Manager of the Tuesday market.

Shopping at these markets are a great way to get to know your farmer. A member of the Hernandez Larsen Family Farm shares “As a farmer, I visualize my customers as I pick the product, making sure it is ripe, looks its best and will nourish them. I look forward to seeing my customers as well, and if there is time, to let them know a bit about the product, why it is important to our health to eat seasonally and locally. It's that rapport that is built with trust, knowing that we grow what we sell.”

Additionally, the Paso Robles Farmers Markets show their commitment to making fresh food accessible to all community members by accepting CalFresh (EBT) benefits and participating in the Market Match program. CalFresh, formerly known as Food Stamps, is a food assistance program in California which is federally funded by the US Department of Agriculture. Individuals and families participating in the CalFresh program receive federal benefits monthly which they can use to purchase certain food items at grocery stores and farmers' markets. Shoppers who redeem their CalFresh EBT benefits at farmers' markets can get additional money for fresh produce through the Market Match program. When a shopper visits these markets, they will receive tokens or vouchers in exchange for their CalFresh (EBT) benefits. Then, they can receive an equal amount of Market Match tokens free of charge to purchase more local fruits and vegetables. For example, a shopper at the Tuesday Paso Robles Farmers Market can spend \$15 with their EBT card and receive \$30 of tokens to spend on fresh produce. CalFresh benefits are matched dollar-for-dollar up to a maximum that varies depending on the market.

The following farmers' markets across SLO and SB counties are also open during the COVID-19 pandemic, and participate in the EBT and Market Match programs:

Monday: Baywood on Santa Maria Ave from 2-4:30pm

Wednesday: Atascadero Sunken Gardens from 3-6 pm

Thursday: Morro Bay Spencer's Market Parking Lot from 2-4:30pm

Saturday: Templeton on 6th St at the Templeton park from 9am-12:30pm

Sunday: Lompoc on Route 1 and Constellation Road, Vandenberg Village from 10am-2pm

The Friday market in Cambria on Main St. from 2:30-5:30pm accepts EBT. Visit [FMFinder.org](http://FMFinder.org) for more information about these markets and the Market Match program.

“Farmers markets are essential to the life and livelihood of millions of shoppers and tens of thousands of farmers.” says Ben Feldman, Executive Director of the [Farmers Market Coalition](#). “But farmers markets don't happen by accident. It takes the planning, organization, and execution of dedicated individuals and community organizations. That work is harder than ever and farmers markets and the vendors who sell at them need all the help they can get.”

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