

## Connecting with Others at the Farmers' Market

Going to my local farmers' market once a week all summer, I have been able to purchase fresh produce, fruit and meats.

In due time I began to notice that on each weekly visit I would run into one or more acquaintances that I didn't see on a regular basis. We took time to chat and caught up before we went on our way. Before you knew it, I walked away satisfied not only with my overflowing bag, but happy that I had shared a few extra moments with an old friend.

There's more to the farmers' market than supplying quality food. It provides an outlet for connections with others and moments for passing along of community information.

Nothing has changed. Ancient civilizations had their meeting places, although like in the Greek agora, only men were allowed for it was a political forum.

In most countries in the world, the market is a central point for towns and cities. It is pleasurable and educational to be surrounded by different types of foods and price points in foreign currency. Refrigeration in small apartments and homes makes it necessary for housewives to go to the market on a daily basis.

Exchange students coming to the United States will most often remark on the huge refrigerators and extra freezers Americans find that they must have to store food as if they would run out anytime in the next century.

Once I was in Tokyo in the world's largest wholesale fish market, and it was bustling with vendors weighing the catch and small business people negotiating sales. I had to watch around me at all times for small carts and trucks were moving through quickly and I didn't want to get

crushed. Now that's where I had the best sushi, too, at a tiny hole-in-the-wall spot off to the side of the market.

Another time in Marrakech, Morocco, in the winding alleys of the longest market in the world if it wasn't for my tour guide, I would never have figured out the maze of turns to get out into the main square.

The merchants were astute at bargaining and I had fun settling on a price for some silver jewelry in one shop. The owner and I eventually came agreement after haggling a bit. I would start to walk away. He would come out of his stall following me with a new lower price. I would shake my head, pause and then turn with a slightly in between price that we would both settle on. Of course, he would tell me how I was robbing him blind. Ha. It is all part of the art of the deal in many countries.

As a teenager, my mother would send me to the bakery in Polish Town a couple blocks from our house on Saturday afternoon when the bakery would have fresh rolls and breads straight from the oven. The closer I would get, the more I would be overcome with the aroma of newly baked goods.

My main reason for being so willing to go was that I loved the thick onion rolls. Every other kid I knew was waiting in line, too, and we would chat about Friday night's football game. My mother had my visit timed just right to get her baked goods before the Sold-Out sign went up on the door. Knowing my own habits, I ate at least one of those onion rolls before I got home, too.

Many towns with larger populations have year-round farmers' markets. Perhaps, our area will look into an indoor space centrally located for that purpose.

