

Matanuska Community Farmers' Market 2023 Policy Handbook

All vendors are responsible for abiding by MCFM policy. Policies are subject to change from year to year, and vendors will be notified upon any policy changes.

Staff & Contact Information

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For additional information, application, or newsletter subscription, please visit our website:

www.matanuskacommunityfarmersmarket.com

Matanuska Community Farmers' Market Mission Statement

The Matanuska Community Farmers' Market 501(c)3 is a family friendly farm and food-focused market that welcomes all patrons. We aim to offer the community access to locally, sustainably, and naturally grown, produced, processed and foraged foods. The market was established in 2023 to aid in the development and growth of the Matanuska Valley's small-scale, diversified agricultural production and direct farmer/producer to consumer sales by:

- Being an outlet for small scale producers to reach community members
- Providing community members with access to local/Alaska, sustainably, and naturally grown, produced, and foraged foods
- Increase fresh food access to underserved and low-income individuals and families
- Foster farmer and consumer education and relations
- Build community

Matanuska Community Farmers Market acknowledges we are on ancestral and unceded land of Ahtna and Dena'ina peoples, who have and continue to steward this land.

The MCFM provides all vendors with this policy handbook and requires all vendors to read and sign the agreement to follow all policies and procedures within. Each year, a new policy agreement must be signed. All vendors are responsible for knowing and following the market policies. In rare instances, the MCFM reserves the right to grant variances to these policies in the interest of improving the MCFM.

Matanuska Community Farmers' Market Policies

1. Alaska Grown, Produced, or Foraged.

Sustainably, naturally, and Alaskan grown, produced, or foraged foods are the main emphasis of the Matanuska Community Farmers' Market. For this reason, we require that all food items be grown, harvested, or foraged in Alaska, preferably within the Matanuska-Susitna borough. Additionally, all other consumable products, such as herbals, must be made from greater than 50% Alaska grown, produced, or foraged materials (can be reviewed on a case by case basis).

2. Naturally and Sustainably Grown, Foraged, and Harvested

The Matanuska Community Farmers Market highly values growing and harvesting methods and practices that promote soil and ecosystem health and are free from artificial fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. Preference will be given to produce growers that practice beyond-organic and naturally grown methods. This will be on an honor system, and may require "peer review" by other vendors.

3. Food Vendor Standards (we do not accept non-food vendors at this time)

As stated above, priority and preference is given to applicants whose business is locally owned and who grows, uses, or harvests products themselves or from participating farms, processes the product themselves, and who highlight regional, Alaska grown ingredients. It is acceptable for a vendor to sell homemade products crafted by the vendor with minimal store bought ingredients, but unacceptable for a vendor to sell store-bought products.

- **Tier 1 Vendors** directly grow, harvest, or produce a raw product, which is directly sold to customers. Examples include fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, meat, eggs, milk, and honey. Tier 1 also includes processed products made from 100% locally grown ingredients, such as wild foraged teas. Tier 1 vendors are the top priority for the market and will make up at least 75% of the market.
- **Tier 2 Vendors** sell self-made and processed products from locally and non-locally purchased ingredients. Examples include value added products, bread, coffee, etc.

4. Vendor Application and Fees

All vendors must have a completed and approved application to sell at the Matanuska Community Farmers' Market. Each vendor is responsible for paying all fees to the market manager. For a 10x10 tent space, vendors must pay \$20 per week before the end of each market. For a 10x20 space (which there are a limited number of, and this must be approved ahead of time), vendors must pay \$25 per market. Vendors should be aware that fees and fee structures may change from year to year, depending on grant funding and market success.

- *If you cancel within less than 12 hours of a market, you may still be liable to pay that day's market fee, as the spot cannot be filled so quickly*

- If you are joining the market mid-season, a *non-refundable deposit* is required (equal to half the cost of markets the vendor is participating in). This is to ensure the market is not left with vendor gaps / gaps in community needs

5. Vendor Reporting and Data Collection

The Matanuska Community Farmers Market is extremely grateful for another year of grant funding from the Mat-Su Health Foundation to encourage our market's success. We do not anticipate funding from them again, and will have to search elsewhere for grant funding. In order to provide meaningful community impact reports for our grant – and collect this information for future grants – we ask that all vendors fill out a weekly sales report. The information will not be reported in any way, other than anonymously for our grant to prove community impact. Additionally, this information will help us secure future grant funding and help us to shape the market makeup from year to year. Multiple times throughout the season, vendors will receive an email with a link to a simple Google Survey to supply the information. **It is extremely important that vendors fill out this survey.**

6. Selling: General Vendor Expectations

- All items sold at the MCFM must be directly grown, harvested, wildcrafted, or processed by the vendor, with the following exceptions:
 - The vendor may designate a member of their household or paid employee to represent their business at the market
 - One vendor may sell for another qualified local food producer, but those products should be clearly labeled
 - Vendors may sell other products (such as salves, hand/farm-made items, and branded merchandise), but no more than 30% of their booth can be comprised of these other items.
- Single-use plastic bags less than 4 mils thick that are non intended for reuse are not allowed in City of Palmer; the MCFM respects this choice and prefers vendors do not use single use plastic shopping bags.
- Vendors should try to stay in their booths through the entirety of the market. If a vendor must step away, they should check in with a neighboring vendor.
- Any vendor providing samples of any kind will also need to provide hand sanitizer and a trash can.
- **Harassment or discrimination of any kind is not tolerated by the MCFM. All vendors shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, religion, or sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity).**
- Failure to abide by these vendor policies may result in loss of vendor status.

7. Vendor Business Licenses and Requirements

The MCFM venue will be located in the confines of Palmer proper, and therefore, in addition to an Alaska State Business License, all vendors will need a Matsu Borough Business License and Palmer Business License. All vendors are individually responsible for collecting and paying City of Palmer taxes.

In addition to holding the proper business licenses, all vendors are required to carry product liability insurance (as per our own insurance policy for the market). **See section on liability insurance for more information.**

8. Hours of Operation and Set Up

The MCFM is an open air market located in the parking lot of the United Protestant Church, 713 S Denali St. in Palmer on Wednesdays from 4:00pm-7:00pm. The market will run from Wednesday, June 12 through Wednesday, September 25, at a minimum. There is potential to take part in a winter “root cellar” sale during the beginning of October and intermittent winter markets.

Upon arrival, please find the market manager to confirm vendor setup location. Vendors may begin arriving to setup at 3:00 pm. If any vendor needs extra time, they may contact the market manager. **Please arrive no later than 3:30 for set up, with vehicles moved by 3:40 and booth setup complete by 4:00 – this is for the safety of our customers who seem to love coming early and window shopping.** Vendors should wait until 4:00 to begin selling, with exceptions made for selling to other vendors, employees, or market staff. We will ring a bell at 4:00 to signal the market opening.

Vendors must stay through the end of market, except for in the case of an emergency. As vendors sell out of product, breaking down tables to condense product is acceptable, however, vendors may not bring vehicles to pack up until 7:00pm. All vendors must have tents, tables, and goods packed up and removed by 7:45 pm. All vendors are required to remove all trash, etc. and leave their spaces exactly as found. We are grateful to the United Protestant Church for hosting the market, and want to respect their property.

9. CSA and Pre-Sold Goods at the Market

MCFM supports vendors who run CSA or other pre-sale options in distributing those products at the market. All vendors doing so must indicate their intention to pre-sell on the vendor application. Additionally, all vendors are required to sell non-presold products through the entirety of the market.

For example, a vendor distributing CSAs at the market must also have crops available for purchase to market shoppers. All pre-sold products must be clearly labeled, or separated and clearly labeled, to avoid customer confusion.

10. Application and Acceptance Process

The Matanuska Community Farmers' Market is a small, new-ish market that does not have the capacity to accept every vendor. The MCFM has a limited number of spaces, and the market maintains the right to determine the balance of vendors that best supports the organizational and market mission. Given MCFM's mission to supply naturally and sustainably grown and harvested foods to the greater Palmer community, priority will be given to producers who fall into this category. If you wish to participate in the MCFM but have not completed a vendor application, please visit our website (www.matanuskacommunityfarmersmarket.com) or email matanuskafarmersmarket@gmail.com

11. Vendor Liability Insurance

The MCFM has liability insurance that covers market employees, volunteers, and the market organization, but does not cover individual vendors. All vendors are required private/personal product liability insurance. For low-cost options, please visit:

<https://www.fdeanquote.com/vendor-insurance> or <https://www.fliprogram.com/>

If a vendor offers or sells any prepared food products, the vendor must have proper DEC permitting and proof of liability insurance displayed at that booth.

12. Signs, Pricing, and Sales

All vendor booths need at least one sign indicating the business name so that market shoppers know who they are purchasing from. Additionally, all items should be labeled and priced, either individually or with a visible list. This policy helps ensure that no market-goers feel awkward about asking or knowing if they can afford to purchase something.

MCFM requires all vendors to charge commensurate prices for their products – i.e. not drastically undercutting other producers and vendors. Charging less than market value for products undercuts those who seek to make a living as small farmers and producers.

All vendors who are eligible to accept FMNP (Farmers Market Nutrition Program) coupons, SNAP/EBT, and SNAP match are required to clearly display the associated signs.

13. FMNP (Farmers Market Nutrition Program) and SNAP Dollars

- **Coupon Redemption Programs: FMNP, or Women, Infant and Children (WIC) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP):** all applicable and eligible vendors are strongly encouraged to participate in both FMNP programs, and preference will be given to those who participate. Only fresh, unprocessed produce may be exchanged for WIC coupons and no money may be given as change; the same goes for senior coupons, but those can also be used to purchase honey. To participate, please visit the following website and fill out the farmer application:
<https://health.alaska.gov/dpa/pages/nutri/fmnp/default.aspx>
- **SNAP Dollars Program: ‘SNAP Dollars’ are for recipients of the QUEST/SNAP (aka food stamp program).** Recipients can swipe their QUEST card at the MCFM info booth where they will receive vouchers in \$2 and \$5 values to spend on food items in the market.
 - **These vouchers can only be spent on QUEST Food Stamp program eligible foods, including:** produce (including mushrooms), fish, meat, eggs, dairy products, poultry, bread products, and seeds and plant starts which produce food to eat.
 - No cash change can be given to customers using these vouchers, but change may be made in wooden tokens.
 - Only vendors participating in the QUEST/SNAP token program can accept these vouchers. Anyone accepting vouchers for ineligible items will not be reimbursed. The program agreement/contract must be filled out prior to accepting the coins or receiving reimbursement.
 - Vendors are strongly encouraged to sell items in even dollar amounts to best facilitate token use.
- **SNAP Match Program:** The SNAP match program is facilitate through funding from the Alaska Farmers Market Association. Accepting SNAP match dollars is exactly the same as accepting SNAP, and vendors will be reimbursed in the same fashion (monthly).

14. Organic Labeling

While the MCFM prioritizes vendors who use organic, beyond-organic, or naturally grown practices, we recognize it is illegal for those who make over \$5,000/year to utilize organic labeling without being certified organic. To be fair to all vendors, we ask that no one use “organic” in their product labeling or marketing unless that vendor is certified organic or creating products using certified organic materials (organic oils, organic flour, etc).

Instead, vendors are encouraged to use descriptions such as “naturally grown,” “pesticide-free,” etc. Additionally, we value the direct to consumer relationship. We encourage vendors to have open, honest communication with their shoppers about growing and producing practices.

15. Product Specific Information

- **Baked Goods:** a DEC approved kitchen is not required for the preparation of baked goods, but all vendors must be familiar with and follow all aspects of DEC regulations, found at: <http://dec.alaska.gov/commish/regulations/pdfs/18%20AAC%2031.pdf>
 - The individual who makes the food must be the one who sells it directly to consumers (unless business uses a DEC approved commercial kitchen)
 - DEC requires that vendors either put on visible placard or label individual items the statement “THESE PRODUCTS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO STATE INSPECTION”
 - MCFM requires that if baked goods contain honey, fruits, or vegetables, local products must be used in order to promote our Alaska Grown mission.

- **Mushrooms and sprouts:**
 - Wild harvested mushrooms are potentially hazardous and vendor must be educated on wild mushroom identification and safety of mushrooms being sold. Vendor must label or make clear that mushrooms are wild foraged, rather than cultivated.
 - Sprouts are considered a potentially hazardous food by the DEC and must be produced in a DEC approved facility. Vendors of sprouts must have proof of DEC certification and proof of liability insurance. Note that microgreens are **not** sprouts, and do not fall under the same requirements.

- **Processed or Dried Foods:** Preserves, jams and jellies, honey, fruit syrups, dried herbs and teas, and herbal vinegars are exempted from DEC regulations and may be sold without certification. Processed foods not exempted above are subject to DEC regulation and must have proof of DEC certification and liability insurance
 - Processed or dried foods should include 100% Alaskan Grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs that are primarily grown, foraged, and wildcrafted by the vendor.

- **Fish/Seafood:** The sale of fish and seafood is regulated by the Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game and the DEC. Vendors must comply with all applicable regulations and must provide the market with copies of their licenses, insurance, permits, and certificates.
 - Seafood sold at the market must be caught by the vendor or brokered by the vendor whose product is locally sourced
 - Priority is given to vendors whose product is caught by them and enhances diversity of market

16. Children at the Market

MCFM is a family friendly market and vendors are welcome to have their children with them, but all children need to be supervised by a parent or guardian at the market for the child's safety. Children under 16 selling at the MCFM should also be supervised by a parent or guardian.

17. Pets/Animals at the Market

Dogs are allowed at the market if they are leashed and controlled by the owner at all times and have never shown aggression in any form, either toward people or other dogs. If a vendor or market-shopper's dog is behaving inappropriately, they may be asked to leave, and their dog will not be allowed back at market. This is to ensure a market space where all feel safe and welcome.

18. Smoking, Drugs, and Alcohol

Smoking is not permitted at the MCFM or at the church. The use or distribution of drugs, alcohol, or any illegal substance at the Market is prohibited.

19. Restrooms

Our market location hosts, the United Protestant Church, have been gracious enough to allow us access to their bathrooms. We ask that all vendors are respectful to their space and leave the bathrooms clean.

20. Harassment and Discrimination

The Matanuska Community Farmers' Market is a safe place for all individuals. Vendors of the MCFM, whether dealing with market customers or other vendors, shall not discriminate against any individual with regards to selling of products, discipline, or any other matters because of age, sex or gender identity, race, national origin, sexual orientation, or the presence of any physical or mental disability. Vendors should behave in a way that is free of harassment and discrimination. Complaints should be taken to the Market Manager and will be regarded with confidentiality. Any vendor conducting harassment or discrimination is subject to immediate termination of market participation.

21. Violation of Market Rules & Sanctions

Either the Market Manager or a majority of the members of the Market Committee are authorized to give notice to vendors of any violation of market rules, regulations, or policies as follows:

- **Step one:** Notice of a first violation shall be **informal and oral**. The violation shall be specifically identified and the warning will be recorded in the Market Manager's Violation File.
- **Step two:** Notice of the second violation in the same season shall be **formal and in writing**. A copy of the warning notice, initialed by the vendor and the Market Manager, shall be kept on file.

- **Step three:** Sanctions for a third violation in the same season, in addition to requiring the vendor to leave the market for the remainder of the day, will be at the discretion of the Market Committee and may include:
 - Suspension from the market for a period of time, up to one year
 - Revocation of membership/participation in the MCFM for a period of time, up to three years

Any form of harassment or discrimination by any vendor may result in skipping steps one and two, directly to suspension or revocation of participation from the market.

22. Appeals of Notice of Violation/Sanctions

- Any vendor may appeal any notice of violation. Notice of the appeal must be in writing, delivered to and received by the Market Manager no later than one week after the date of the notice of violation or imposition of sanction.
- No later than two weeks after receiving an appeal, the Market Committee shall hold a meeting to consider the appeal and give the vendor the opportunity to speak on their behalf
- At an appeal hearing, the vendor has the burden of showing that the notice of violation is improper, or that the sanction is inappropriate, or both. The Market Committee shall control the proceedings. At its discretion, and with no obligation to do so, the Committee may appoint an impartial third party to hear the appeal.
- All decisions shall be final and in writing.
- If the vendor in violation is part of the Market Committee, they will not take part in the decision making process for the appeal.

Advertising

We hope that all of our vendors realize the success of their stand at the market is dependent on the success of the market as a whole. The Matanuska Community Farmers Market will be doing lots of advertising and community outreach before and during the market season. We hope that our vendors will also do what they can to promote the market to their customer base, friends, and family members.

Lastly, thank you! Thank you for your interest in participating in our new community and farm/food-focused market. The Matanuska Community Farmers Market is so appreciative of your support and interest.

Signature:

Date:

Printed Name/affiliation with business:

Name of Business: