

Benton County Farmer's Market

Ashland, MS

2025 Market Rules

The Benton County Farmers Market (BCFM) started in 2014. In 2024 we incorporated the Benton County Farmers Market as a 501(C)4. Our purpose is to provide local farmers and producers an outlet for their products, support and educate local farmers/growers and encourage environmental and nutritional awareness to the public.

BENTON COUNTY FARMERS MARKET GOALS

To support local farmers/growers and provide a place for them to sell their homegrown, home baked, and handmade wares. To bring people together in a community activity which will help support Benton County, MS agriculture and encourage the consumption of healthy foods.

MARKET LOCATION AND HOURS

The market is located on the west side of the courthouse. BCFM, officially opens the first Wednesday in June from 8am to 11:30. until the end of the growing season. Our goal is to be open until mid October. The Market Manager has the discretion to close the market at any time if conditions justify, such as severe weather or natural disaster.

VENDOR FEES

There is a \$20 yearly. fee to participate or \$5 fee for each set-up. This money is used for supplies and advertising. However, contribution from vendors may be needed for additional purposes.

RULES & REGULATIONS

Local Producer Qualification

To sell at BCFM, all vendors must be from within a 75-mile radius of Ashland, MS. Purveyors of products not available within a 75-mile range will be considered on a case-by-case basis with consideration to the quality of product and scarcity of product at the market. Please contact the market manager for more information

Producer Only Market

BCFM is a producer only market. We define a producer as the person or group of people directly involved in growing or making the product. This may include the producer's family partners, interns, or employees. Collectives, collaborative arrangements, cooperatives and associations may qualify as producer-only and are evaluated on a case- by-case basis. Contract farming is NOT permitted.

Vendor Agreement

Vendors who wish to sell at BCFM certify by signing the vendor agreement (vendor agreement is the last page of these rules). By signing the agreement the vendor and their partners grow/raise their own products or make their own value-added products. For artisan vendors, all work must be of original concept, design, and execution and made by the vendor.

Farm/Producer Site Visit

All producers must make themselves available for site visits by a representative of BCFM during the market season. Producers are expected to make available records, receipts and other documentation requested by the market representative as part of the site visit. Failure to allow a site visit at any time, announced or unannounced may be grounds to revoke your right to vend.

In the event of a customer or vendor complaint regarding the authenticity of origin of any product, the Market Manager will report the complaint to the Board of Directors and to the vendor in question. If the market cannot confirm the authenticity of the product from a prior site visit, the vendor may either discontinue sale of the questioned product at the market or submit to a site visit from a market representative that week. It may be requested that the product in question not be sold at the market until a market representative has verified its authenticity.

Meat and Animal Products

It is the responsibility of each individual vendor to know what inspections, permits and certifications their operation requires to sell to the public in Mississippi.

All meat and animal products, including eggs, must be from animals owned by and held in the direct care of the producer on land under the producer's management. Contract farming is NOT permitted.

For meat products except poultry, slaughter animals not born on the farm must be owned and held on land under the producer's management and under the producer's direct care for at least 50% of the animal's life.

Poultry raised for meat must be raised on land under the producer's management for no more than one week old, up until slaughter.

All processed foods, such as sausage and lard, must be made exclusively with meat, fat and/or offal from animals that meet the above criteria. Additional ingredients, such as spices, may come from other sources.

PROHIBITED ITEMS

Resale of wholesale fruits, vegetables, produce and other products NOT grown/made by the vendor are prohibited. The integrity of the Market and good will of the customer depends on this. Complaints against vendors perceived to be re-selling produce will be investigated. No animals of any kind are permitted for sale at the market. BCFM may organize small animals only markets separate from our weekly farmers market. The BCFM Small Animals market will have separate and rules determined by the BCFM Board

Food Safety

Processed Food Vendors

Based on the risk level of products being sold, vendors (with the exception of cottage food operators) must obtain the proper Food Permit from the Mississippi State Department of Health. Proof of certification from the Mississippi State Department of Health must be submitted with your application.

The vendor must retain a copy of this information and provide it upon request.

Cottage Food Law

The BCFM allows the sale of items created under the Mississippi Cottage Food Laws. It is the responsibility of the vendor to ensure compliance with these regulations. All items must be properly labeled in accordance with the regulation including visible signage informing the customer that these items were created in a non-regulated kitchen. Mississippi Cottage Food laws/regulations can be found at the Mississippi Department of Health or vendors can find information on BCFM website or ask the Market Manager.

Set-Up and Opening

Vendors may begin setting up their booths no earlier than one hour before the Market opens. No vending or bagging may occur before the start of the Market. Vendors are responsible for setting up and breaking down their area. Vendors must provide own tables/displays. Each vendor is responsible for clean-up of their space.

Signage

Vendors are required to post signage at their stall that posts the name of their business and location. Vendors are also required to post signs with product names and prices. Signage and creative displays are encouraged as long as they do not interfere with other vendors or market operations. Products labeled as “organic” or other certified growing methods must have appropriate certification verification.

Pricing

Each vendor will operate as an individual entity and is responsible for setting his/her own prices. However, intentional undercutting and price wars are NOT allowed. All vendors must represent their products in an honest manner whether written or verbal.

Scales and Measures

Vendors must provide their own scales and measures. Scales must be accurate and in proper operating condition.

Sales Tax & Permits

Each vendor operates privately and separately and it is the individual responsibility of each vendor to comply with all city/town, county, state and federal laws and regulation concerning packaging, labeling, taxation, food safety and sanitation, etc. Vendors are not required to collect State Sales Tax. Vendors are exempted due to the Certified Farmers Market status of BCFM. Vendors at BCFM events do not need to obtain a permit for selling in the Town of Ashland.

Liability Insurance

Benton County Farmer’s market encourages each vendor to carry their own liability insurance.

NOT ALLOWED

- NO ALCOHOL, intoxicating beverage or controlled substance, nor any person under the influence thereof, shall be allowed on the Market premises.
- NO SOLICITING of products other than approved items will be permitted.
- NO vendor is to approach customers while at the location of another vendor
- NO FIREARMS or other weapons are permitted while at the Market
- NO person or organization may solicit money, votes or signatures or engage in a protest, demonstration or political activity/speech, including distribution of written materials in the Market area or within 50 feet of the Market boundaries.
- No political signage of any kind is permitted inside the market area and/or in your booth area. This includes but is not limited to: yard signs, stickers, clothing, hats etc.
- No smoking or vaping allowed inside the market area. For purposes of the smoking policy, the market area is defined as any area within 50 feet of vendors space.

Clean-up/Closing

Each vendor is responsible for keeping their space clean and walkways clean. All discarded produce, food or flower material must be picked up and removed by the vendor. Vendors booth/tables must remain until the end of the market. Vendors must leave the Market area within one hour after close.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Benton County Farmers Market (BCFM) is a safe, community enriching farmers market open to all regardless of race, religion, age, sexual orientation, personal identity, disability or political beliefs. We do not tolerate abuse or discrimination in any form be it to shoppers, other Sellers, staff, regulatory officials, or volunteers. Anyone determined by the Market Management or BCFM Board to conduct themselves in a manner deemed abusive, disruptive, offensive, derogatory, threatening or dangerous, or in disregard of the rules or laws that govern the BCFM will be asked to leave the premises. Sellers who do not comply may be subject to suspension or expulsion from the Market.

Complaints & Violations

It is the responsibility of the vendor to satisfy customer complaints, but upon receipt of numerous complaints to BCFM about a vendor, the Market Manager will investigate and attempt a resolution. Complaints will be reviewed by the BCFM Board if a complaint cannot be resolved by the Market Manager. Vendor to vendor complaints must be submitted in writing to the Market Manager or to the BCFM Board. Vendors determined to be using methods that are detrimental to sound market operations, including the violation of market policies, may be denied the privilege of selling at the market. These methods may include, but are not limited to: 1) offering for sale produce or goods that

are poor quality or which fail to meet the requirements of federal,, state or local laws; 2) Intentional misrepresentation of products sold, such as labeling products as “organic” without proper certification and/or produce/fruits not grown on vendor’s farm and are purchased at “produce warehouses”, and; 3) disruptive, abusive or offensive behavior or language towards other vendors, market customers or market management.

Penalties & Procedures

Violation of any of these policies shall subject the vendor to forfeiture of the privilege of selling at the market. Any complaint must be filed in writing, signed and submitted to the Market Manager. Complaints will be looked into by market management, who reserves the right to request a farm site visit of any farm/grower producer. Violations will have the following consequences: 1) If a violation of market policy has occurred, a warning letter will be sent to the vendor, 2) A second warning letter of complaint will result in a 30 day suspension of the right to sell and 3) a third violation will result in the vendor not being allowed to sell for one year and forfeiture of any fees. After one year, the individual may request to the BCFM Board to be allowed to sell at BCFM.

MARKET MANAGEMENT

The BCFM consists of the Market Manager and a Board of three or more other members who manages the operations of the market.. Market Management may deny the privilege of selling at the Market to any person who violates these guidelines and rules, or who otherwise takes actions which are determined by Market Management to be detrimental to the Market. Market Management specifically reserves the right to request additional information or documentation before making a decision to deny or limit a vendor’s access to the Market

AGREEMENT TO RULES & REGULATIONS

The BCFM reserves the right to modify these rules and regulations at any time. The Market reserves the right to refuse the application of any vendor at any time and for any reason.

Possible additions

Benton County Farmers Market
Acknowledgment/Vendor Agreement

_____ (Business Name) (herein referred to as Vendor) acknowledge that I have read and agree to the BCFM rules and regulations created and enforced by the Board of Directors. Vendors understand it is the policy of the Benton County Farmers Market that products sold at the Farmers Market must be grown by me, prepared by me or crafted by me. Further, vendor understands that Market staff and/or authorized Vendor Representative designee may perform site inspections. It is also understood that vendor will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, and failure to do so may result in immediate forfeiture of vendor status for the remainder of the season. Vendor and all agents have read and agree to rules and regulations laid out in the Benton County Farmers Market Handbook.

Professional Code of Conduct

In the spirit of professionalism, participants shall conduct themselves in a manner that represents the Benton County Farmers Market with honor, dignity, and respect. The participants shall always demonstrate the qualities of civility and professionalism. Participants will refrain from using vulgar, abusive, racist, sexist, demeaning or intimidating language at any time. Participants will support fellow vendors and staff in a positive manner and will treat vendors, staff, and Market customers with courtesy and respect.

_____ I have read and agree to adhere to the Professional Code of Conduct

(Please Initial)

_____ I have read and agree to adhere to rules and regulations

(Please Initial)

Owners Printed Name _____ Date

Owners Signature _____.