

marketshare [mahr-kit shair] -noun

1. Is a program of marketumbrella.org, which works to cultivate the field of public markets for public good.
2. These free documents (called "shares") are the best of "lessons learned" from public markets everywhere.
3. Employ as needed, & please feel free to tell us about your results, so that we can share those with other markets.



market day: chefs and markets

Perhaps it comes as no surprise that chefs are quite often the “rock stars” of the food-and-farmers-market world. We’ve noticed that when chefs wear their uniforms to the Crescent City Farmers Market, shoppers follow them around and buy what they buy. Back in 1995, when the CCFM was a fledgling upstart, our stock in the community rose like a rocket when Bayona Restaurant founder and chef Susan Spicer told the Times-Picayune that we were one of the best things that had happened all year. Conversely, when another chef publicly panned our early efforts as too small (he has since become a firm fan), the criticism really hurt. So, as a market organizer, you need and want the support of local chefs.

Chefs are important to both the supply (farmers) and demand (consumers) sides of your market equation. One of the people who understand this best is Julie Ridlon, owner of Chanterelle Catering, founder of the Missouri Chef’s Collaborative, and co-founder of the Clayton Farmer’s Market, which is organized around two key players: farmers and chefs. Because the Clayton Farmer’s Market’s mission is to educate people to cook using local foods, chefs and farmers collaborate at every market. Chefs give market tours and cooking demonstrations; farmers describe their produce and livestock and how it’s grown. Ridlon believes that it is these personal relationships with chefs, along with the culinary education of local consumers, that will help sustain local agriculture and all the wonderful variety and superior quality that implies.

Ann Yonkers, one of the founders of FreshFarm Markets in Washington, D.C., is active in the Les Dames d’Escoffier, a chefs’ organization. She assisted the Dallas, TX, chapter in its efforts to revitalize the city’s historic shed market by hosting a strategy meeting with Dallas chefs and farmers. Look for groups like these, or even become a member of your local Slow Food chapter, or the International Association of Culinary Professionals; all are devoted to making great food available to everyone.

Chefs and restaurants depend on the local food system for their produce, herbs, seafood, meat and dairy products, and more, depending on the region. Chefs can also add value to market organizations by serving as advisors to vendors and the Board; by helping develop local food handling guidelines, conducting taste tests, and advising farmers on specialty products in demand.

Yet, as with so many aspects of market management, working with chefs is also a balancing act. We’ve seen shoppers get angry when they’ve perceived that the best produce has been set aside for restaurant purchase “before the bell,” or when vendors have taken a chef’s purchase out of turn so that a hundred-dollar transaction wouldn’t have to wait on a shopper whose purchase totaled \$1.75. No one likes to feel like a second-class citizen. To keep everyone happy, market management must balance the needs of chefs and other shoppers.

At marketumbrella.org, we communicate our respect for chefs by including them in market decision-making: asking them to serve on our board, occasionally hiring them as staff, and running proposed changes by them. We also keep them informed of new produce and other products that will be available at market so that they can incorporate them in their menu planning. In the early days, we did this through Market Fax—a facsimile that went out once a week to local restaurant chefs; now we do it through our e-newsletter and Hot Crops, our online product update.

Recently, we honored one of our chef friends, the late Jamie Shannon of Commander’s Palace (who was an early and stalwart supporter of the market) by putting his likeness on our new credit/debit wooden token (known as the Crescent). Now, we can ask our vendors how many “Jamies” they made at the market!

We also feature chefs in cooking demonstrations and our Tuesday market Green Plate Specials. It’s great exposure for their restaurants and catering businesses, and we find that chefs

generally enjoy getting out of their kitchens and mingling with an appreciative public. Originally, chefs happily volunteered their time and supplies for the weekly cooking demonstrations, but we worried after 10 years that we had lost the excitement of the early demonstrations. Now, the chefs who sign up to produce weekly Green Plate Specials for a month get to charge for their lunch offerings, so they don't mind investing the time. When we do invite a chef to cook at the demonstration table, it happens infrequently enough that crowds and excitement are always present.

We also use chefs when we venture out to do community outreach. Recently, chef Anne Churchill came along with our staff to WIC (Women, Infant and Children) clinics doing simple, healthy cooking demonstrations. And in the traveling shrimper road show that we call the White Boot Brigade, chefs Poppy Tooker and Corbin Evans came along to connect us to restaurants in New York City and San Francisco.

Sponsorships are logical with some restaurants and can offer extra benefits to both market and restaurant: Our friends at Dickie Brennan's Restaurants have footed the bill for printed market shopping bags. Dozens of chefs and owners graciously support our yearly fundraising events.

We also cultivate "the inner rock star chef" in all of our shoppers by featuring shoppers' cooking demos. Over time, the recipes produced by both amateur home chefs and the professionals culminated in our recent CCFM Cookbook. By opening the market "stage" to non-professionals, it became apparent that the real star of the show is the food, and different and delightful things to do with it. This perspective includes and benefits all of a market's constituents—vendors, shoppers, and "rock-star chefs" alike.

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mission | management | marketing | measurement

Thank you for using a share document. This 4M worksheet below is to help you think through what you just read and how to apply it to your situation. Read the share titled "The Strategy of the 4Ms" to learn more about this marketumbrella.org teaching tool.

Is this issue or strategy covered in your current mission (or values)? _____

Does your management structure allow you time to handle this, or is there another organizational partner to help?

How will you communicate to others about this issue or strategy (marketing)? _____

When and how will you measure the impact of this resolution of this issue or the completion of this strategy?



cultivating the field of public markets for public good