

A Small Producers Guide to Selling to Restaurants, Distributors and Retailers

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Research has shown that there is high interest from restaurants within the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District in offering local products to consumers on their menus. Regionally produced meats, fruits, vegetables and other products - all are desirable! Farmers though, especially small producers, often don't know how to entice restaurants into going the extra mile it takes to cope with the greater uncertainty and higher expense that may be required in order to follow through with that desire. It takes a dedicated effort, a bit of salesmanship, and clear agreements to achieve what producers, buyers, and consumers all crave-the best quality local food on their tables. Here are some tips to make it happen...

Step 1: Create A Relationship

- Set up the relationship at beginning of season, before everyone is busy.
- Reach out to buyers you are interested in working with-don't expect them to come looking for you!
- Adopt a business philosophy and develop good business practices
- Do the homework on your own business. Write up a history of your farm and another piece highlighting your growing practices and the reasons your products are special. Know the prices you need to receive and quantities you are able to supply.
- Provide this comprehensive information to the buyer including
 - quantities available (min and/or max) per order
 - delivery schedule
 - pricing
 - availability dates if seasonal
 - growing methods, farm description
 - brochures
 - samples if available
 - GST# and Food Safe Certificates where required

Step 2: Keep that Relationship Healthy!

- Be Reliable** - Reliability of supply and delivery is of utmost importance to chefs and restauranteurs. Their business fails if you fail to follow through with your promises.
- Know the customer** - Price is not always the most important factor for those who want to buy local. Find out what drives their buying decisions be it quality, freshness, shelf life, delivery methods, consistency, ethics or the environment.
- Communicate** - Stay in touch but be respectful of a buyers workload, everyone is busy! E-mail is great for some, others prefer to communicate via phone. Some are interested in online ordering platforms and others repelled by the thought! Find a method and keep to it. If using email, check it regularly and consider a scheduled check-in to provide a clear assessment of what is working and what is not.

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- **Have a system for dealing with production gaps** - Give the buyer ample notice, at least a few days, if you won't be able to get their product to them due to weather or other production problems. Buyers understand the constraints of farmers but they still have a business to run!
- **Be orderly** - Develop efficient systems for processing orders, invoicing and advising customers of product availability and price changes.
- **Be safe** - Food safety is everyone's concern. Practice safe production, harvest and delivery methods and maintain the ability to trace products from garden right through to the table.
- **Keep a consistent quality** - Buyers need consistent and reliable quality. High quality is one of the predominant reasons they buy locally. Give ample warning about deviations and don't expect to stay on their list for long if product quality varies excessively!
- **Deliver** - If the goods aren't there, the restaurant suffers. Buyers will usually expect delivery to their door and appreciate a set schedule. Living with fluidity doesn't work here—a dinner rush is a dinner rush, and the chef can't stop to check on the tomatoes you are dropping off! Work with your buyer to set a schedule that works for you both and consider a delivery fee if less than minimum order.

Step 3: Grow Your Opportunities

- Develop marketing materials and information. Spread your farm name and a good reputation.
- Be willing to alter production to meet buyer needs.
- Co-operate with other small producers to increase the volume you can offer for sale.
- Investigate the potential of growing specialty items which are not available through distributors.
- Work with clients to sell them on the idea of new products by providing recipe and menu ideas.
- Search out clients willing to buy 'seconds' or lower quality produce to use in soups or preserves.
- Share your successes with other farmers and buyers. Model a great working relationship and offer tips to others in order to further the success of the industry as a whole.

Useful Links and Info

[Guidelines for sale at Temporary Food Markets](#)

The Vancouver Island Health Authority created this document providing recommendations for preparation and display of food intended for sale at temporary food markets including Farmers' Markets and public events. **Talk to the local health authority about selling those foods classed as 'low risk' at retail stores and at farm gate.**

- <http://www.viha.ca/NR/rdonlyres/3DDA888D-939E-4A08-926E-DB679892A952/0/GuidelinesSaleofFoodsatTemporaryFoodMarkets2012FINAL.pdf>

[Wholesale Price List Link](#)

Certified Organic BC maintains this current wholesale price list for reference when setting prices

- <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/rcbtoa/services/prices.html>

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Food Labeling and Packaging Requirements

Canadian Food Inspection Agency governs rules for packaging and labeling of food products

• <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/labelling/food-labelling-for-industry/eng/>

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The following Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District business' have indicated interest in purchasing direct from producers. If you would like your business to be listed here next year, please contact the AV Times.

Ukee Juice	Cody Naples	1627A Peninsula Rd. Ucluelet, British Columbia Canada V0R3A0	P: (250) 726-5068
Sproat Lake Landing	Steve Muise	10695 Lakeshore rd. port Alberni, BC V9Y 8Z8	250)735-1535
Red Can Gourmet	Tim May	700 Industrial Way, po box 251, Tofino, BC V0R 2Z0	250)725- 2525

The Starboard Grill	Brad Declercq	#2-5440 Argyle St., PA, V9Y 1T7	250)720-9100
Swale Rock Café	Lily Diotte	5328 Argyle St. PA V9Y 1T8	250)723-0777
The Wickaninnish Inn	Ike Seaman	Box 250, Tofino, BC V0R 2Z0	250)725-3106
The Schoonner Restaurant	Mare Bruce	311 Campbell St. Tofino	250)725-3444
All Mex'd Up	Judy Walker	#6 5440 Argyle St. PA V9Y 1T7	250)723-8226
Shelter Restaurant	Matty Kane	601 Campbell Street, Box 68 Tofino V0R 2Z0	250)725-3802

Long Beach Lodge Resort	Ian Reddick	1441 Pacific Rim Highway, Tofino BC	725-2442
Riverside Lodge	Matt Dunk	6150 Ferguson Road, Port Alberni BC, V9Y 8L4	723-3474

Swept Away Inn	Daniel and Bouchra	5505, Argyle St. Unit 1, Port Alberni, British Columbia	(250) 918-8298
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Green Soul Organics	Morgan Callisan	Box 833 Tofino, BC, V0R 2Z0	250)725-4202
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Picnic Charcuterie	Tina Windsor	700 Industrial Way, Tofino BC V0R 2Z0	
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Farmer Bills Country Market	Keith Bruner	7666 Pacific Rim Highway, Port Alberni BC	778-421-5566
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Tofino Farmers Market	Anne Weeks	General Delivery, Tofino BC V0R 2Z0	250-266-5006
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