

## Retail is Detail

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## Under the Big Top... Practical Pizzazz 5 Reasons to Pitch a Tent.

A good quality tent can add pizzazz to your market venue. Whether you're introducing a foodservice profit center, adding another till to your U-pick operation, vending at an outdoor farmers' market or simply looking for more on-farm retail space, an event tent may be the answer. Farm direct marketers invest in a market tent because they're affordable, flexible and adaptable. In addition, they:

1. Expand retail space on the farm or at the farmers' market
2. Offer shelter from the weather
3. Provide shade from the sun
4. Protect product quality
5. Enhance market ambiance and business image

## Where to Get Them

The idea of using tents is a good one," says Don Gregorwich of the Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association. "They're tough, easy to set up and are sized to fit the needs of most farm direct marketers."

Do your research before investing in a tent. Price and quality vary. Talk to farm direct marketers who use them and find out what features they like and what they'd change. Investigate size preferences. Ask if it is easy to put up and take down. How many people does it take to erect? What did it cost? How does it handle in the wind? Is it water proof or just water resistant? How often will it be used? Is it easy to repair? Can replacement poles be purchased? Is it guaranteed?

Before you invest in a new tent, consider renting several models over the market season to see what works best in your operation. "Book early," suggests Don. We did find that there is terrific rental demand for tents. If you're looking to rent, forward planning - as in months, not days or weeks - is essential."

Several Farm Fresh members have purchased tents to enhance their market operations. When asked to recommend tent suppliers Don usually suggests three in Alberta.

Warner Shelter Systems Limited  
9811 44 Street SE  
Calgary, AB T2C 2P7  
(403) 279-7662  
toll free: 1-800-661-6155

Alberta Special Event Equipment Rentals and Sales  
6010 99 St NW  
Edmonton, AB T6E 3P2  
(780) 435-2211

Hidden Meadows Industries Ltd  
52263 Range Road 215  
Sherwood Park, AB T8E 1B4  
(780) 922-8010

## A Look Around the Market

Pat Batten of Ocean Odyssey Inland, Captain Gobbler's Arnie Pahl, Duane & Debbie Mertin of Pearson's Berry Farm and Doug & Evelyn Visser, Riverbend Gardens have used 10 x 10 foot **Caravan tents** at markets for years. "We sell at 6 markets per week so buy the heavy duty model from a Vancouver supplier," says Doug. "With care our approximately \$500 investment lasts about 10 years."

The Mertin's, Arnie and Pat use Costco's lighter weight Caravan models at their market stalls. "I use them 6 times a week. At about \$400 they're a bit less money but still perform well," says Pat. "Wind is a problem. You need to use weights against the wind."

What do these marketers like about the Caravan? "It's easy to set up and replacement parts are available," notes Doug. Like most temporary structures, they have to use weights to tie it down and prevent wind damage.

"Walls are available so it could be used in bad weather. I seldom do, though, because wind damage is a problem," says Arnie Pahl. "Even with walls tents won't keep you warm in bad weather," adds Debbie. "You still have to dress warm."

Pat Batten says, "Newer tents offer real improvements. They work well with neighbouring vendors as the tents can fit together."

Helen and Joe Doef of Doef's Greenhouses opted for the 10 x 10 foot **Easy Up**. "They run between \$500 and \$600 dollars plus \$150 for the frame," says Helen. "We really like it. You can buy replacement canvas if you have to do repairs. It comes with a container that protects it from damage when you're not using it. We started with a Caravan tent which was a little less money but more difficult to set up."

"We use 2 tents that we purchased from Heavy Metals in Ardrossen, says Eleanor Janzen of Menno's Sausage. "At about \$1000 each they're more expensive than our previous ones but the quality is worth it. The second tent that we just purchased this year is easier to set up and take down."

## Words of Advice

Doug Visser, "We'd recommend either the Caravan or the Easy Up."

"Looking around our 3 markets, I'd say 8 out of 10 stallholder with tents use Caravan," concludes Arnie.

Pat Batten advises, "Easy Up is good but a bit more expensive. You get what you pay for. Stay away from cheap."

"We like a white tent," says Helen. "The true colours of our produce comes through and our products simply looks better."

Eleanor Janzen, "Every year companies improve their tents. Assess what you need. The amount you spend depends on how often you use it."

## Web Links

<http://www.wssl.com/>  
<http://www.coveryourworld.com/westway/about.htm>  
<http://www.gettent.com/>  
<http://www.tentnology.com/contact.html>

## Is your Net-Working?

### Vendors Wanted!

Calgary Grassroots/Northlands Farmers' Market is looking for an organic vegetable producer. Market goes Tuesdays 3:30 - 7:00 pm. Contact penny.wilkes@gov.ab.ca for information.

Calgary Farmers' Market at Currie Barracks is looking for a pork vendor. Contact Guy Joly, Market Manager at (403) 242-1625 or email gujoly@calgaryfarmersmarket.ca.

**Producers wanted for Dine Alberta September, 2006.** Do you have a food product that you want on the menus of Alberta's fine restaurants? Act now! Sign up for Dine Alberta 2006. Get your producer package at [www.dinealberta.ca](http://www.dinealberta.ca) or call Mary Rempel at (403) 381-5929. For toll free calling, dial 310-0000 first.

Now available! **Report on the Study of Pork and Chicken Alternative Markets** November 2005. To receive your free copy of the study email Bert Denning ([bert.denning@gov.ab.ca](mailto:bert.denning@gov.ab.ca)) or Cindy Cuthbert ([cindy.cuthbert@gov.ab.ca](mailto:cindy.cuthbert@gov.ab.ca)).

The **Alberta Horticultural Congress research foundation** continues to operate even though the last Congress was held in November, 2005. Executive summaries of funded research project findings will be posted on the Congress website. Check it out at <http://www.albertahortcongress.com/>.

The **Cottage Wine Development Team** continues to work with interested producers. Anyone interested in diversifying into this industry can call Sharon Faye at (780) 422-5326 or email [sharon.faye@gov.ab.ca](mailto:sharon.faye@gov.ab.ca) for information. On April 21, 2006 a document advocating for a cottage wine policy was submitted to the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission.

## Explore Direct presents ...

### Alberta Farmers' Market Association Regional Meetings

Northeast regional workshop June 14, 2006 Bonnyville Provincial Building, Health Unit office

Northwest regional workshop June 19, 2006 Barrhead Provincial Building

All farmers' market managers and vendors are welcome. Call (780) 427-6403 or email [melisa.zapisocky@gov.ab.ca](mailto:melisa.zapisocky@gov.ab.ca) for registration and meeting information.

### Learn Agri-Food Network

The Learn Agri-Food Network supports agripreneurs sharing information with peers to build businesses of ag or rural based experiences, products and services. A celebration dinner and season finale meeting goes Tuesday June 13, 2006 in Falher. Call Susan Meyer at (780)538-5630 or email [susan.meyer@gov.ab.ca](mailto:susan.meyer@gov.ab.ca) for meeting details.

### Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association

The Farm Fresh annual meeting will be held in conjunction with a member workshop on November 16, 2007. A general meeting will also be held at the February Grow West convention in Calgary. Contact Don Gregorwich at [dgregorwich@syban.net](mailto:dgregorwich@syban.net) or phone (1-800) 661-2642 for information. Fax: (780)373-2297.

### **Grow West 2007 North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) Convention**

Mark your calendar! The NAFDMA Convention is coming to Calgary in February, 2007. The choice is yours: Bus tour, workshop or conference. Attend one of two pre-conference bus tours, an all day intensive workshop, educational conference **or ALL three!**

- 3 day pre-conference tours. Feb. 12-14, 2007.
- 1 full day of workshops. Feb. 15, 2007.
- 2 full days of concurrent sessions. Feb. 16-17, 2007.
- Trade show. Feb. 15-17, 2007

The NAFDMA pre-conference tours are a 'school bus on wheels'. You'll visit operations that exemplify best management practices. After the tour stops and while in motion, NAFDMA board members and local Alberta reps guide discussions, critique stops, capture nuggets and facilitate sharing and networking.