

22 July 2014

To all SAGE Farmers Market Stall Holders

WE FLIPPIN' WELL WON!!!

We are the 2014 ABC *delicious. Magazine's* "Outstanding Farmers' Market"!!

How does it feel to be part of the best farmers market in Australia? It feels pretty good to me and I'd like take this opportunity to express my personal pride in being associated with all of you and also that it has been a privilege to make my contribution to the running of this market. I know all the committee members feel the same way.

As Maggie Beer said to Stuart, going to a farmers market is like going to church. That's a pretty good way to sum it all up. What we're doing together is a pretty special thing – devine, even – and I'm more motivated than ever to help it succeed.

I wrote an article about why I think we won the award, which I've published on our website at moruyafarmersmarket.org.au, if you'd like to read it.

Congratulations to you all. To state the obvious, you ARE the market.

3PM BELL

So from that exciting high, to the mundane matters at hand. I love my job as the site coordinator, but I don't like having to be a policewoman. Making customers wait until the 3 o'clock bell is a pain, I know. But it is important for the following reasons. Firstly, some stall holders are still setting up at 5 minutes to 3. I've been ringing the bell early because I can see how edgy the customers are getting and I can see the pressure some stall holders are under, however, for the stall holders that are still setting up, ringing the bell early is a problem. They quite rightly should expect that the bell will be rung at 3pm and be able to plan their setup accordingly.

Secondly, I have noticed an increasing number of stall holders are selling – not just putting goods aside, which is a very grey area and the committee hasn't yet formed an opinion on that – before the bell. This puts stall holders who are making customers wait for the bell at a distinct disadvantage. It also makes it very hard for them to say "no" to customers who have just been served a few stalls away. In some cases, they are losing sales.

It's a difficult issue and we appreciate that sometimes customers get cranky and don't understand why they should have to wait, but I am reiterating to you all that it is expected that you don't trade before the bell. It is fair and equitable to everyone if you can manage those customers that are pressuring you and not trade until the bell.

I would really appreciate your help with this. Turning me into a policewoman will have an adverse impact on the culture of our market, so I hope we can work together on this issue.



CUSTOMER ORDERS

One suggestion to help deal with the pre-3pm pressure that some stall holders experience is to encourage people to pre-order.

The committee recommends you suggest as much as possible that people can contact you prior to the market to have produce put aside for them. It has also been suggested to set aside an area of your stall (if you can) specifically for people who have pre-ordered – an express lane, if you will. This should alleviate some of that pressure.

SIGNAGE

We will also be providing every stall holder with a sign stating that there is no trade until 3pm. We hope that these combined steps will help our customers understand that there is a fixed start time and will make it easier for you to manage this issue.

Following our win at the *delicious*. Produce Awards, we are having another sign made for all our stall holders, identifying and acknowledging you as part of Australia's best farmers market. Please feel free to display this sign anywhere that you trade. I hope to have them next week.

SCRUTINY

Now that our market is getting more attention as a result of our win, it is more important than ever that we maintain our integrity and ensure authenticity. At the awards event, our market was described as "inspiring", which was the best praise we could hope for.

The committee would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that our integrity and authenticity, which guide our ethos, are essential to our success. We will continue to monitor what is sold at the market – who grew it and where it was grown – and we are grateful that any transgressions thus far have been few and far between (and dealt with amicably, for the most part).

We have all made a considerable effort to create a culture of cooperation and transparency at our market. I think we're doing pretty well, so let's ensure we continue to foster that culture and I'm sure we'll continue to grow and succeed.

Remember: we are "an inspiration for other communities".

Please feel free to grab me for a chat about any of this stuff.

Kate Raymond
Site Coordinator
on behalf of the
SAGE Farmers Market Committee

m: 0413 920 620
e: markets@sageproject.org.au