

Mastering the Markets

Texas Farmers Markets

by YOLANDA NAGY



As we head into a new year, perhaps it's time to take a fresh new look at the Texas Farmers Markets that we know and love. TFM has two locations — Cedar Park and Central Austin — and both markets are held on the weekends and are sustainable, year-round, producer-only markets. This means that the vendors are located within 150 miles from Austin and only sell what they grow or produce. As a shopper, you'll feel good about the food you buy there because it will never be stored in a giant warehouse or trucked in from out of state.

If you're a Saturday shopper, you'll want to take a trip to the Lakeline (or Cedar Park) market. It fills the Lakeline Mall parking lot with over 30 ranchers and farmers, and 61 prepared-food artisans, making this one of the largest markets in the Austin area. Come early to shop before things sell out but plan to stay for lunch by packing a cooler and some water to enjoy the live music.

All of you Sunday shoppers will also want an early start at the Mueller market. I'd recommend making your first stop at the information booth, not to ask for a map but to buy one of their signature made-in-the-USA organic cotton bags. I love these bags because they are big and have a pocket to stash your wallet and keys.

When you enter the open, 19,800 sq ft. lot, you'll discover a European-feel but still Southern-style market with over 120 vendors. There is no other market like it in Austin, in my opinion (but others seem to agree — it was voted Austin's favorite farmers' market in the *Austin Chronicle* seven years in a row).



This outdoor/indoor market is not just a shopper's paradise but also a farmers foodie extravaganza! Since late June, the market has been divided into two parts: one inside the Branch Park Pavilion (where a mask is required), and another outside the pavilion, wrapping around the building and onto Philomena Street. (Tip: Before you go, download a map of the market's layout from their website to make sure you don't miss your new favorite vendor.)

There is just so much to see, touch, smell and taste at both of these markets! Normally in this column, this would be where I told you about my favorite vendors, and as much as I love to recommend them, I'm not going to this time. This is a new year, and I want to challenge you to do your own exploration: learn about the markets, talk with the vendors, and ask them how to prepare and store the items that you buy. Try their samples, too! Because, remember, you are not obligated to buy and it's a good opportunity to experience something new. Keep your promise to yourself and take home something new each week. Stay updated by signing up on their websites for their weekly newsletters where you can find out about what's happening each week, what's in season and their food programs. You will be glad you did.

Yes, a New Year means new adventures. And local never looked so good! I'll see you at the markets.

TFM Market Locations:

Lakeline Farmers Market Saturdays 9-1 p.m.

11200 Lakeline Mall Dr., Cedar Park

Plenty of free parking

Open rain or shine

Mueller Farmers' Market Sundays 10-2 p.m.

2006 Philomena St. Austin

Free parking on the street. There are two paid garages (TFM does not validate parking)

Find Yolanda Nagy on IG: [@eatin_and_sippin_locally](#) and on Facebook: [Eatin' and Sippin Locally](#).

