

Farmers

from front page

said Patterson, who works out of the Joslyn Center and can be seen making the rounds during each and every weekly event. Her job also includes visiting other area farmers' markets to promote vendors. "It's up to me to keep the market going and keep it up-to-date," she explained. "We're always looking for new things."

Among the "new things" is Big Mista's BBQ, which has garnered rave reviews on the farmers' market circuit for its smoky brisket, tri-tip and ribs. Also new is an avocado stand. Though El Segundo's market is nearly full at the moment, openings can pop up at any given time. For instance, a new stand selling cinnamon vanilla almonds is set to debut soon. "The vendors come from a long distance, so if their crops aren't doing well, they have to pull out," said Patterson. "And if you have too many people selling like-items, then naturally they don't sell as much. You have to keep an even balance. I try to put myself in their place."

Becoming a vendor is no easy task, according to Patterson. Produce merchants require certifications from the agriculture department that must be updated annually. Food vendors must buy quarterly health permits and have insurance. "

In the produce section if they say they are organic, they have special certificates they have to buy and must write a letter saying they are not using pesticides and explain how they handle the vermin problem," said Patterson. "They have to have certifications that must be posted, so anyone who wants to see them can. Also the agriculture and health departments visit the market quarterly. Produce can't have too much of a percentage of stuff that looks ready to go bad. We have to have good-looking fruit..."

Fruit is having a field day at the moment, with many of the summer "stone fruits" (e.g. cherries, apricots, nectarines, peaches)

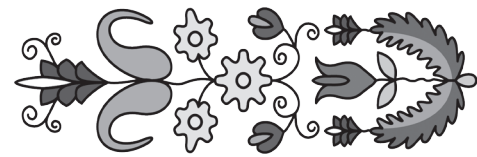
now available. That and improving weather typically bring in more crowds. Though not as large as some other area farmers' markets, El Segundo has built a following for its diversity, especially in the culinary department. In addition to Big Mista's, other food vendors include Aunt Betty's Roasted Peanuts, Crepes de France, Dr. Chocolate, Elike (olive oil), Frontier Kettle Korn, Gera's Roasted Corn, La Fiesta Movil (salsa), Moms Products (hummus, pita chips), Old Towne Baking Co., Paciugo Gelato, Ruben's Nuts, Thai Tiffany and Tropical Islands (Brazilian). The two "non-food" merchants are unique to El Segundo: Gary's Knife Sharpening (note: he also sharpens scissors, gardening tools and just about anything else that needs honing) and Obia, which sells various soaps, lotions, oils and candles.

"Though our vendors work at different farmers' markets and have other people who sell for them, we have quite a few of the owners themselves selling produce for their own farms," said Patterson. "This is a very close-knit farmers' market. Everyone gets along and we all watch out for each other. Our attendance remains good. Sure there has been a little bit of a drop-off in how much people are buying due to the economy, but the ones who come enjoy buying the produce fresh from the farms. You can't get it any better than that..."

Herald in Australia



Patricia Moore bringing good baseball news to Kevin and Natalie Moore at THE TWELVE APOSTALS, Fort Campbell National Park, Victoria, Australia



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