

# New 'Farmers Market Brunch' debuts at C-Fest

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TRAVERSE CITY — Blue Heron 2 makes its mayonnaise with maple syrup from Mio. It bakes its own sourdough biscuits with grain grown in Leelanau County. And its eggs and sausage — made from Berkshire hogs — come from a local farm in Kingsley.

The Traverse City café and bakery will combine the local ingredients in a breakfast sandwich for hungry patrons of Saturday's Sara Hardy Downtown Farmers Market. The stroll-and-eat brunch from 7 a.m. to noon also will feature locally sourced tacos and burritos from the Roaming Harvest food truck using meats provided by Maxbauer's Specialty Meat Market.

The "Farmers Market Brunch" — also July 11 from 7 a.m. to noon — is a new offering from the National Cherry Festival, which is renewing its focus on local agriculture. It's both a way to bring more traffic to the market's temporary spot at the Old Town Parking Deck and to showcase what can be done with local products.

"When the market moves during Cherry Festival, we see a drop in the number of customers that come there," said Tricia Phelps, project coordinator for Taste the Local Difference in northwest Michigan. "It's at a time of year when farmers could use that market and at a time when produce is plentiful.

"To see it go down in attendance is something that has always struck me as an issue and the Cherry Festival agreed. They wanted the festival to be a festival about the local agriculture, not to see farmers suffer because of it."

Farmer Reid Johnston experiences a 60- to 70-percent drop in sales on each of the two Saturdays the market moves away from its regular location along Grandview Parkway between Union and Cass streets.

"It's a pretty difficult time for us," said Johnston, of Second Spring Farm in Cedar. "The market is one of our main sources of revenue, and crops are starting to come in and people are starting to show up in numbers and then we get displaced. In my mind it's so goofy because the festival is supposed to celebrate



## Farm to festival

Containers of fresh strawberries sit on a table at the Sara Hardy Farmers Market.

the agriculture in the region and in effect it just messes us up.”

Sales at the Wednesday market drop by half during festival week, said farmer Nic Theisen. That's because increased traffic during the festival, combined with the market's out-of-the-way temporary spot on Eighth Street, keep many people away.

"A lot of my farmer friends that (sell) on Saturdays, some of them won't even go to market during the festival," said Theisen, of Loma Farm in Lake Leelanau. "I think it's just because Traverse City is so busy, people just stay away. And other people don't know about the market. Usually we get a lot of walk-in traffic from people who see us downtown."

Theisen's farm produces many of the ingredients Roaming Harvest will use in its Farmers Market Brunch offerings, said owner Simon Joseph. This week, that could mean anything from snow peas or sugar snap peas to garlic scapes, the soft, green stems and unopened flower buds of hard-neck garlic varieties.

"We're going to do what we do well, so we'll do tacos and burritos with a farmers market twist," said Joseph, whose Korean beef, blackened whitefish and black bean tacos are local favorites. "It will be a market-driven menu, no pun intended."

Blue Heron's breakfast sandwiches will be served on sourdough biscuits made partly with starter dating to the 1800s, owner Brian Williams said.

"Starter's one of the factors in the final flavor of the bread and the older the starter is, the likelier it is not to die or lose its leavening," said Williams, who feeds the starter twice a day.

All brunch options will be easy to handle and will range in price from \$5 to \$7 — minus a discount for those who make a farmers market purchase.

"It's a quick breakfast, it's not meant to be a full-on sit-down thing," Joseph said. "We're going to keep it simple and affordable and hopefully a lot of people will come out and enjoy the market and a bite to eat."

The first 100 customers will receive a \$5 voucher to spend at the market, courtesy of the festival.

"We're really hoping that it will spur more locals to come and support these farmers during the festival," Phelps said. "It's at a time when they need it and a time when a lot of people avoid the market."

The brunch is organized by Taste the Local Difference, which joined the festival for the first time this year to help develop and promote some of its "Farm to Festival" food events. Others with the Taste the Local Difference "handprint" — meaning much of the food served is locally sourced — include Saturday's Very Cherry Pancake Breakfast at the Open Space and Blues, Brews & BBQ at the Hagerty Center.