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# Sparta Farmers Market to make debut Saturday



Photo by Daniel Freel/New Jersey Herald
**Sparta will host a farmer's market in front of the municipal building, pictured above, Saturday starting at 9 a.m.**

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BY JESSICA MASULLI

jmasulli@njherald.com

SPARTA — Township residents are about to have a lot more options when it comes to buying locally grown foods.

The Sparta Farmers Market will open Saturday at 9 a.m. with 12 vendors selling natural vegetables, meat, eggs, cheese, fruit and flowers, according to Ben Del Coro, the market's manager and executive chef and national sales manager for Fossil Farms, a county-based operation that sells farm-raised game and all-natural meats.

The market will be held every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 65 Main St., in front of the municipal building.

Mayor Scott Seelagy credited Mitchell Morrison, a partner in the Sparta Green Team and coordinator of Sparta Mountain Day, with planting the seeds for the market, which has the full backing of the Township Council.

"I think it is a great thing for Sparta. It will help the local economy and the agricultural community in the county, Seelagy said.

Morrison said the goal is to make the market a destination point.

"People will come to the market and visit other Sparta locations as well," he said.

However, at the heart of his interest in the market is a healthier community.

"There is a huge demand for people to know where their food is coming from, to eat healthy and to eat local," he said.

"We want to pull the community together and make people aware that they have healthy options," Del Coro said.

Twelve vendors from local farms have signed on to be at the market each week, with three or four extras coming in weekly, based on what products they have available.

Del Coro wants to pair the farmers with local residents.

"I work with local farmers," Del Coro said. "I realized they have a severe lack of marketing. I asked, 'Why doesn't Sparta have a market?' "

Some of the vendors include produce from Flower Creek Farm in Andover, meats from Sparta Mountain Farm in Jefferson, flowers from Fair Acres Farm in Montague, cheese from Springhouse Dairy Cheese in Fredon and local wine from Ventimiglia Vineyard in Wantage.

On opening day, visitors can expect a ribbon-cutting ceremony, cooking demonstrations and farmer introductions. Cooking demonstrations will be held every Saturday at noon.

"Notable area chefs will bring their talents to the market to show visitors how to use the products found in the market with easy, flavorful and healthy ways," the market's website said.

Del Coro also plans to create shopping lists on the website, www.spartafarmersmarket.org, to let people know in advance which products will be available on Saturday. Del Coro plans to have seasonal farm tours where people can go on "field trips" to see where their food is produced.

"It is about building local economies," Del Coro said, "and finding more healthy eating options right outside their doors."

Del Coro hopes that the market can pair with local schools by selling vegetables planted at the schools.

"We want to teach kids a valuable life lesson, to grow their own food," Del Coro said.

The Sparta Farmers Market is also on Facebook.

Other farmers markets in Sussex County include:

• Olde Lafayette Village, Route 94, Lafayette; Sundays.

• Sussex County Board of Agriculture Farmers Market, Plains Road, Augusta, at county fairgrounds; Saturdays.

• Crystal Springs, Route 94, Hardyston; Saturdays, June through October.

Staff writer Kathy Stevens contributed to this story. *Created: 5/12/2011 | Updated: 5/13/2011*

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