

## **Workshop Title: How to Sell Grains at the Farmers' Market**

Speaker(s) & their title(s): George Wright, Castor River Farm; Metcalfe, ON

### Summary

*The products of Castor River Farm are sold at a farmer's market in Ottawa, and at a farm store. The key to marketing has been having an attractive, interactive stall that encourages customers and their kids to stay at the stall. Rolled oats are by far the most popular item. One challenge is that average transactions are small, and therefore need a high-traffic market to increase number of sales, or find ways to make bigger sales..*

Selling wheat conventionally, could expect \$100/ton, and now it's between \$200-\$250/ton. For organic: \$300-\$350/ton, and @ \$300/ton, that's \$0.13/lb. But at farmer's market, you can ask \$3.20/lb (\$7,200/ton).

### Market Appeal:

George relies on a customer-initiated process at market by having attractive, interactive features at his stall that appeal to people, and especially their kids. For example, he has an electric Grote Molen kitchen flour mill to make flour on site. This is a noisy little machine that creates a stir among market shoppers. Also has a hand-cranked oat-roller, which is a ton of fun for customers' kids, and together these create line-ups at his stall. He sells quantities by the cup (using pre-graduated mason-jars with handles).

He will often have his kids man the stall, and this is a big draw as well. Jokes that when he is away from the stall, his kids regularly out-sell him. He has found that one key to selling his products has been education, primarily with respect to offering recipes, and also storage information. It's challenging to get people into new foods and new modes of cooking.

### Other Market Tips:

- keeps Pollan's *In Defense of Food* on the table and ear-marked to the section on conventional grain production and processing
- collects emails for newsletters
- clear from a distance what his stall sells
- focus on one big market
- giving away free samples to anyone who shows some interest in product
- educating customers on storing and cooking

Popular at market, in order of sales, with number of buckets (5 gallon?) taken to market:

- 1) Rolled oats - 8
- 2) Wheat flour – 1.5
- 3) Steel-cut oats + Oat groats – 1 each
- 4) Spelt flour + Spelt kernels – 1 each

beyond those items, sells limited quantities of the following, and wonders whether it's worth it at all:

- 5) Buckwheat
- 6) Triticale
- 7) Rye
- 8) Barley
- 9) Winter wheat
- 10) Flax
- 11) Mustards

Also does a pancake mix and a healthy cookie mix.

Weekly sales follow seasonality of baking, higher in the spring up until May, then dipping in the summer, but picking up again in late summer and fall, and peaking in November. Average sales are low, about \$3 per transaction. He wants to find a way to bump this, perhaps by selling by the pound instead of cup, but cup is convenient. Otherwise, need to increase the number of transactions, and therefore need lots of traffic and big market.

Self-certifies for gluten-free products using a home test that works extremely well, called: Easy Gluten Test. Relies on trust of customer at market and has worked well. Approx. 60% of customers are regulars, and 30% are new, and about 10% tourists.