

Fresh Produce, The San Angelo Way!

By Brit Macias

With the birds chirping their morning songs and the heat of the day not yet upon us, I visited San Angelo's own Farmer's Market to check out the fresh produce and what makes our local market great.

The stands were filled with colorful fruits and vegetables of all shapes and sizes, being sold to smiling customers as I spoke with a vendor from Thailand, Saranya. This year is only her second selling at the San Angelo Farmer's Market, but she finds selling there is just plain fun. She mentioned enjoying her conversations with the people who come by her stand and an interesting fruit that certainly doesn't taste good but is good for your health—bitter melon. Saranya informed me that bitter melon is great for diabetic individuals and many of the vegetables on her stand have medicinal benefits.



Saranya was not the only vendor to mention to me her love of the people or the health benefits of locally grown produce sold at the Farmer's Market. Meaghan Davis, 28, and Norma Gilman, 72, also voiced the joy they receive meeting the locals and explained to me in length that the grocery store is not the place you want to buy your produce.



“I would just like to say that people sell their stuff organic all over the place, but I was a science teacher for 37 years and I consider nobody organic because I don't poison, but I use City water and what's in city water?” Mrs. Gilman explained with a shrug. “So, everybody has a problem being organic... what does organic mean?”

What's in our City water is a topic for another day, but despite what that may be, Mrs. Gilman

and Meaghan Davis still claim the produce sold at the Farmer's Market is as fresh and chemical free as you can get.

"People will ask me if there are worms (in the corn). We can't guarantee that every one of these items is going to be perfect but the pretty ones they sell at the grocery store are loaded down with chemicals." Despite some customer apprehension of produce plucked straight from the garden and into their possession, Meaghan's corn is gorgeous and so sweet her son just peels and eats—no cooking necessary!

Not only is the produce fresh and healthy, it is affordable. "You can come get veggies to feed your whole family for a week for \$10," Meaghan stated. Mrs. Gilman chimed in, "We sell nearly everything for a buck and it's healthy."

Mrs. Gilman, who has been braiding garlic since the 80's when she began for her mother, pointed out the importance of the next generation in our community rising up to contribute in the Farmer's Market. "We're hoping the next generation will (continue). To see these young boys actually taking over... that's what we need."



I spoke to "those young boys" Mrs. Gilman was referring to, and the Schwartz Boys Produce brothers echoed the same love of the customers as the other vendors did. Their family has been growing produce in Wall for a long time, but the brothers have been selling at the Farmer's Market for 6-7 years on their own. When asked their favorite part of selling there, one mentioned, "I like seeing the smiles on people's

faces when they get the fresh produce." Another explained he liked selling because it helped make money for college.

Now there's an idea... an entrepreneurial group of young people working hard to pay for their education. Mrs. Gilman hit the nail on the head when she said, "We need the young people of the world." She suggested they go out and grow

their own backyard garden, while Meaghan suggested schools begin garden projects.

Frequent customer of the Farmer's Market, Rita Cardenas, shared her view of the market from the other side of the stand, explaining she enjoys being outside while shopping and the freshness of the produce. She also voiced her appreciation for being able to pick and choose and having her questions answered. "If I don't know what a particular vegetable is or how to cook it, I can ask and the vendor knows."

There you have it, folks. Fresh, chemical-free as it gets produce at a decent price from friendly faces and young people making a way in the world. What reason is there to not visit our San Angelo Farmer's Market at 609 S Oakes? Their grand opening is June 18th. They are open Tuesday, Thursdays, and Saturdays 7am until sell out (typically around noon.) Who knows? Maybe we'll see you or your kids' stand there next year!



Until Next Time...

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