

Market tradition: organic bounty and wire sculptures

Text and photos by **MARIE ARY**

Along Pike Place, every Wednesday, the Meyer family sells lush, local organic fruits and vegetables; the Suwanchote family handcrafts sculptures daily on-site from wire and colorful tubing.

Selling along Pike Place is the origin of the 98-year-old Market tradition of "meet the producer," a tradition continued by 311 farmers and craftspeople, including the Meyer family, of Stoney Plains Organic Farm, and Chatnarong and Nayana Suwanchote, of Trisons sculptures.

Wednesdays are organic at the Market

Organic Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., feature certified organic fruits and vegetables

from area farms including 150 crops from the Meyer family's 50-acre farm, one of 553 state-certified organic Washington farms.

This month, look for Stoney Plains Organic Farm's strawberries and raspberries; sugar snap and shell peas; five types of beans; and garlic and sweet onions on shaded tables along Pike Place.

"We grow three acres of berries, mostly strawberry, with some raspberry, now coming in," said son Patrick Meyer, one of seven siblings, the farm operations manager. "Sugar snaps and shell peas should be strong this month with a few snow peas in early July.

"We have five types of beans right now, the fava, green, purple, yellow wax and royal burgundy beans," he said. "We grow 11 different varieties of garlic on 10 acres and one of my specialties is the Spanish rojo, along with the elephant garlic."

The family planted "over one million sweet onions similar to Walla Wallas that we're just starting to harvest now," Patrick said. "And the row crops available include carrots, celery and zucchini."

The Meyers grow "between five and seven acres of dried beans such as the cranberry or horticultural bean, as it's also known," he said. "Our growing season begins in January and is now year round."

They will sell each Wednesday through the end of November, closing with squash, potatoes, kale and other winter crops.

"We have three 100-foot-long greenhouses where we start our seedlings for everything grown in our fields," said Patricia Meyer, mother

and farm founder.

"If people want to buy in bulk quantity from us, they call ahead to say 'I need a case of this or that'," Patricia said. "Their order ships on the truck and they pick it up at the Pike Place Market. We have restaurants that do that."

According to Patricia, demand for organic is on an upswing.

"Customers tell me they don't want the chemicals, it tastes much better and I've had two customers, diagnosed with cancer, whose doctors told them to switch over to organic," she said. "It's also easier on the environment."

Organic since 1977, "we began on three-quarters of an acre beside our home," Patricia said. "My late husband Bob and I have seven children and when we started out, we didn't want our children eating pesticides, so organic was the way we were going to go."

Besides Organic Wednesdays, the Meyer family has been involved in the Market Basket CSA (community supported agriculture) program from its beginning.

"They've been participants since 1998, the first full year of the Market Basket CSA program," said Michele Catalano, the Market's CSA program manager.

"The farm was Bob's dream," said Patricia. "He always wanted a farm, was extremely knowledgeable and was a great mentor for the young farmers coming in."

"If they had questions, he could answer them."

Bob Meyer retired as an international area union director for the state, county and municipal employees union.

"After he retired, he took over the operation and we worked together until he died two-and-a-half years ago," she said.

"The farm was my dad's dream and now it's mine, too," said Patrick. "My brother Tom is involved, plus two sister-in-laws and my two children have sold our produce at the Market in addition to their work on the farm."

To place large orders telephone Patricia Meyer, 360 273-6786.

Twisted aluminum wire morphs into art

Husband and wife artists Chatnarong and Nayana Suwanchote of Trisons hand shape fine gauge aluminum wire into sculptures at their day stall near the north Pike Place pergola.

"All Trisons sculptures are made from one continuous piece of wire onto which we incorporate colorful plastic tubing while we hand shape the wire," said Nayana Suwanchote. "For example, beginning at one handlebar of our bicycle sculpture, we wrap one piece of wire into shape until we complete the tip of the opposite handlebar."

The Suwanchotes' super miniature, two-and-a-half-inch bicycle sculpture "uses 40 inches of 18-gauge aluminum wire, which I complete in seven minutes," she said. "Our bicycle with a handlebar basket requires five feet of wire while our tandem bicycle uses six feet of wire."

Pedals on all bicycle sculptures, which include butterfly, banana, mountain and racing designs, move. "We encourage visitors to push the pedals with their fingers," said Nayana. "And, they are amazed the pedals move."

To ensure all Market visitors can be art patrons, the Suwanchotes create bookmarks and clever sculptures in 72 designs that hold photographs, messages or recipes. They also take commissions for exclusive sculptures.

"In May, we made 500 bookmarks from all of our designs for a birthday party in Atlanta, Georgia," she said. "Our customer visited the Market two years ago and had remembered us."

"We own 72 designs that include medical and dental, legal and educational, animal and floral, and Seattle-area themes," said Nayana. "We also have American and British Sign Language phrases."

Recent June brides placed large orders for the photograph/memo/recipe holders and freestanding bicycle sculptures as wedding favors.

"Last month, we sculpted 60 photograph/memo-holder wedding gifts that incorporate a corporate logo of a mountain topped with rays of sunlight," she said. "The young customer is the marketing manager for her corporation."

A Vancouver, B.C. bride ordered 230 of the smallest freestanding bicycles, with kickstands, as wedding favors.

"With a one month lead-time, the bride placed her order through our website," said Nayana. "Then, the bride personally came to the Market from Canada to inspect each bicycle and pick up the order from us."

Corporate and business customers find the Trisons items appropriate for conventions and marketing gifts.

"Last month, we created and shipped an



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