



ROCHESTER FARMERS MARKETS

To our valued community,

Farmers markets are grocery stores, offering reliable, local food from trusted producers. Read on to learn about our decision and precautions we are taking.

Rochester Farmers Market will be open Saturday, March 21 with our usual schedule (9:00-12:00 noon at 35 Fairgrounds Ave SE, Rochester, MN 55904).

Farmers markets are essential to the livelihood of farmers and food producers. They offer an efficient way for residents to obtain a diversity of fresh foods from direct, trusted sources. Shopping at farmers markets means you are supporting your local economy, which is especially critical in this time of uncertainty.

Considering current events, the decision to remain open was not an easy one, and we delayed our announcement to provide the most up-to-date information possible. Here are a few of the factors that influenced our decision:



Minnesota Department of Agriculture has confirmed that **farmers markets are exempt from the restaurant/bar closure and are categorized as a grocery store / essential service**. Communication from Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture, Thom Petersen, has confirmed from Governor attorneys that farmers' markets are exempt from this executive order, provided they do not offer onsite consumption. (Read about this decision and what our twin cities neighbors are doing in the [StarTribune](#))



Olmsted County leadership has agreed that we are a grocery store and has listed the farmers market as an [exception to the Graham Park closure](#). Graham Park facilities staff have been wholly supportive and are proactively helping us plan for Saturday March 21 in addition to future farmers markets.



We have received an unprecedented level of in-person support from the [Minnesota Farmers Market Association](#), Minnesota Departments of [Agriculture](#) and [Health](#), [Olmsted County Public Health](#), [Renewing the Countryside](#), [Farmers Market Food Hubs](#), our vendor Board of Directors and community Board [Friends of the Farmers Market](#), and many volunteers and sponsors.

After communicating with our winter market community of about 30 vendors, many of whom have served Rochester Farmers Markets for decades and rely primarily on our successful market for their livelihoods, we want you to know that:

- We care.
- We want to continue to provide for you.
- We want to do that in the safest way possible.
- Farmers markets are a critical resource for healthy, wholesome, reliable food.

There is no evidence that food is a source or transmission route for the novel coronavirus. To keep our farmers, producers, and shoppers safe, we are focusing on our role as a **grocery store**, and have made changes to our setup at market:

- There will be NO food served for onsite consumption (no concessions or sampling).
- Customers will need to access the market from **Broadway Ave**. The streets and parking lots south of the market are closed for Graham Park operations.
- We are planning to have fewer vendors and more space between vendors.
- We've placed several hand wash stations around the building and encourage everyone to **wash hands frequently**.
- We've replaced the market info booth with a minimal table and made other changes to ensure easy, effective sanitizing.
- We will only be using the West door.
- We encourage customers to **shop efficiently** and avoid congregating. Practice social distancing of approximately 6'.
- We encourage customers not to touch items on vendor tables – please point at what you want and let vendors bag the purchases.

- We plan to offer the token/EBT/Market Bucks system as this provides an essential food resource for customers. We are brainstorming about alternatives and best practices.
- Many volunteers will be onsite helping with the drive thru pilot and helping sanitize surfaces.
- **If you are sick or fall into a high-risk group, or if you have sick or high-risk people at home, we strongly encourage you to stay home on Saturday.** When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

Thank you, as always, for your support of local food, small businesses, and southeastern Minnesota farm families.

Sincerely,

Jess Joyce, Market Manager,
and the rest of the Rochester Farmers Market Association team

#FarmersMarketsAreGroceryStores