



WEDNESDAY NIGHT MARKET ADDED: The Saturday Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market 2016 season is underway

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ALTON - The 2016 season of the **Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market** is underway through October 15th, in session on Saturday mornings from 8:00 a.m. until Noon and on Wednesday evenings from 4:00 until 7:00 p.m. in the parking lot at the corner of Landmarks Blvd. and Henry Street. A new Night Market is being added, also on Wednesdays, at Elijah P's from 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Shoppers will find a wide selection of locally-grown seasonal fruit and vegetables, including heirloom varieties and organically grown crops. Produce will be available, along with grass-fed beef, pasture-raised poultry, farm fresh eggs, local honey, hot or iced coffee, fresh bread and other baked goods. In addition, fresh cut flowers, potted plants, and a large assortment of hand-crafted artwork such as pottery, stained glass, soap, candles, and woodworking items will be sold.

Alton Main Street organizes the markets, which have been in operation for 24 years, as part of the organization's efforts to revitalize the Downtown Alton historic district. The events feature a variety of products that are handmade or homegrown within a 50-mile radius. New vendors are welcome; registration fees are \$12.00 for Saturdays and \$5.00 for either Wednesday option. Discounted seasonal rates are also available.

Live entertainment and special activities have been scheduled every Saturday morning throughout the season. On June 11th AMS will be teaming up with the Alton Park & Recreation Department to hold a Tailgate Sale in the adjacent parking lot. The sale starts at 7am, and shoppers can find great bargains until Noon. If you would like to reserve a \$10 parking spot to sell your unwanted goods, advanced registration is required by calling 463-3580. On June 18th, live music will be performed by When Universes Collide, and attendees will enjoy an Artist Demo by Jim Linksvayer, who will be working on the pottery wheel. Kids can also enjoy getting behind the wheel of a small automobile in the Power Wheels Derby Car Racetrack. June 25th will feature multi-instrumentalist Nancy Lippincott, as well as the popular “Recipe Day”, an activity loved by shoppers as a great opportunity to collect favorite family recipes while they visit with the vendors.

Alton Main Street aims to improve access to healthy foods thanks to the Illinois EBT Wireless Project grant funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps or LINK cards) will be accepted by many vendors. The goal is to boost the sale of Illinois-grown food and provide access to fresh produce to low-income residents by enabling Farmers’ Markets to accept federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. Starting on July 2nd, Senior Services Plus will be distributing Senior Nutrition Coupons at the Saturday Market, which are vouchers for \$25 worth of free produce to seniors 60+ who fit income guidelines. For more information on that program, please contact SSP at 465-3298.

A new project called the “Night Market” will launch on June 8th, which will take place every Wednesday from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. in the warehouse behind Elijah P’s, located at 401 Piasa Street. “We have gotten feedback from artists who work 9-5 jobs that they would like a mid-week Market to sell their wares, so we’ve added a late night option to support more creative entrepreneurs in our area,” said Sara McGibany, Executive Director of Alton Main Street. “Last fall we worked with Russ Smith to present the Chili Cook-Off in his warehouse and everyone fell in love with the ambiance in the space, so we are excited to get more activity going there. Vendors will enjoy the built-in foot traffic from the popular bar & restaurant, so it’s a win-win for everyone.”

The same stipulations apply for vendors - anything homegrown or handmade by you is welcome to be sold, and there are many on-site amenities that will be enjoyed by vendors and shoppers alike, including restrooms, electricity for booths, live bands from 6:00-9:00pm, and great food and drinks. The warehouse is climate controlled, meaning that there is no risk for rain-outs and vendors do not need to set up tents. “The Night Market concept will be a great fit for the space”, said owner Russ Smith, “we will be creating an atmosphere that is popular with St. Louis Markets by allowing customers to grab dinner and a beverage and listen to live music while shopping for artisan-made

products. There will also be cross-promotional opportunities for our chef Aaron Whalen to offer specials featuring produce and products from the Market.”

“Thankfully, choosing to shop local is becoming more than a fad; it’s developing into a way of life for many people who realize the economic impact of supporting local entrepreneurs,” said McGibany. “Spending a portion of your existing food budget and purchasing gifts from market vendors truly boosts our local economy because the profit re-circulates here instead of being sent out of the area to corporations and their shareholders,” she said, “Not to mention fruits and vegetables are at their freshest and most nutritious when they have not been shipped across the country, and the Market is a lot more fun than a trip to the grocery store.”

Anyone who would like to sell homegrown or handmade items at these events is encouraged to visit the Events page of www.DowntownAlton.com to download a registration form. Pre-registration is not required, vendors simply show up one hour prior to start time to be directed to their booth space. Receive reminders on what produce is in season, plus upcoming entertainment and activities at: [facebook.com /AltonFarmersMarket](https://www.facebook.com/AltonFarmersMarket) or on the Twitter account @AltonMarket.