MARKET VENDOR'S HANDBOOK 2026

NELSON FARMERS MARKET

Welcome to the Nelson Farmers Market!

The Nelson Farmers Market is a long-standing and well-established gathering place in Nelson, BC. Located in the heart of the Kootenay region—an area known for its vibrant culture, strong arts community, and small-scale agriculture, the market has connected local producers with the community for more than four decades.

Who We Are

Traditionally held at Cottonwood Falls Park every Saturday from spring through early autumn, the market brings together farmers, food producers, artisans, and the public to offer fresh, local, and seasonal goods. Over time, the Nelson Farmers Market has expanded to include additional weekly and seasonal events, such as the Wednesday market, Market Nights, and special events including the Garden Starter Market and Harvest Fest. These offerings reflect the growth of the market and its continued role in serving the community.

The Nelson Farmers Market is more than a place of commerce; it is an essential part of community life and the local economy. The market fosters direct connections between producers and consumers, allowing residents and visitors to purchase food and goods directly from those who grow and create them. It supports small-scale farmers, artisans, and food entrepreneurs from across the Kootenay region by providing an accessible and meaningful marketplace.

By prioritizing locally produced food, the market contributes to community food security and sustainability while enhancing community vitality. The market also provides a welcoming public space where neighbours gather, local artists and performers share their work, and visitors experience Nelson's unique character.

As a proud member of the British Columbia Association of Farmers' Markets (BCAFM), the Nelson Farmers Market aligns with provincial principles that support strong local food systems, community connection, and ethical market practices.

About this Handbook

This handbook outlines the policies, expectations, and operational guidelines governing vendor participation in the Nelson Farmers Market, along with key dates, maps, and fees. It is updated regularly and reflects the collaborative decisions of the Nelson Farmers Market Advisory Committee, Nelson City Council, and the Nelson Farmers Market Manager.

The Market Coordinator is present during all market operations to support smooth functioning and oversee adherence to these guidelines. Vendors are responsible for understanding and following all policies in this handbook to help ensure a safe, fair, and welcoming environment for vendors, customers, and the community. Any violations or concerns must be reported promptly to Market staff. The Nelson Farmers Market reserves the right to enforce compliance, issue warnings, or revoke market privileges if these guidelines are not followed.

Table of Contents

05 **British Columbia Association of Farmers Markets (BCAFM)**

06 **Applications and Vendor Selection**

07 **Important Dates**

05 **Fees | Application & Cancellation**

12 **Booth Assignments & Set-up**

15 **Parking**

16 **Market Policies**
- Make It, Bake It, Grow it
- Children
- Smoking
- Cannabis
- Wild Mushrooms
- Signage

18 **Food & Drink Vendors**
- Interior Health Requirements
- Temporary Food Service Approval Process
- On-Site Cooking | Fire Department Regulations
- Additional Food Vendor Requirement
- Support from Market Management

20 **Produce Vendors**

21 **Artisan Vendors**

22 **Community Groups & Not for Profit Organizations**

24 **Location Maps**

27 **Harassment & Discrimination**

27 **Comment or Concerns**

British Columbia Association of Farmers Markets (BCAFM)

The Nelson Farmers Market is a proud member of the British Columbia Association of Farmers Markets (BCAFM). We operate under the principle of "Make It, Bake It, or Grow It," meaning all products sold at our market must be crafted, baked, or grown by the vendor themselves. Resale of any kind is not permitted. Our vendors are local farmers and small businesses from across the Kootenay Region, creating a vibrant and diverse marketplace.

The Market also participates in the Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program, which supports food security for low-income families, pregnant women, and seniors. This program provides access to fresh, local, and seasonal produce while supporting the farmers who grow it.

In 2025, the Nelson Farmers Market distributed $67,922 in nutrition coupons, directly benefiting residents and strengthening our local food system. By participating in this program, and by following the Market's guidelines, vendors help foster a healthy, fair, and thriving community.

For more information, visit bcfarmersmarket.org.

Vendor Selection

Returning vendors in good standing are given priority placement for the upcoming market season. At the same time, the market is always excited to welcome new vendors, as fresh ideas, products, and local creativity help make the Nelson Farmers Market diverse, vibrant, and engaging for our community.

Application Requirements

All vendors must complete the application form on the City of Nelson website at nelson.ca/market.

Vendors are expected to review this Vendor Handbook. Submitting an application confirms your agreement to abide by all handbook policies. Failure to do so may affect your vendor standing and future participation in the market.

Applications must be submitted at least two weeks before the market date for which you are applying.

Application Review and Notification

The Market Coordinator reviews all applications and will notify applicants within two weeks of submission.

Market Participation Expectations

Vendors are expected to honor confirmed market dates. Excessive cancellations may jeopardize your priority placement or eligibility in future markets. Reliable participation helps maintain a fair and consistent market for all vendors and customers.

Special Event Markets

The Nelson Farmers Market hosts several special event markets—including Garden Starter, Night Market, and Harvest Fest. These events are not BCAFM events, which gives us more flexibility in the types of vendors allowed. Resale is still prohibited, but a wider variety of unique products may be accepted for these special events.

Accessibility and Questions

If you are unsure whether your products meet the market criteria, have questions about the application process, or need assistance, please contact the Market Coordinator at farmersmarket@nelson.ca. We are happy to provide guidance and support to help you participate successfully.

Please note: Drop-in vendors are not permitted.

2026 Market Dates

All dates and times are subject to change.

For more information about what to expect at each market, please visit nelson.ca/market

Mother's Day Garden Starter Market

Sunday, May 10th | 10am to 3pm

@ the Hall Street Pier

Saturday Farmer's Market

Saturdays, May 16 to October 31 | 9am to 2pm

@ Cottonwood Falls Park

Wednesday Farmers Market

Wednesdays, June 3 to September 30 | 10am to 2pm

@ the 600 block of Baker Street* and Hall Street Plaza

**Wednesday markets may temporarily begin at Cottonwood Falls Park due to downtown infrastructure replacement projects. Location changes will be communicated to vendors in advance.*

Summer Night Markets

Friday, July 24 and Friday, August 21 | 6pm to 10pm

@ the 200-400 blocks of Baker Street

Harvest Fest

Sunday, September 27 | 10am to 3pm

@ the 200-400 blocks of Baker Street

Registration Fees

Event fees are due on market day, and are collected in person at each event. An additional $25 application fee applies to all new and returning vendors and is due at the time of application.

Saturday & Wednesday Weekly Markets

Farm Vendor Fee: $40/week

Non-Farm Vendor Fee: $45/week

Mother's Day Garden Starter Market

Farm Vendor Fee: $50

Non-Farm Vendor Fee: $55

Summer Night Markets

Farm and Non-Farm Vendors: $75/event

Ready-to-Eat Food Vendors (no cooking on site): $85/event

Food Trailer or Truck Rig: $100/event

Harvest Fest

Farm and Non-Farm Vendors: $75

Ready-to-Eat Food Vendors (no cooking on site): $85

Food Trailer or Truck Rig: $100

Cancellation Policy

Wednesday & Saturday Weekly Markets

A minimum of 48 hours notice is required for cancellations.

Vendors who cancel within 48 hours or fail to attend their scheduled market must pay a cancellation fee before participating in their next confirmed market date.

Cancellation Fees

First offence: $20

Second offence: $40

Third offence: Removal from the market for the remainder of the season

Special Event Markets

A minimum of two weeks notice is required for cancellations.

Late cancellations or no-shows will be subject to a $50 fee.

Reliability & Future Participation

Market management reviews overall vendor reliability, including cancellations and season-long participation. Missed markets or late notice may affect future eligibility.

Vendors with a pattern of cancellations may:

- Receive lower placement priority
- Be offered fewer market dates
- Have future applications reviewed with reduced priority or denied

Extenuating Circumstances

Market management may, at its discretion, consider waiving cancellation fees.

Note: The Nelson Farmers Market operates rain or shine, and weather-related concerns are not valid reasons for late cancellations.

Booth Set-Up

For all markets, vendor spaces are assigned by the Nelson Farmers Market Coordinator. Stall requests may be submitted but are not guaranteed. Stall placement is determined by market management based on a variety of factors, including (but not limited to) years of participation, vendor standing within the market, product type, category balance, site logistics, and overall market flow.

A significant amount of strategic planning goes into creating a successful, safe, and well-balanced market layout. As a result, not all placement requests can be accommodated. Vendors will receive a site map with set-up instructions the day before the market. All stall assignments are final, and adjustments will not be made on market days except at the direction of market staff.

Vendors with heat-sensitive products should be aware that shaded stall locations are limited and are not guaranteed. Vendors are fully responsible for protecting their products from heat and sun exposure.

Each vendor is required to have the following:

- A 10x10 tent—to help protect products from weather and sun exposure, side walls are recommended but not mandatory.
- **Tent weights are mandatory.** Vendors without proper weights will not be permitted to set up a tent.
- A table for product display.

Signage & Advertising

All vendors must display a sign clearly identifying their business name and location. Clear business signage helps customers identify and return to vendors they have purchased from previously.

Vendor signage must be fully set up before the market opens to the public. Failure to display a business name sign may result in a warning and may impact future participation if not corrected.

All products must be clearly priced. Prices must be affixed to individual items or displayed on a clearly visible sign or board at the booth.

Prepared foods for home use or for on-site consumption must have all ingredients clearly listed and either attached to the product or prominently displayed at the booth.

Any signage or claims identifying products as organic, biodynamic, or first-, second-, or third-year transitional must be supported by appropriate certification documentation, which must be prominently displayed at the front of the stall.

Social Media

We love to share! We encourage you to post on your social channels about your market booth and let your customers know you're here. Tag us and we'll share your posts on our channels.

@nelson.farmers.market Nelson BC Farmers Market

Parking

Baker Street Markets

Vendors are asked not to park within the downtown core in order to preserve parking availability for market customers and the greater community. Designated vendor parking is available at a daily rate in the City of Nelson parkade and on Cedar Street.

Vendors who choose to park outside of these recommended areas should be aware that downtown parking is actively monitored by Bylaw Services. Any parking tickets issued as a result of non-compliance are the sole responsibility of the vendor.

Cottonwood Falls Markets

Vendors are asked to park outside the market boundary to reduce congestion and ensure safe access for attendees. Vendor parking is not permitted in the main Cottonwood Falls parking lot, the Rod & Gun Club parking area, or the lots behind Cottonwood Autobody.

Approved vendor parking includes the City-owned parking area behind Selkirk Veterinary Office, additional parking in Railtown (approximately a flat, five-minute walk), and available nearby street parking.

Set-up/Takedown Procedures

Setup and takedown details will be communicated by email to each vendor the day prior to the market event.

Parking Enforcement

Parking regulations are enforced by City of Nelson Bylaw Services. Vendors must park in permitted areas and follow all posted parking restrictions.

Vehicle Safety

Unsafe driving within the market area is strictly prohibited and may result in a review of the vendor's application and approved market schedule. All vendors must adhere to respectful workplace and conduct expectations—violations may also result in a review of application status and market participation.

Market Vendor Policies

The Nelson Farmers Market is more than a place of commerce—it is a vital part of community life and the local economy. By fostering direct connections between producers and consumers, the market allows residents and visitors to buy food and goods directly from those who grow and create them. Clear, shared policies help ensure the market remains fair, reliable, and welcoming for everyone, while supporting small-scale farmers, artisans, and food entrepreneurs from across the Kootenay region through an accessible and meaningful marketplace.

Smoking

Smoking of any kind, including tobacco, cannabis, vaping devices, and e-cigarettes, is prohibited on market premises during operating hours. In accordance with the City of Nelson Clean Air and Smoking Bylaw, smoking is not permitted in parks or municipal open spaces, including within a seven-metre buffer surrounding these areas.

Children

The Nelson Farmers Market values family participation and understands that some vendors may need to bring children to the market. Children must remain at the vendor's booth or always be under direct adult supervision. Vendors are responsible for ensuring that children do not interfere with other vendors, customers, or market operations.

For safety reasons, wheeled devices—including bicycles, scooters, balance bikes, skateboards, and similar equipment—are not permitted on market property during market hours.

If these guidelines are not followed, vendors may be required to make alternate childcare arrangements in order to continue participating in the market.

Wild Mushrooms

For safety and regulatory reasons, the sale of foraged wild mushrooms is not permitted at the Nelson Farmers Market.

Cannabis

The sale of cannabis or cannabis-derived products, including but not limited to edibles, extracts, topical products, and health or wellness items, is not permitted at the Nelson Farmers Market. Under British Columbia law, non-medical cannabis sales are restricted to government-operated stores, licensed private retailers, and the B.C. government's online store.

Re-Selling & Make It, Bake It, Grow It Policy

The Nelson Farmers Market prohibits the re-selling of products. All vendors must make, bake, or grow the products they sell and must be directly involved in the creation, production, or cultivation process.

To qualify under the 'Make It, Bake It, Grow It' standard, products must be at least 80 percent altered from their original state through the vendor's own labor, skill, and creative process. Priority is given to vendors who produce items entirely from scratch.

Make It, Bake It, Grow It?

Make It: Items that are substantially handcrafted or manufactured by the vendor from raw or base materials. Minor finishing, assembly, or decorative changes alone do not qualify.

Bake It: Food products prepared by the vendor from approved kitchens using original recipes and in compliance with all applicable health authority regulations.

Grow It: Agricultural products grown, raised, or harvested by the vendor.

Assembled or minimally altered items do not meet the Make It, Bake It, Grow It requirement. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Stringing pre-purchased beads onto a chain or cord
- Stamping, labeling, or embellishing thrifted or pre-made clothing
- Combining pre-made components without substantial transformation
- Repackaging or relabeling commercially produced goods

Such items are considered re-selling and are not permitted at the market.

Market management reserves the right to request information about a product's production process and materials at any time. Vendors found to be re-selling or misrepresenting their products may be required to remove the items for sale, leave the market immediately, may forfeit applicable fees, and may have future applications declined.

Food and Drink Vendors

The Nelson Farmers Market welcomes food and drink vendors and is actively working to grow ready-to-eat food offerings. The following information is provided to help vendors clearly understand approval requirements and applicable standards.

Interior Health Requirements

The Interior Health Authority regulates the sale of food at temporary food markets. Vendors are responsible for determining whether their products are classified as lower-risk or higher-risk foods.

Approval is required to sell higher-risk pre-packaged food not intended for immediate consumption, including (but not limited to) shell eggs and frozen or refrigerated raw foods of animal origin such as meat, poultry, or fish. Vendors must obtain the appropriate approval from Interior Health and provide confirmation to the Market Coordinator prior to vending.

Food and beverages intended for immediate consumption at the market require approval through a Temporary Food Service application with Interior Health.

Vendors must review the Interior Health Guideline for the Sale of Foods at Temporary Food Markets to determine whether:

- Their products are considered lower-risk and exempt from permitting, or
- Their products are considered higher-risk and require approval from an Environmental Health Officer

Lower-risk, home-prepared foods may be sold without authorization from Interior Health, provided they meet all applicable guidelines.

Temporary Food Service Approval Process

Step 1: Review Interior Health's Temporary Food Market Guidelines to confirm whether your food is classified as higher-risk.

Step 2: If required, submit a Temporary Food Service application along with all supporting documentation to Interior Health.

Step 3: Once approved, Interior Health will issue a confirmation letter.

High-risk food vendors must provide a copy of their Interior Health confirmation letter to market staff prior to vending and must have it available onsite during market hours.

Vendors are responsible for ensuring ongoing compliance with Interior Health standards, including food handling, temperature control, handwashing, sanitation, and safe food storage practices.

On-Site Cooking & Fire Department Requirements

Any vendor cooking food onsite, using open flames, propane, electrical cooking equipment, or operating from a food truck or food trailer is required to obtain certification or approval from the Nelson Fire Department prior to vending.

Fire safety approval is mandatory in addition to Interior Health requirements and must be secured before attending the market.

Additional Food Vendor Requirements

All food and beverage products sold at the Nelson Farmers Market must be locally made by the vendor. Preference is given to products made using locally grown ingredients and supplies whenever possible.

The re-sale of food or beverage items is strictly prohibited and will result in the vendor being required to leave the market. This includes, but is not limited to, bottled water, juice packs, or commercially produced food products.

Support from Market Management

The Nelson Farmers Market understands that navigating health and safety requirements can be complex. The Market Coordinator is available to assist food vendors in understanding Interior Health standards, Fire Department requirements, and the application process. Vendors are encouraged to reach out well in advance of their scheduled market date for guidance and support.

Produce Vendors

Local food production is the foundation of the Nelson Farmers Market. All produce vendors are required to grow or produce a minimum of 80% of the products they sell, and all produce must be grown or produced within a 200 km radius of Nelson.

Farm vendor cooperatives, collectives, or associations are permitted to sell at the market, provided this arrangement is clearly disclosed to both the Market Manager and Market Coordinator and is communicated transparently to customers at the vendor's booth.

Products originating outside the 200 km radius may only be sold with prior approval from the Market Manager and Market Coordinator. Approval will be granted only for products that are not reasonably available within the local region. Any approved non-local products must be clearly identified through signage stating where the product is from and explaining how it is ethically and/or fairly traded.

These guidelines exist to protect the integrity of the market, support local farmers, and ensure customers can make informed purchasing decisions.

Artisan Vendors

The Nelson Farmers Market prioritizes artisans who create original products through hands-on craftsmanship. Artisan vendors must personally make at least 80 percent of the products they sell and meet the BCAFM "Make It" standard. Products must result from a meaningful production process involving the vendor's skill, technique, and transformation.

Assembly alone does not qualify as making. Products primarily constructed from pre-made or commercially produced components such as items that are glued, strung, packaged, poured, or otherwise combined with minimal alteration are not considered handmade. To qualify, assembled products must be significantly transformed through the artisan's process and altered by at least 50 percent from their original state.

Artisan vendors must be able to clearly describe how and where their products are made and who is involved in the process. Any pre-made or externally sourced components must be secondary to the finished product and disclosed upon request. Products that are primarily repackaged, resold, or minimally altered are not permitted. These standards protect the integrity of the market, support genuine local makers, and ensure customers can trust that artisan goods are truly handcrafted.

Community Groups & Not-for-Profit Organizations

The Nelson Farmers Market welcomes community groups and not-for-profit organizations whose work meaningfully contributes to the well-being of the local community. Participation is intended to support organizations that provide direct community benefit through services, education, cultural activities, environmental stewardship, food security, or other initiatives that strengthen the social fabric of Nelson and the surrounding region.

To qualify as a community group, organizations must be non-commercial in nature and e able to clearly demonstrate how their presence at the market gives back to the community. This may include sharing educational information, raising awareness about community services, engaging the public in positive initiatives, or supporting local causes. Community group booths are not intended for fundraising as a primary purpose unless explicitly approved by the Market Manager and Market Coordinator.

The Nelson Farmers Market is a non-partisan, inclusive public space. Political parties, political advocacy groups, protest movements, or organizations whose primary purpose is political campaigning, lobbying, or advocacy for or against specific political positions, governments, or international conflicts are not permitted to participate as community group vendors. This includes groups whose materials, signage, or activities could reasonably be interpreted as partisan, political, or divisive in nature.

All community groups and not-for-profit organizations must receive prior approval from the Market Manager and Market Coordinator and must operate in alignment with the market's Code of Conduct, values, and purpose. The Market Manager and Market Coordinator reserve the right to determine eligibility, request additional information, and remove any group whose activities do not align with the intent of community group participation at the market.

Market Locations

Hall Street Pier Parking

Mother's Day

Cottonwood Falls Parking

Saturdays

Baker and Hall Street Parking

Wednesdays

Harassment & Discrimination

The Nelson Farmers Market is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment for all vendors, staff, volunteers, performers, community groups, and customers. Harassment, discrimination, bullying, or aggressive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes verbal, physical, visual, or online behavior that makes someone feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or disrespected.

All vendors are expected to treat others with respect and are responsible for the conduct of anyone working in their booth. Concerns or incidents should be reported to the Market Coordinator or Market staff as soon as possible.

The Market Coordinator has the authority to take immediate action, including issuing warnings, removing individuals from the market, suspending participation, or revoking future market privileges. Serious or repeated incidents may result in removal from the market without refund.

By participating in the Nelson Farmers Market, all vendors agree to adhere to this policy and help create a positive, inclusive, and respectful community space.

Comments or Concerns

The Nelson Farmers Market is committed to operating the market in a way that is fair, transparent, and respectful to vendors, shoppers, and partners. We know that running a busy public market can sometimes create challenges. When concerns arise, we have a process to ensure they are handled properly.

Vendors are encouraged to raise questions, comments, or concerns directly with the Market Coordinator, either on-site if the concern is immediate, or via email at farmersmarket@nelson.ca. This allows issues to be reviewed with the right information and people involved, and helps us respond in a timely and consistent way.

Our goal is always to:

- Listen carefully
- Review concerns fairly
- Provide clear answers or solutions
- Improve how the market operates.

Thank you for your support for another exciting season at the Nelson Farmers Market!

NELSON FARMERS MARKET | City of NELSON

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farmersmarket@nelson.ca | nelson.ca/market