

Ajax and Pickering residents take a bite out of farm fresh foods

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Farmers' markets open this month in Ajax and Pickering

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AJAX -- After years of having to look outside of their municipalities, Ajax and Pickering residents now have options for buying farm fresh products with two farmers' markets running this summer.

Returning this year is the Ajax Farmers' Market at Vandermeer Nursery on Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., which started June 2 and runs into October. The nursery is at the corner of Lakeridge Road and Bayly Street in Ajax.

The market was created last year and Vandermeer Nursery general manager and the market's marketing manager Pradeep Suriar said he's hoping the market will continue to grow.

"We ended up with 13 vendors and this year we're starting with 14 vendors," said Mr. Suriar, adding that as the market becomes more popular he's hoping to have 20 to 25 vendors.

Right now, farmers are selling produce, meat, baked goods and more. By starting the market in the afternoon, it gives farmers a chance to pick their produce in the morning and take it to market in the afternoon.

Mr. Suriar said this year the market is opening about two weeks earlier than last year.

"The residents themselves asked for it to start earlier," he said.

Meanwhile, in Pickering, a new farmers' market is opening this summer courtesy of Ontario Power Generation (OPG). The market will run on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. starting on June 15 and running until Oct. 5.

To find the market, take Brock Road south to the Pickering nuclear plant and follow the signs from Montgomery Park Road.

Cheryl Johnston, senior communications adviser at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, explains that OPG held a few markets last year and it proved popular with both the public and with plant employees.

"There wasn't a Pickering farmers' market being held on a weekly basis so we saw a need and decided to fill it," said Ms. Johnston.

The farmers come from Pickering, Ajax, Nestleton and Port Perry and they'll be bringing produce, lamb, organic bread and baked goods, honey, herbs, maple syrup and more.

"We're stressing Ontario produce," said Ms. Johnston.

As to why the two companies started farmers' markets, Ms. Johnston said OPG believes in supporting the community.

"I think it's important that OPG not only support the host communities, but the community at large especially the agricultural community, and this is a great opportunity for them to sell their products that are locally grown," she said.

At Vandermeer Nursery there's an even closer connection.

"We've been here for over 50 years and we are farmers ourselves," said Mr. Suriar.