Chatham Mills Farmers’ Market has grown like a weed

By Adrienne Bashista

Drive through Pittsboro most Saturday mornings and you can’t miss the tents on the lawn of the historic Chatham Mills Mill. Chatham Mills Farmer’s Market is open for business. Across the street you’ll see another reminder of the Market: Pittsboro’s newest public art decorates the wall of the old hotel owned by Pam and Smuffy Smith; a mural promoting all the farmers’ markets in Chatham county.

Now in its third year, Chatham Mills Farm—all the farmers’ markets in Chatham county. In its third year, Chatham Mills Farm—all the farmers’ markets in Chatham county. In its third year, Chatham Mills Farm—all the farmers’ markets in Chatham county.

Pam and Snuffy Smith: a mural promoting the market: Pittsboro’s newest public art. The seeds of the current Market were planted in an earlier farmers market hosted at the Carolina Brewery. “The current location was in town and more visible,” says Chris Jude, Board President and one of the founders. “Chatham Mills is a comfortable, historic setting in the center of town.” Jude had worked with farms at markets in other places he’d lived, and had enjoyed organizing events and things that build community.

“Too me, a farmers’ market says a lot about the town you live in, it’s such a great place to meet your neighbors and learn about the food you eat. Tom Roberts, who owns Chatham Mills, and I had worked together on events like the Pittsboro Mardi Gras, and he was supportive of the idea of the mill hosting a farmers’ market. I worked with Dutch Rufalo, Olkhouski, Lilly Den, and Carol’s Good Earth, with support from Debbie Ross and Chatham Marketplace to form a board and bring in new vendors to the farmers’ market at Chatham Mills.

“In our third year we’ve really begun to come into our own. We’ve got a wonderful group of vendors, with really amazing products, and our customers are loyal and have helped us cultivate attendance. We’ve been really fortunate, also, to have a lot of musicians and entertainers at market, kids events, and non-profit partnerships, which has helped spread the word,” Jude said.

The growth of the market has benefited vendors who’ve been there since the beginning as well as new-to-the-market growers, vendors and customers. “The best part about being a vendor at the Chatham Mills Farmers market is the wonderful flow of regular customers and being surrounded by committed and fun vendors. It is a great family friendly environment,” Mackenzie Withington from Lilly Den Farm.

Kim Sevy, a new vendor at the market this year, sells vegetables, flowers, soaps, and fibers through Wanderlust Farm with her partner Steve Chaise. “How that the farms and families are young and have the vitality and consciousness to live their dreams. Each farm can tell you stories about each vegetable you pick up off their tables.”

Laura Stewart, along with her husband, Chas, runs from Fish Farms, and she credits the Chatham Mills Farmers’ Market with helping to expand their farm. “We just love Chatham Mills Farmers Market. The other farmers and vendors are talented and friendly, and we love the diversity of the products available at the market. You can truly get all of your groceries for the week, locally grown and produced, right there at the market, from super fresh veggies to pastures raised meats, gourmet mushrooms, rabbit, bread, soaps, jams, and cheese. The market also attracts great customers who have a passion for food. When a farmer arrives with an unusual plant variety (like rare tomatoes or heirloom peppers or lettuce), customers tend to gravitate towards them with enthusiasm and have great recipe ideas. Seeing the great reception of foods that you don’t always find in your typical grocery store has encouraged us to be more adventurous in our seed selection when choosing what to grow.”

Due to its current success, the market is expanding its season, formerly from mid-April through Thanksgiving, now to the end of January. In November the hours will be from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m., and then starting with the special pre-Thanksgiving market on Wednesday, November 27, winter hours will be from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. through January 25. Most of the current vendors will continue selling their vegetables, meats, cheeses, preserved foods, and baked goods. To be notified about events and activities at the Chatham Mills Farmers’ Market please see their website: chathammillsfarmersmarket.com, or find them on Facebook.

One of Adrienne Bashista’s many hats is manager of the Chatham Mills Farmers’ Market: chathammillsfarmersmarket.com. You can contact her at cmrnsmnrgnrg@gmail.com

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