

# Farmers' markets about to open in Lake Tahoe Basin

By Kathryn Reed

Farm fresh produce is headed to Lake Tahoe as the annual farmers' market season begins.

Tahoe City gets things going May 27 at Commons Beach. The 8am-1pm market is every Thursday through September.

South Lake Tahoe's market opens five days later – June 1 – in the parking lot of the American Legion on Highway 50. It, too, goes from 8am-1pm. The Tuesday event will run through Oct. 5.



Jim and Lois Coalwell are ready for another season to begin June 1 in South Tahoe.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

“It’s been cold down here so things are slow,” Jim Coalwell, who runs the South Lake Tahoe certified market, told *Lake Tahoe News* on Monday. He and his wife, Lois, run the Red Shack in Placerville. “We had a couple bouts of hail which probably did do damage.”

Coalwell has heard 30 percent of the cherry crop in El Dorado County has been damaged from the winter that won't end. Some of the pears will have brown spots from the weather. They may not be pretty, but the flavor will be there, he said.

It is possible peach season will be delayed because the temperatures have been cool. Still, it's peaches, cherries and greens that are expected to dominate the booths on opening day.

Vendors come from as far south as Fresno to sell their goods in Tahoe.

The South Tahoe market has room for 25 growers. However, several of them take two booth spaces.

"Because of the economy people are trying to get into farmers' markets," Coalwell said.

He has been fielding calls from all over the state from people wanting to get into the six markets the El Dorado County Certified Farmers Market Association puts on. The Placerville market opened May 15. New this year is one in Folsom.

Growers aren't sure what to expect from the clientele in Tahoe. On the South Shore the numbers were down in 2009 compared to other years.

"It didn't seem to have the enthusiasm it's had. We had our regulars, but it didn't have as much of a community event type feel," Coalwell said of the market last year. "I think people were hurting."

With the unemployment rate in the city nearing 18 percent, it's likely people may not be shopping for fresh, farm grown produce like they have in the past. Plus, the population seems to keep dwindling.

Another 19 spaces in South Tahoe are for prepared food and other vendors. Bread, cheese, tamales, lavender, jams-jellies,

salsa, fish, kettle corn, pottery, photography – all will be available.

Market organizers are going to help with the plastic bag conundrum. Coalwell has bags that say “please reuse” on them. A barrel will be at the market for people to recycle their bags.

The Foothills Farmers Market runs the Tahoe City market, as well as the one in Tahoe Donner on Tuesdays; and the Thursday markets in Truckee and Kings Beach.