

# Farmers market season about to begin in Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

A true sign winter really is history is when seasonal farmers markets open.

Placerville's market opened last Saturday; Tahoe City's opens later this month; and the two South Lake Tahoe markets start in June.

While fresh produce is the thrust of the markets, it is a growing business venture, too. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, there are 7,175 farmers markets in the country. There were half that many less than 10 years ago.



Lots of greens are expected when the South Lake Tahoe Tuesday farmers market opens June 5. Photos/LTN file

The USDA estimates farmers markets are a \$1 billion a year business. However, that represents just 2 percent of retail farm sales in the U.S.

Jim Coalwell, who runs the Tuesday certified market in South Lake Tahoe, partly attributes the success of markets to people wanting to know where their food comes from.

He said the markets have weathered the recession well. One thing that hurts the Tahoe market is the dwindling population.

Coalwell, with wife Lois, run five markets – most in El Dorado County.

The market at the American Legion parking lot off Highway 50 will open June 5. Like past years, it will run from 8am-1pm each Tuesday until the weather says it's time to fold up the tables for the season.

The other South Shore market returns to Ski Run Boulevard on June 22. New this year is that it will be on Fridays from 3-8pm. The boulevard is closed between Birch and Larch streets.

This will be the third year for the Ski Run market, but its second full year.

Alex Mellon, who runs this market, told *Lake Tahoe News* it will be like a brand new market.

“It will be more like street festival atmosphere,” Mellon said. “It is a certified farmers market, so you have to have more farmers than crafts.”

Still, he is working on bringing in a number of artist-type booths. He's also in discussions with Blue Angel Café for the restaurant to provide a beer garden.

“It will be a unique dynamic,” Mellon said of what is planned. Food, crafts and music are expected to be part of the mix.

While the Tuesday market is more traditional, Coalwell said what would be most noticeable on day one is the number of vendors.



Asparagus was a big seller in June last year.

“Everything looks really good. We should see cherries the first day and peaches, and a lot of greens,” Coalwell told *Lake Tahoe News*.

A blueberry grower from Orland should be at the first few markets before more regional blueberries ripen.

Early season peaches will be from the Modesto area before the foothill trees start producing.

Coalwell said on May 5 at the Placerville market he tasted the cherries from a Stockton grower – and then went on to rave about them. Those growers will be in Tahoe in a matter of weeks.

With a good winter, consumers should expect to see more fruit available compared to a year ago.

Coalwell said the late rains were a good omen for this year’s harvest. The lack of hard frosts also is good for farmers.

A couple new vendors will be someone selling tablecloths and a local chef who is expected to cook with some of the products available at the market.

### **Other regional farmers markets:**

#### **Tuesdays:**

- Truckee: Truckee River Regional Park

10500 Brockway Road off Highway 267

June-October, 8am-1pm

- Kings Beach: Kings Beach SRA

Highway 28 at Bear Street

June 8-Sept. 7, 9am-1pm

- Minden

Esmeralda Avenue

June 1-September, 4-8pm

### **Wednesdays:**

- Carson City: Pony Express Pavilion in Mills Park

Highway 50 East and Saliman Road

June 8-Aug. 31, 3-7pm

- Gardnerville: Lampe Park Farmer's Market

Waterloo Drive, one block west of Highway 395

June 2-Sept. 15, 8am-1pm

### **Thursdays:**

- Truckee: Donner Pass near the train station

June-August, 4-6pm

- Tahoe City: Commons Beach

Commons Beach Road and North Lake Boulevard

May 27-Sept. 30, 8am-1pm

**Saturdays:**

- Carson City: Saturday Morning Farmer's Market

Third and Curry streets

June 11, 8:30am-1:30pm.