

# Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market to wrap winter season with special Mother's Day weekend event



The Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market will conclude its first winter season on May 11, before gearing up for a new summer session starting June 1 at Academy Park. (File photos)

## LEFT OF CENTER WITH JOSHUA MALONI

The Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market successfully extended its 2023 summer schedule into the fall and winter months by adding a fair held Saturdays inside First Presbyterian Church. The shoulder season will conclude May 11 with a special Mother's Day weekend happening.

Rachel Jolbert runs the market. She said, "We will be indoors and outdoors. Our normal market, we house 19 vendors inside of the church for the winter. We are going to have 19 vendors inside the church, and 25 vendors outside of the church," in addition to live music.

She noted, "We have some special vendors who are coming just to sell flowers. ... We have vendors who are coming to sell jewelry, because it's more of a Mother's Day kind of a thing. And also, just to celebrate spring and kind of the end of our first winter market, and just do something special that's bigger and hopefully draw more people in."

The market will run from 9 a.m.

to 1 p.m., with merchants located at the back entrance to the church and in the parking lot.

And did we mention the waffles?

"So, that's my other business," Jolbert said of her Three Little Hens Baking Co. "I'm one of the full-time bakers at the market. I am branching out to add another made-to-order item to the menu for the summer. I'm debuting it at the Mother's Day market. I'm doing made-to-order waffles with fruit toppings, and peanut butter, or Nutella or chocolate sauce. Just as another made-to-order option for food at the market. I'm excited to debut that for Mother's Day."

"A lot of people are pretty excited about it," she added.

Jolbert said the winter market has "gone pretty well for our first year. I think not everyone even knows that we're there (laughs), so I think we're pretty happy with how it's gone so far. And I can't wait for next year; we've already solidified our dates with the church for the end of this year into next year's winter market. I'm excited for our second year

now that we've got one year under our belt."

She explained the extra market weeks benefit her merchants.

"I think it's been good for the vendors, especially the ones who most of their income comes from selling at markets and doing pop-up events, that they haven't had an opportunity in past years to get their product out there," Jolbert said. "It's definitely helped, especially with those vendors. But around the holidays, and even like the spring holidays with Easter and obviously Mother's Day coming up, I think it's been a huge benefit to them."

And for the market's patrons, Jolbert said, "In the summertime, we have a lot of regular vendors, and we found that, over the winter, we have almost a new set of regular vendors, which is really nice. I think people are excited just to have something to do on a Saturday morning and, for a lot of our summertime vendors, that's just what they do – whether it's raining, whether it's snowing now in the wintertime – they're still coming out to support the vendors, which is really nice.

"A lot of them have developed relationships with the vendors. They're always going to get their eggs from a certain vendor or come and get bread from a certain vendor, just because that's what they've done all the time in the summer. So, having the ability in the winter has been really exciting, and I think they love continu-

ing to support their favorite small businesses throughout the whole year."

The summer market season will begin June 1 in a slightly different location.

"We are anticipating the building of the new pavilion in Academy Park so, just ahead of any construction that might happen, we are taking the lead and moving over to the Cayuga (Street) side to start the market season," Jolbert said. "We're just going to move there for the whole market season, because we don't have a timeline yet for the possibility of building that pavilion. So, the Cayuga side across from Syros and the carwash is where we'll be this year."

When the structure is built, "If they do end up having it the way that it should be used – with picnic tables and things – what I'm actually hoping will happen is that we could stay on the Cayuga side, and then our patrons at the market could actually use the pavilion more so as a place to hang out in the park, while the market's going on for the day, and have more seating," Jolbert said. "I think that would actually benefit the market and the community more on a Saturday than for us to actually use that space and be underneath it."

Something else patrons will notice this summer is that "We've almost doubled the size of the market for this coming season," Jolbert said. "What's really been important to myself and Jamie

(Symmonds), the previous owner that I've kept up with, is just the integrity of making sure no matter how big the market got, that it was still 100% producer-made. So, you either have to grow, make or produce the items that are being sold at the market. We don't wholesale any items. And I've made sure, even with doubling the amount of vendors, that all those vendors meet those criteria.

"And like I said, there's a lot of new food vendors. I've got some more people coming from Erie County, and I've added two more farms from Niagara County – which is something that people told us that they really wanted – was more produce, more variety. So, we did add two new farms for produce, and another farm for poultry.

"But we do want to spend some extra time this year, whether it's with our new website or social media – and also in our new information booth – just educating the community and the public on what eating in-season produce looks like. Because we often find people are asking for products in a month where they're just not in-season in Western New York. So, we want to kind of educate people on the importance of eating in-season, and that's what the farmers market really is about."

For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/lewistonartisanmarket>.

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