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Farmer’s Market Observations:

The farmer’s market was buzzing with energy today as hungry customers eagerly scanned their vendor’s tents to decide which heaping plate of fresh, local food they wanted to indulge in. I observed several stands which received much more business and had far longer lines. These stands were the hot food lines, with chefs directly behind the counter, busy cooking sizzling entrées right in front of the customers. For example, Verde Cocina, a stand proudly declaring the statement “wholesome, Mexican flare” under their logo, had one of the longest customer lines. I watched as this vendor piled on heaps and heaps of greens of various kinds onto a large skillet. The chefs served these barely wilted greens and beans atop freshly rolled tacos to give to customers. A Middle Eastern vendor which often had a similar sized line, rolled freshly made pitas into foil and handed them to customers. They took individual orders from customers, and provided them with fresh, hot, customized food.

There was a similar thread which ran through all successful food vendor’s stands. It was simple: all of these stands provided fresh, wholesome, good smelling and tasting food. And they made no mistake about advertising their freshness and their commitment to local, sustainable foods, and marketed this well. It was visually stimulating and the smells which this food evoked peaked customers interests and drew them in.

People like choice. People like to sit outside. People like eating with others. People like a change to their daily routine. And people like a fresh, tasty, hot, local food. And the Farmer’s Market caters to all of these preferences.

The problem is - OHSU cafes lose money from this weekly market. Yet, there are things to learn from this farmers market and ways that we can change to bring in more dollars on other days of the week. Though the cafés already provide different specials every day, coming up with a local, sustainable food items to serve on a specific day of the week could boost sales. Creating marketing around these days would be essential to draw a crowd. Adding more sautéed vegetables to add on top/on side of dishes could be beneficial as well as it adds visual and nutritional appeal. Focusing on international food favorites like Mexican and Middle Eastern, and choosing fresh, sustainable options within these cuisines could be advantageous as well.

The farmer’s market is a part of what makes Portland, Portland. It is familiar and well-known. Local, good food, with delicious smells wafting from sizzling cook tops, and the choice to eat outside with friends